

# Sandwell College

## General further education college

<b>Inspection dates</b>		<b>12–16 May 2014</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is good because:

- The large majority of students make good or better progress.
- Long course success rates have improved steadily over the last three years, especially for students aged over 19.
- Students develop very good personal, social and employability skills that prepare them well for further study and for the world of work.
- Progression between different levels of study and from college into higher education, employment or further study is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good, and often outstanding.
- Teachers and support staff work exceptionally hard to ensure that all students achieve, despite the wide range of potential barriers to learning that many face.
- Students benefit from the college's excellent teaching, study and social spaces, with very high quality resources and equipment to support learning.
- It is led and managed well, in the best interests of students so that standards have risen and students helped to do their best in their studies.
- Leaders and managers excellent engagement with external partners and their ambitious vision for the local community are now vital to meeting the needs of the area's diverse communities and in promoting economic and social regeneration.
- Students study in a safe environment, where equality and diversity are very well promoted.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not enough teaching and learning is yet outstanding.
- Success rates on long courses for students and apprentices aged 16-18 are not yet high enough.
- The quality and rigour of written feedback on students' work requires improvement.
- Not enough students on study programmes have sufficient opportunities to develop their employability skills through work placements or work experience.

## Full report

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

- Continue to raise the standards of classroom practice so that more students benefit from outstanding teaching and learning that challenges and stretches all of them.
- Identify the reasons for the relatively weaker performance on long courses for students and apprentices aged 16 to 18 and take effective actions to help them improve further.
- Implement actions to ensure that teachers' written feedback on students' marked work is more detailed and constructive, to help students understand how they can improve further.
- Develop further links with external partners to support more students on study programmes to improve their employability skills through the provision of work placements or work experience.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- The college recruits students from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds and a significant minority speak English as an additional language. Nevertheless, the large majority of students make good or better progress. No significant differences exist in performance between different groups of students. The college's introduction of grade booster classes helps students to progress towards challenging target grades. Analysis of in-year progress data indicates that most are on target to achieve their qualification at the end of their programme.
- Long course success rates have risen steadily for the last three years and are now satisfactory. Success rates for students aged 19 and above are now high, and at level 1, very high. For students aged 16 to 18, success rates have risen incrementally from a low starting point for each of the last three years and are satisfactory. However, they were high at level 1, satisfactory at level 3, but low at level 2. The college's data indicates that the trajectory of upward improvement in long course success rates is continuing in 2013/14.
- Success rates on functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics are high at entry level but low at level 1. College managers have taken a range of appropriate actions to tackle achievement at level 1, but it is too soon to assess the impact. Overall success rates on the college's relatively small apprenticeship programme require further improvement. Apprentices aged 16 to 18 achieve low success rates. However, success rates for apprentices aged 19 to 24 are high and most complete within the planned period of study.
- Students develop very good personal, social and employability skills that prepare them well for further study and for the world of work. They enjoy their learning and the wider social and economic opportunities their enhanced confidence gives them. College managers invest significant staff development resources to help teachers integrate English and mathematics with the taught curriculum. This initiative is particularly effective in developing students' skills in these subjects. The development of specialist language and terminology is also good.
- Progression between different levels of study and from college into higher education, employment or further study is very good. A large proportion of students progress from lower level courses to higher. College managers have successfully joined forces with Jobcentre Plus to develop highly effective and successful pre-employment programmes for unemployed adults and courses that integrate English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) with employability skills. A good proportion of those who successfully complete these programmes progress into sustained employment or to further study.

