

City of Bristol College

General further education college

Inspection dates		12–16 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		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- The proportion of learners who complete their courses successfully varies considerably across the college. Success rates are mostly lower than those in similar colleges. Learners' attendance is low in a number of subject areas and their punctuality is often poor.
- A minority of learners do not have the level of vocational skills they should have acquired by this stage in their learning programme.
- The provision for work experience outside the college is insufficient, and a minority of learners continue to receive insufficient training to prepare them effectively for work.
- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills is not good enough.
- Much teaching, learning and assessment that require improvement remain in the college, despite the improvements made.
- Teachers do not plan well enough to challenge all learners in lessons and do not check their individual learning and progress with sufficient rigour or frequency.
- Teachers do not plan consistently well to promote equality and support diversity in lessons and in assessment.

This provider has the following strengths:

- The progress made by senior managers in developing a culture of improvement amongst staff and in upgrading the infrastructure to support the management of the college and the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The rigour and technical skill shown by governors in supporting and challenging leaders and managers to improve the quality of provision for all learners.
- The wide range of key partnerships to engage learners who have not traditionally attended college and which provides very effective progression routes.
- The behaviour of learners which contributes to the harmonious atmosphere of respect in a diverse college.
- The quality of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of improvement achieved to date in teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of all learners, to encourage them to achieve their full potential
 - check learning in lessons more rigorously and systematically so that they know more clearly the progress learners are making
 - use prior attainment information from group profiles to plan learning activities more effectively so that they provide appropriate challenge for all learners
 - provide feedback of a consistently high quality to learners on the standard of their work so that they know more precisely what they need to do to improve their performance
 - improve learners’ English and mathematical skills through skilful use of appropriate vocational contexts, so as to equip learners more fully for progression into further study or employment.
- Improve the quality of individual learning plans so that teachers promote learners’ progress more consistently through their achievement of appropriately challenging targets.
- Increase the rigour and speed of follow up for teachers whose lessons require improvement and ensure good practice is used effectively within and between subject areas.
- Develop teachers’ skills and confidence in planning to promote equality and support diversity to a consistently high standard in lessons; enable teachers to manage better spontaneous discussion of this aspect.
- In work-based learning, improve learners’ progress and achievement through:
 - more rigorous and systematic tracking of learners’ progress against precise targets
 - more frequent visits to carry out planned review and assessment in the workplace
 - establishing better links between on- and off-the-job training.
- Extend the availability of good-quality external work placements, in order to prepare learners better for transition into employment or further study.
- Improve learners’ attendance and punctuality so that learners make better progress in their learning.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes for learners require improvement. They have improved from the last inspection when they were inadequate. Staff have been successful in tackling the challenge of ensuring that learners stay on to complete their courses. They monitor learners’ attendance and progress more precisely. College data show that a higher proportion of learners remain on programme than at the same time last year, although this varies across subject areas. Learners often make good progress in lessons. Learners studying at advanced level on the majority of courses are on track to achieve their target grades. ▪ However, a consistent feature of outcomes for learners is inconsistency both across the range of the college’s work and within subject areas. This is as a result of initiatives to improve teaching, learning and assessment being works in progress, and the variation in the extent to which they have had an impact in improving the provision for all learners. ▪ Learners’ attendance requires improvement and varies considerably across the college. It is very good in a number of areas of the college, but poor in others. Punctuality to lessons is often lax. 	