- Students' behaviour in lessons and in social areas is good, as is their attendance. Students enjoy college life, participate enthusiastically in learning sessions and produce work of a high standard. The college provides students with significant opportunities to develop skills in employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship. With the support of their teachers, many students successfully establish small scale business ventures and others develop enterprising initiatives and business ideas.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and learning are good, and often outstanding, leading to the good or better outcomes for students. Teachers have very high expectations of their students regardless of background, language barriers or previous negative experience of formal learning. As a consequence, most students' experience of their time at Sandwell College is highly positive.
- Despite the many potential barriers to learning, teachers and support staff work exceptionally hard to ensure that students achieve. They provide high levels of pastoral and academic support to help students remain engaged in learning and to achieve their learning goals. The additional support 'booster' sessions aimed at improving students' grades is effective in helping students to achieve. Specialist staff provide particularly good additional support, including for students with dyslexia.
- The college promotes high aspirations for students' future employment. It offers a good range of employability activities to students on study programmes to help develop their readiness for work. These include business enterprise, volunteering, mentoring, mock interviews, college-based placements and curriculum related projects, shows and exhibitions.
- The college's high quality accommodation, including excellent specialist vocational areas, tools, and equipment provide students with superb facilities in which to learn. Specialist resources such as high quality training salons for hairdressing students and a wide range of cars and engine components for motor vehicle students are good.
- Teachers are well qualified and have very good experience in the subjects they teach. They use their knowledge and skills particularly well to plan and to relate theory work with workplace and every-day life. Vocational teaching is good and often outstanding. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is contagious and their rapport with students is very good.
- Assessment practice is generally good. Students benefit from their teachers' choice of interesting projects and assignments to assess learning. Teachers make good use of holistic assessment on unit-based programmes for project and client activities. They give very good verbal feedback, which is often immediate following practical vocational assessments. The quality and rigour of written feedback requires improvement because teachers do not always provide sufficiently detailed or useful advice about how students can improve their work.
- Early assessment is effective in identifying students' starting points in English, mathematics and vocational aptitude and ability. Teachers use the results of initial assessment effectively to develop individual student and group profiles, enabling information to be readily available for lesson planning, including on study programmes. They systematically record the students' targets and predicted grades on the college's electronic tracking system. In a few cases however, these targets are insufficiently challenging.
- Students benefit from specialist English and mathematics teaching to improve their knowledge and examination grades. Vocational staff reinforce the use of English and mathematics in the specialist occupational skills well. For example, sports students calculate each other's body mass index and motor vehicle apprentices apply mathematical skills when making calculations about vehicle speed, acceleration and power.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well in their lessons. Students have a good awareness of equality and diversity, and can articulate ways they adjust their behaviour and language

when dealing with colleagues, customers and clients from diverse backgrounds. Teachers promote diversity and tolerance well, though they do not always fully exploit naturally occurring opportunities in lessons to deepen students' understanding.

- Initial advice and guidance are very effective in providing independent and impartial advice to help prospective students make appropriate course choices. The college offers open days and taster days to enable students to meet teachers and to view the college's facilities. The six-week 'Passport to Learn' initiative for students on study programmes is successful in helping students to enrol on courses that match their needs and abilities.
- Students benefit from local and national employers visits to the college to speak about the different jobs they offer and to see the standards of students' vocational skills. Course-related additional qualifications, such as an airline cabin crew award for travel and tourism students, enhance career opportunities. However, students on study programmes do not have sufficient real work experience or work placement opportunities to help them develop a full appreciation of commercial pressures and challenges.

## Health and social care

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

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, leading to the improving outcomes for current students. Success rates had been on an upward trajectory for three years, but dipped in 2012/13. Retention has improved considerably in the current year and students are making good progress towards achieving their learning goals. Students develop good practical and professional skills during their work experience and they produce written work of a high standard.
- Teaching and learning are good in most lessons. Students are encouraged to work independently using the internet, textbooks and the college's virtual learning environment (VLE). Teachers employ a wide range of activities, such as group work, which challenges students and promotes learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not set enough challenging work for the most able students.
- Teachers make good use of the chat room facility on the VLE at specific times to set questions and activities to check students' knowledge and understanding; to increase and improve their vocabulary, and their use of English, and to trigger specific internet searches for health and care related ideas.
- As part of their study programme, students benefit from good opportunities to gain work experience in a broad variety of relevant settings such as residential care, dementia care and in pharmacies. This enables them to develop their employability skills successfully and to understand the importance of timekeeping and good attendance. Attendance in class is good.
- Teachers set challenging targets for their students and monitor them effectively. Until recently, a small number of teachers had not been monitoring and updating targets adequately and a few students were unaware of their targets. As a consequence, a small minority of students are making slow progress.
- Support is extensive and effective. Additional learning support tutors meet their students up to three times a week, as well as providing them with help in the classroom. Students receive regular, individual review sessions with their tutor, as well as helpful group tutorials.
- Assessment is very effective. Students know what assignments they are working on and when they are due. Written feedback is detailed, constructive and supports learning, so that students know how to improve. In lessons, activities provide opportunities for effective continuous

assessment and teachers are generally very skilled at asking probing questions that challenge students and encourage learning.

- Teachers develop students' English well in lessons. Students are encouraged to communicate effectively with their teachers and with one another during group work. Teachers mark written work thoroughly. They identify and correct spelling mistakes, as well as grammatical errors and poor sentence construction. However, they do not promote mathematics skills so well in lessons.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Teachers schedule careers advice and university guidance sessions into the tutorial programme, as well as topics such as financial guidance and interview skills. University representatives visit the college and provide students with informative advice about studying at higher education. Students also attend university open days and events. The college provides students with vocationally relevant opportunities to study additional courses in substance misuse and sexual health.
- Teachers routinely reinforce equality and diversity topics in lessons. They plan effectively to meet the individual needs of their students. One class participated in a lively debate about the benefits and costs of promoting equality and diversity within the healthcare profession. This developed their communication skills well at the same time as deepening their knowledge of equality and diversity.

## Motor vehicle

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

Good

- Good teaching, learning and assessment are good have resulted in the sustained drive to raise outcomes and a two year trend of improvement from a low initial starting point. Students' develop good industry standard skills, using hand tools and automotive equipment with confidence. Students speak enthusiastically about their learning experience and their prospects of finding employment in the motor vehicle industry.
- Teachers have high expectations for their students and share best industry practice to provide motivation and engagement. They give freely of their time to support students in achieving their full potential and assess students' practical skills continuously and rigorously. Students track their own progression, negotiating assessment times when they feel they are ready. Weekly personal tutorials provide good pastoral support with a themed programme of life skills and personal welfare. Teachers effectively prioritise health and safety in all student activities.
- Teachers plan learning well to meet the needs and interests of students. They have significant motor trade experience, which they use effectively to develop students' skills to a good industry standard. The college's training workshops are equipped to a higher commercial specification than many high street garages. Students carrying out vehicle body repairs use advanced repair equipment competently and with confidence to perform non-invasive repairs to damaged vehicles. In a mechanical engineering session, students conducted detailed pre-MOT inspections, correctly identifying and assessing wear tolerances in key components in accordance with the test requirements.
- In good lessons, teachers make effective use of a variety of learning activities to stimulate interest. They use technology well to present graphics, video and animated presentations that show complex vehicle components in action, to develop and enhance students' understanding. In a good theory session on the safe removal, storage and replacement of air bags, the teacher presented video and graphic images to reinforce the precautions necessary owing to the explosive nature of this device.
- In most lessons, teachers encourage students to reflect on how motor vehicle components work, thereby promoting their problem solving skills. In a minority of lessons, teachers too often

accept responses from the more able, or more vocal, and fail to provide opportunities for all students to contribute.

- All students take diagnostic tests to assess their support needs, together with a dexterity exercise to evaluate their practical capacity to ensure they enrol on a course that meets their needs and abilities. Teachers use on-line tracking effectively to record and monitor student progress. Students use the on-line tracking programme confidently to check progress and to devise their own development action plans, which teachers validate and monitor.
- Teachers ensure assessments are well organised, rigorous and timely. They return marked work promptly and provide constructive and helpful comments to help students improve their skills.
- Teachers integrate mathematics well with motor vehicle engineering topics. Students can accurately calculate vehicle geometry, tolerances and quantities and they are confident with a good range of essential mathematics skills. Teachers promote English satisfactorily. However, they do not always develop students’ vocabulary and the technical terminology associated with motor vehicle engineering.
- Students benefit from good careers advice. Teachers ensure that motor vehicle courses meet the requirements of the study programme effectively. Students benefit from programmes designed to meet their individual needs, as well as to develop their work readiness. However, not enough work experience opportunities are available to meet the needs of all students.
- Students are respectful and polite to each other and to staff and visitors. They work collaboratively in class and share ideas. Students clearly understand the importance of equality and diversity. However, teachers do not always plan lessons to help students understand and respect the diverse needs of the customers they will encounter once they are in employment.