- In beauty therapy, learners demonstrate excellent practical skills; but in hairdressing, learners' technical skills are not at the standard they should be at this stage in key areas such as cutting and perming. In work-based learning in care, learners' work at intermediate level is of a very high standard, demonstrating that learners are being encouraged to fulfil their potential; but, at advanced level, the quality of work only goes as far as complying with awarding body requirements.
- The standard of learners' achievements in English and mathematics requires improvement, as it is too variable. For example, in a law lesson, learners at intermediate level produced written work to a very high standard. This was as a result of the teacher's continuing commitment to ensure learners use appropriate technical, legal vocabulary correctly, and her assiduous marking of spelling, grammar and professional writing style. However, learners coming to the end of their course at advanced level in health and social care were not all able to perform a basic calculation to determine the correct dosage of medication to be given to a patient.
- The development of learners' employability skills is uneven. Although the opportunity for learners to undertake meaningful work experience outside the college has increased, this is not consistent across the college. Staff work closely with a national social enterprise company to improve links with local employers and increase work placement opportunities for learners. Many learners benefit from 'live work projects' or 'client briefs', which develop their employability skills and commercial awareness. For example, learners in media have produced training films for the Fire Service and learners in construction have built resources for skateboard parks in local schools. However, in hairdressing and beauty therapy, learners take too long to prepare for treatments. In motor vehicle work-based learning, learners have not acquired the customer service skills necessary to deal with the requirements of different types of client.
- The proportion of learners within the subcontracted provision who complete their courses and achieve their qualifications has risen slightly over the last year and is now in line with the college rate. Learners in subcontracted provision enjoy their learning; they develop new skills which result in their increased confidence and improved prospects for gaining employment.
- In the last academic year, learners from a significant number of groups achieved below the college average. In the current year, there are no indications of underachievement by any group of learners. Better monitoring of progression into employment or further study indicates that this is good for those learners who completed their courses successfully.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Well-chosen measures have secured improvement from the very low base of the previous inspection. The college has focused sensibly on reducing the amount of weaker teaching. It has identified what it sees as the essential elements of good practice and tried to ensure all teachers recognise them and incorporate them into their teaching. It has made effective use of thorough lesson observations, high-quality coaching and useful written guidance to drive improvement and motivate teachers. The result is an improving, but mixed, picture of teaching standards. This variability is clearly reflected in the currently inconsistent outcomes for learners.
- Good teaching takes place across the college. For learners on independent living provision it is the norm, as it is for adults studying GCSE English. Here, and in other good teaching, teachers have consistently high expectations, planning sessions which meet all learners' needs and challenge the most able. Their teaching is characterised by high levels of technical expertise that ensures all learners make good progress.
- Too little teaching is good, despite the genuine enthusiasm and willingness to experiment that many teachers now display. In most subject areas, standards remain mixed, with too much variability in teaching quality. The college still has pockets of inadequate teaching, as well as a small amount that is outstanding. Recent college observation data also show that over half of workplace assessments and reviews require improvement.

- Learning outside the classroom is not well enough developed. The scope of the college virtual learning environment (VLE) is limited and it is not widely used. The college provides many imaginative activities to help learners gain skills needed to sustain employment. However, too few learners following study programmes below advanced level have work placements with external employers to develop these skills further.
- Assessment practice is mixed. For example, in the better learning sessions, teachers use questions well to check learning, but the college has identified accurately that this good practice is not sufficiently widespread. The quality of feedback learners receive on their written work is sometimes good. However, in most subject areas it does not consistently offer learners adequate guidance on what they need to do to improve. Workplace learning assessments are not planned well enough, and reviews are often not effective. As a result, learners do not have a clear view of their progress or what they need to do next.
- Arrangements to establish learners' levels of English and mathematics skills when learners start at the college are appropriate. Free-writing tasks complement effectively computer-based assessments. Although teachers receive the outcomes of these initial assessments, they do not use them consistently well when planning lessons, and so are less able to meet individual needs. Target setting when planning individual learning is generally weak.
- The college provides good support for learners. An expanding, highly-trained team of dyslexia experts provides an effective reading improvement scheme for a large number of learners aged 16 to 19 on study programmes. Learners with complex physical or learning needs receive good levels of support in the classroom, although staff do not always plan this well enough for maximum impact. A recently revised tutorial curriculum is successful with learners studying introductory and intermediate courses. Most learners report receiving good personal and academic support from their teachers.
- A good range of recent, innovative projects are starting to have an impact. A successful recent initiative, which uses sport to motivate and engage young learners in construction, is being extended across the college. Progression coaches work successfully to reduce the number of learners aged 16 to 19 who drop out of construction programmes. Close working with partners such as local authorities now ensures proper consideration of the needs of learners leaving care and is leading to improved retention.
- Learners receive good information, advice and guidance before and during their programmes. Skilled staff field initial enquiries and refer those needing more in-depth advice to experts based at the college, including the national careers service. Highly-skilled specialist staff assess the needs of prospective learners with a wide range of often very complex support requirements, referring them to appropriate provision in the college or elsewhere. The college now provides an impartial careers advice service in five local schools with which it has close links. A newly-established 'progression week' and follow-up activity have focused learners successfully on their goals for their next steps.
- Arrangements to develop learners' English and mathematics skills are improving. Posters and guides aimed at improving spelling and vocabulary are widely displayed. Teachers and learners alike use these well. Correction of errors in written work is common, although sometimes it is not detailed enough. Initiatives to develop learners' mathematics skills are less well advanced. Increasingly, teachers include activities to improve English or mathematics in vocational sessions, but the quality remains mixed.
- Teachers are skilled in ensuring that their lessons are suitably inclusive. Learning takes place in an atmosphere of mutual respect. However, too few lessons contain planned or spontaneous activity which increases learners' understanding and appreciation of diversity and cultural difference.