**Hairdressing and beauty therapy**

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

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good across all of the subjects offered, leading to the overall high success rates for level 3 in hairdressing, nail art and beauty therapy programmes. However, level 2 programmes in hairdressing and beauty therapy are less successful. Successful progression to higher level programmes within the college is good. However, progression into employment in the hair and beauty industry is low. Progression into employment for the small number of barbering students is good.
- Learning is enjoyable, interesting and successfully led by well qualified and enthusiastic teachers. They use questioning techniques well to challenge students, to assess the extent of their knowledge and to support the development of analytical and evaluation skills. Outstanding teaching and learning is characterised by fun activities demanding a high degree of individualised and cooperative learning. Weaker learning sessions do not take account of students’ previous experience and, as a consequence, a few students make slow progress.
- Students’ vocational skill development is good, and often outstanding. Level 2 hairdressing students cut hair carefully and methodically to meet, and often exceed, qualification requirements. Level 3 nail art students demonstrate highly creative skills that demonstrate work readiness. Students demonstrate their creativity further through high levels of success in competition work. They benefit greatly from these experiences and develop further key employability skills in effective team work, communicating with others and time-management.
- Teaching accommodation and resources are good and similar to those found in high quality professional salons. Students benefit enormously from access to a wide and diverse range of clients that supports successful skill development and increased confidence when working on a range of different hair types and skin tones. Teachers use technology well to engage students in

quizzes and games and to show relevant video clips to reinforce skill development. Students work safely and teachers reinforce health and safety matters in learning sessions.

- Early assessment ensures that teachers identify and deal with potential barriers to learning before the course begins. Students with dyslexia have very good support. A few students had never previously received a full diagnostic assessment for dyslexia and as a result, they have begun to make significant progress in learning for the first time. Students’ targets are clear, measurable and followed up frequently. Assessment is timely, with most students making good progress. Students who have completed their programme early progress to more challenging skills at a higher level.
- Teachers give good verbal feedback to students, with clear guidance about how to improve. They also give good written feedback on project work. However, their written feedback following practical assessment is less helpful, because it is insufficiently evaluative and does not tell students clearly how they can improve.
- Students benefit from helpful marking of assignments which supports improvements in the use of English. Teachers correct spelling, grammar and poor sentence construction and provide useful tips on how to improve. They effectively integrate English and mathematics into learning sessions through the use of carefully designed tasks.
- Pre-course information is clear and includes information about progression routes from each level, many of which are aspirational job roles in the hair and beauty industry. Students are very clear about the expectations of their programme and have a clear understanding of the next steps available to them.
- Learning sessions are inclusive and teaching materials reflect a broad range of client characteristics. Students are aware of the wider concepts of equality and diversity. However, teachers do not always use the interesting discussions during sessions to raise students’ awareness of how they can adapt hair and beauty treatments to meet the individual needs of their clients.

<p><b>English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)</b></p> <p><b>16-19 study programmes</b></p> <p><b>19+ Learning programmes</b></p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, as are outcomes for students. ESOL students work hard to improve their English and support each other well. Standards of work are high, attendance and punctuality are excellent and students make rapid progress in improving their fluency, accuracy and understanding.
- Teachers have very high expectations and plan lessons which are memorable, challenging, thought-provoking and fun. For example, a mixed level 1 and 2 group enjoyed a wide-ranging discussion about marriage in their countries of origin, while a lively beginner’s group had fun hunting for (paper) cats hidden around the classroom in order to practise the use of prepositions.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully with excellent challenge and a strong focus on the world of work. For example, students learn to write a curriculum vitae and prepare for an interview. Learning activities are very practical to develop good English skills, as well as employability skills such as team working, problem solving and presenting to audiences.
- As part of their study programme, students benefit from many opportunities in the college to gain work experience; volunteering in the stationery shop, working as guides at an open evening or having a go at plastering in the college’s construction workshop. An exciting programme of visiting speakers and trips broadens horizons further. For example, one group is currently preparing for an educational trip to Paris.