Health, social care, early years and playwork

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

- Teaching, learning and assessment for apprenticeships and workplace learning in health and social care, healthcare support, early years and playwork require improvement; this reflects outcomes for learners. Success rates are significantly below the national rate, although they are beginning to show improvement following the construction of a new, albeit embryonic, management team. Learners develop confidence in their work via the acquisition of new knowledge from their courses. A minority of learners progress to higher level courses.
- The standard of learners' work at intermediate level is very high. However, at advanced level it merely complies with awarding body requirements, reflecting teachers and assessors having insufficiently high expectations and failing to challenge learners to achieve their full potential.
- The majority of teachers, assessors and managers have relevant teaching, assessing and subject qualifications and good levels of industry-standard expertise in a range of professions which include security, health and social care and the children's workforce. Learners appreciate and benefit from the support assessors and teachers provide, particularly with personal and welfare issues. However, teachers and assessors do not have sufficiently high expectations of learners. Too many lessons are unambitious and teachers and assessors fail to use their skills and experience consistently to stretch and challenge more able learners.
- The assessment of learners' knowledge, in both taught lessons and workplace observations, is of an inconsistent standard. Teachers use a range of assessment techniques to check learning, such as questioning, quizzes, assignments, observations and presentations. However, they do not always plan these effectively to challenge all learners to achieve to their full potential. Teachers and assessors fail to give sufficient guidance to enable all learners to study their subject and present work to the best of their ability.
- Teachers and assessors do not promote the use of technology sufficiently. The lack of emphasis on the importance of technology in the children's workforce means learners are ill equipped to meet workplace expectations in this aspect of their work. Too few learners have access to and use technology to produce their work and improve their presentation to a good standard.
- The majority of learners develop English skills well within vocational lessons and in workplace assessments. Apprentices understand the importance of developing skills and qualifications in English and mathematics to meet the demands of their ever-changing working environments, and to enable them to progress to further or higher learning. Teachers design and use effective activities and resources to enable learners to develop vocational language, team-working skills and presentation skills within the classroom. However, the promotion of mathematics in vocational lessons and in workplace assessments by the majority of staff is insufficient and currently underdeveloped.
- Information, advice and guidance for learners require improvement. These are too often inconsistent and informal. In health and social care and health care support work, guidance for learners ensures that they are on the right course for their career aspirations. However, too few teachers and assessors in early years understand fully the implications for the changes in guidance for working with children from September 2014. As a result, too many learners have insufficient guidance to enable them to understand fully the new requirements they need to meet to follow their chosen career path.
- Too few teachers and assessors support learners well enough to develop a good understanding around the importance of equality and diversity and inclusion. Not all staff fully understand the recent changes in legislation. A minority do not use appropriate terminology with learners to enable them to develop confidence in dealing with the rich and diverse range of people, cultural and religious groups they will encounter in the workplace and the communities in which they live.

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

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This corresponds to the outcomes for current learners, in contrast to historic performance data. Learners' knowledge and skills are appropriate for their level of study. In most courses, learners make the progress expected from their prior attainment. Progression to higher education, work or further study is good for those who successfully complete their course.
- Actions to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners have been successful in improving attendance and retention in AS- and A-level courses in the current year.
- Teaching and learning have strong features. Coaching in small groups to help learners prepare for imminent examinations is good. Teachers consolidate knowledge and understanding well in areas learners find challenging, such as probability in psychology. They offer useful guidance about revision and how to tackle examination questions.
- In the majority of lessons, good planning offers a variety of challenging learning activities that keep learners interested and support their learning. For example, in an Access to science class, learners were reinforcing their understanding of cell division and the replication of DNA through watching a video clip, analysing a photograph of cells, completing crossword puzzles and matching statements on cards. Learners who finished early worked on additional materials. In an A-level physics lesson, learners engaged in a thought-provoking discussion about the conservation of matter and energy which deepened their understanding. Learners work well in pairs and groups and extend their knowledge through mature discussion while completing the task in hand.
- Where learning is less effective, at times learners work for too long on the same material and the pace is too slow for the more able learners. Teachers do not always check learning thoroughly enough before moving on. Work is not always sufficiently challenging and, at times, a few learners lose focus.
- Learners are, on the whole, attentive and well motivated, making steady progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, in an AS-level biology lesson, learners showed confidence and good communication skills in presenting accurately their understanding of the structure and function of the heart to the whole class, using terms such as 'ventricle' and 'aorta'.
- In a number of courses, for example Access, learners develop their independent learning skills well through use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and laptop computers. However, this is not consistent.
- Teachers make sure that learners understand and can use specialist vocabulary, such as 'dopamine' and 'radioactivity'. They correct spelling and punctuation in learners' written work and insist on the correct use of specialist terms in class. Learners in an A-level chemistry lesson successfully completed calculations involving 'entropy', 'enthalpy' and 'free energy' and could show that they understood the meaning of the terms, for example in the manufacture of ammonia.
- Assessment is now frequent and thorough. Good practice is well established in Access and vocational courses. Teachers monitor learners' progress through frequent formal and informal assessments completed in the classroom and at home. Teachers review continually learners' progress, attendance and punctuality; they provide effective support for those at risk of falling behind. Learners' written work is mostly well presented and of an appropriate standard. In most cases, teachers' written comments tell learners what they need to do to improve their work and achieve higher grades.