- Teachers make excellent use of technology. Students have good access to computers and receive excellent support to develop, improve and accredit their information technology skills. Teachers use video to bring the outside world into the classroom and make particularly good use of interactive whiteboards to enliven lessons.
- Accommodation is attractive and enhanced by colourful displays of students’ work. A few classrooms divided by a partition are disturbed by sounds from the lesson next door. However, a few teachers have turned this to advantage by opening up the partition and team teaching, leading to some excellent sharing of best practice.
- Thorough arrangements for early assessment and interviews ensure that students are on the right course, with good built-in flexibility to change to a higher or lower level class if necessary. Teachers monitor progress skilfully, challenging students from lesson to lesson with targets for improvement to help them achieve their long term goals. Students are proud of their examination success and have high ambitions.
- Assessment is outstanding. Teachers give oral feedback in every lesson which helps students write their own targets as they evaluate their learning. A common marking policy ensures that regular written feedback is helpful, showing what students have achieved and what they must do to improve. Parents and carers are kept well informed and can go online at any time to check progress.
- Teachers help students to develop excellent fluency and communication skills, as well as reading and accurate writing for a wide range of purposes. Students have outstanding opportunities to develop or accredit their skills in mathematics through lessons taught by ESOL specialists who have received training to teach wider functional skills. ESOL students have excellent opportunities to progress to level 2.
- Teachers, learning support assistants and volunteers are well qualified and provide outstanding support to all students, including those with disabilities. Teachers know their students’ backgrounds and ambitions exceptionally well, and give expert guidance on their next steps. Most 16-18 students use their English skills to progress to further study or employment. The excellent teaching helps adult students to gain independence and gives them the confidence to pursue a career, discuss their children’s progress with teachers or simply to go shopping or see their doctor without needing a family member to translate for them.
- Teachers and managers work exceptionally hard to help students overcome the many barriers they experience to learning and work. Speaking 18 languages between them, they are excellent role models. They help students to celebrate the rich mix of cultures and all students demonstrate a key employability skill: respect for one another’s culture. Teachers swiftly challenge stereotyping and inappropriate use of language during learning sessions.

<b>Foundation learning</b>	
<b>19+ Learning programmes</b>	Good

- Good teaching, learning and assessment lead to high success rates on pre-employment training courses. However, success rates on a minority of courses, in numeracy and higher level literacy, are low and require improvement. College in-year data suggests that success rates are improving. The majority of students progress to higher level study or employment. Students’ confidence to participate in their communities as active citizens, including seeking work and involvement in schools and statutory services, are much improved. Students are proud to be part of the college learning community, attend regularly and enjoy their studies.
- Students achieve and progress well in creative, well planned lessons tailored to their individual needs. They respond well to their teachers’ high expectations, challenge and support. Students participate and engage very well, with most taking responsibility for their own development



needs and pace of learning. Enthusiastic and well qualified teachers motivate students and promote the benefits of better English, mathematics and language skills for work and everyday life effectively.

- Less able students benefit from excellent care and support from teachers, support workers and specialists. One deaf student communicated with confidence through a sign language interpreter during a class discussion. Students with mental health difficulties receive support and encouragement to reflect on their answers to questions. In a minority of lessons, more able students do not receive sufficient challenge because activities are too easy or repeated.
- High quality accommodation, teaching technology and college facilities motivate students and enrich their learning experience. However, a few classrooms in community venues are cramped. On pre-employment courses, local employers and regeneration partners direct the curriculum, opening up employment opportunities for new and existing students. Employer visits add interest and variety to the employability element of classes, and students hear first-hand how to improve their interview skills and job prospects.
- Good early assessment accurately identifies students’ starting points and progression routes to higher levels of study and work. Individual goals are agreed, previous learning assessed and students placed on courses that meet their needs and abilities. Challenging targets build on and extend learning so that students are better able to read official letters, shop confidently and help their families to succeed in education.
- Students know how to improve through frequent and accurate verbal feedback. In the better classes, teachers use targeted questions to test students’ understanding and extend learning before moving on. However, in a few classes, students often shout out answers preventing quieter students from answering. Written feedback for students on pre-apprenticeship and some Skills for Life courses is insufficiently helpful and often limited to congratulatory comments or praise.
- Pre-course information and advice is good. Students attend welcoming and well planned recruitment days and interviews before joining courses. Recruitment events in local schools help parents attend learning to support their children. Good information in lessons helps students on pre-apprenticeship and ESOL courses improve their interview techniques and confidence. Progression advice helps students consider their next steps very well and many go on to higher level study or employment.
- Mixed cultural groups of students form effective learning teams, supporting each other, and celebrating each other’s successes. Students with mental health difficulties and learning disabilities are very well integrated into classes. Students willingly share their cultural values and respect the views of others. Teachers challenge discriminatory language and celebrate difference and similarity well.

<p><b>Business management</b></p> <p><b>16-19 study programmes</b></p> <p><b>19+ Learning programmes</b></p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Good teaching, learning and assessment lead to good outcomes for students. Students’ success rates overall are high, although better for students aged 16 to 18 than for those aged 19 and over. Progression to further and higher level courses is good, with most level 3 students moving to higher education. All current national diploma students have offers of a place in higher education.
- In the significant number of better lessons, teachers provide students with good individual support, helping them to improve their understanding of business management topics, produce better work and to achieve higher grades. In less successful lessons, teachers provide too few

opportunities for students to develop independent learning and higher level thinking skills which they will need to progress into employment or higher education.

- Students on study programmes have good opportunities to develop their employability and enterprise skills. One student in particular, with the help of other students, organised a talent show supported by local businesses and judged by celebrities. In a good lesson, the teacher linked the theory of running a training session to students’ practical activities, where students assessed the performance of their peers in presentations. Teachers maintain a useful notice board of topical business news, much of which is also available on the VLE, which they often use to promote real-world business issues to students.
- Managers and teachers have high expectations of students and successfully promote students’ success in assessments, work and further study. In the best lessons, teachers set challenging targets. For example, in a finance lesson, the teacher used group work and deeper extension questioning to ensure that students fully understood the purpose and use of cash flow forecasts. In a few lessons, students receive insufficient challenge from teachers and rely too much on textbooks and printed notes from teachers to complete assignments.
- The tracking of students’ progress and the marking of their work is sound. Managers and teachers have successfully tackled the unacceptable delays in the return of the results of completed units earlier in the year. Students receive regular written and verbal feedback from teachers in grade booster lessons which help them better achieve their units. For example, in one lesson a small group of students were editing an advertisement which they had previously recorded on film. The teacher enhanced the value of the activity by providing helpful suggestions on the best use of voice-overs.
- Teachers regularly integrate English and mathematics activities with business management topics. For example, in a business resources lesson, students had to correct a business letter with grammatical and spelling errors. The teacher not only worked through the answers with them, but also explained clearly why those changes were required.
- Information, advice and guidance are effective in placing students on the right course. Students value their college induction because it gives them a good understanding of what to expect from their programme of study. They have a good idea of what they want to do after they complete their studies. A level 3 fast track programme is responsive to local needs and gives students who are not in education, employment or training an opportunity to re-engage with learning.
- Teachers create a positive and supportive learning environment for the diverse range of students they teach. They integrate equalities topics effectively during sessions but they do not always take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to further develop and enhance students’ understanding. Students’ behaviour in class is good.

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	Good
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- The college is well-led and managed. Leaders and managers have worked hard, and successfully, to improve significantly the quality of the college’s provision, and of its estate, since the previous inspection. Teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners are now good. Student numbers have grown significantly and the college’s drive for inclusion continues to attract many students with lower than average starting points and previous attainment.
- Managers’ engagement with external stakeholders is excellent. Students benefit from these partnerships, for example, as employers and practitioners contribute their perspectives on work and employability. Governors and managers are at the centre of local and regional initiatives to promote economic and social regeneration.
- Essential to leaders’ and managers’ capacity to meet students’ needs is the successful completion of its impressive Central Campus at the heart of the local community in Sandwell. This excellent presence transforms the college’s actual and potential contributions to its

communities. Students have accommodation and resources of the highest quality for their work and leisure and feel proud to be students at the college.

- Leaders and managers put students first in the priorities and management of the college, and understand the challenging social and economic environment in which their students live. They promote successfully a vision and strategies to improve the prosperity and wellbeing of the college's local communities, including employers. The recently appointed Principal is successfully leading a programme of cultural change to drive further quality improvement, emphasising the empowerment of all staff, openness in management, and high expectations.
- Governance of the college is strong. Governors provide particularly good challenge and support to senior managers. They exercise their responsibilities in determining the college's vision and mission very effectively. They were, for example, closely involved in the considerations on the re-introduction of GCE A-level provision. They have good skills and experience, which they keep under review, to do their work. They also review their working practices, including through the work of consultants.
- Leaders and managers have rigorously implemented comprehensive and very thorough arrangements for the safeguarding of students. The college meets, and exceeds, legal and government requirements in its arrangements. The proactive role of governors, managers and all staff is evident, especially in the particular and successful attention they pay to the assessment of risk.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in the college is particularly strong. The college attracts and welcomes a tremendously diverse student population, working very well together and with a diverse staff. Good analysis of student data shows no significant achievement gaps in the college. Senior leaders very successfully promote equality and diversity through the college's extensive profile within the local communities and through their offer of a wide range of courses to meet community needs.
- Management of the curriculum is good. Curriculum managers and teachers are well supported and encouraged by senior managers, within a clear management and performance framework. Managers do not shirk their responsibility to deal with poor performance by staff, and teachers have left the college when all avenues for the improvement of their work have been exhausted.
- Comprehensive and rigorous quality assurance, with course review and self-assessment at its heart, drives up performance. A well-conceived annual cycle for improvement, for staff, governors and students, policed by the head of quality and improvement, results in sensible improvement actions. Continuous review and moderation, with rigorous and realistic target setting, helps make the process meaningful to teachers and managers.
- Self-assessment of the college's strengths and weaknesses, and improvement planning, are robust. Students' views are collected, and used well, to contribute to judgements. Teaching, learning and assessment have improved through the college's reliable, and developmental, observation process.
- Since the previous inspection, the college has continued to develop the range and scope of its curriculum, but with the quality of what it does firmly in mind. Senior leaders actively pursue the theme of employability. The college has sensibly re-introduced GCE A level provision in the light of local needs and demands from prospective students. Apprenticeship provision meets much needed demands from employers. The college is now very much a regional centre of excellence for dental nursing and has longstanding customer care provision for a large national car breakdown company.
- Managers and staff have a sound, and improving, understanding of study programmes for students aged 16 to 18. Students' English and mathematics skills are well developed. The college is working to improve the range and quality of work placements.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Sandwell College

<b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b>  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	16-19 study programmes	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2	2

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Health and Social Care</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Motor vehicle</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ESOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Employability Training</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Business Management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	General further education college							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	7,169							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Graham Pennington							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	March 2011							
<b>Website address</b>	www.sandwell.ac.uk							
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	819	1,901	704	1,941	1,455	468	8	87
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	170	183	124	188	N/A	N/A		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	60							
<b>Full-time</b>	45							
<b>Part-time</b>	15							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	953							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ N/A.</li> </ul>							

## Contextual information

Sandwell is a densely populated metropolitan borough with very high levels of deprivation. It ranks as the 12th most deprived local authority on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation out of 326. About one quarter of the borough's population is from a minority ethnic group, though the proportion of students studying at the college from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher. Unemployment and worklessness are higher than the average for the West Midlands and for England. The proportion of school pupils gaining five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics, is much lower than the national and regional averages. Sandwell College is a medium sized college located in West Bromwich in the West Midlands. It offers provision in all 15 subject areas from its single site close to the centre of town. The majority of students aged 16 to 18 follow full-time courses and the majority of adult learners follow part-time courses.

## Information about this inspection

<b>Lead inspector</b>	Jai Sharda HMI
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Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal for teaching and learning as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, 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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