- Teachers use tutorial sessions well to monitor learners' progress in achieving their predicted results and to give extra help. They give their time generously outside lessons. Learners value the help they receive with their mathematics and English in the learning centre. However, not all teachers provide the college's tutorial programme to offer enrichment.
- The college provides good initial information and advice to help learners choose their courses and subjects. Guidance is extensive in Access courses. Advice and support to help those learners preparing for higher education are good, but on-course guidance is less comprehensive for others. Learners value the support they receive on personal matters to help them stay on their course.
- Visits from speakers from universities and previous learners enrich the experience of those planning to progress to higher education. However, preparation for work is underdeveloped in most courses. The vocational forensic science course has a rich programme of visits and speakers, but work placements are not part of the course. Access learners have benefited from a project in which some have carried out scientific research projects leading to an additional award.
- Learners consider they are treated fairly; bullying is rare. Learners from very diverse backgrounds work harmoniously together. Teachers include the promotion of equality and support for diversity in lesson plans and incorporate these well into some lessons. For example, in biology, learners consider the distribution of disease in different communities; vocational learners researched famous female forensic scientists.

Motor vehicle

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, reflected in outcomes, which are too low. New managers have made a good start in tackling underperformance, and have had a demonstrable impact on the standard of provision. Since the last inspection, managers have improved initial advice and guidance. The majority of apprentices are on the right course, leading to a reduction in the number of early leavers.
- Learners are able to pick optional subjects to study that suit the work they are undertaking in employment. They can substitute qualification units, enabling more study of vehicle fault-finding and diagnostic techniques. However, managers and assessors have yet to implement fully robust new procedures for tracking the progress apprentices make; it is too early to judge the impact of this on apprenticeship outcomes.
- Initial assessments do not inform individual planning in the area sufficiently. Learners' profiles lack sufficiently-detailed reference to their development needs for mathematics and English. Assessors make insufficient use of the results of initial assessment and a majority do not identify targets to enable learners to progress.
- Assessors do not plan the timing of assessment well enough and learners do not always know what progress they are making towards their learning goals and targets. The assessment of learners in the workplace in a few cases is not sufficiently regular and focuses too narrowly on meeting the requirements of the qualification.
- In weaker examples, assessors carry out reviews infrequently and to an insufficiently high standard. They set dates for review that take little account of learners' individual needs and do not help learners make better progress. During progress reviews, short-term targets for the technical content of programmes are too generic and do not explain the small steps required to build on, and extend, learning. Apprentices are unclear about their progress and they do not always know what they need to do to achieve.
- Teachers have high expectations of learners and create an environment beneficial to learning. Apprentices' attendance and punctuality are good, reflecting the high standards expected in the

motor vehicle working environment. Behaviour is good and learners show enthusiasm for the subjects they are studying. Standards of apprentices' vocational work are satisfactory. Apprentices undertake practical tasks using small hand tools with dexterity.

- Teachers do not always check the progress of individual learners, which results in only a few learners responding during discussions. They do not always ask probing questions or link theory with practical work; as a result, learners do not deepen or extend their knowledge sufficiently.
- Teachers provide apprentices with effective feedback on their progress, although the level of feedback on marked work does not provide learners with detailed enough information to enable them to improve their work.
- Learning resources are good. Workshops have up-to-date, industrial standard equipment. Learners have good access to high-quality tools for their studies. Links with a multinational heavy goods vehicle firm is highly beneficial to learners, through the donation of specialist vehicles for learners to work on. Although assessors adopt suitable procedures in health and safety, they do not always do enough to promote a culture of high standards in health and safety. However, apprentices work and train on employers' premises alongside skilled mechanics who help them develop a wide range of strategies and the ability to work confidently on their own.
- The development of learners' mathematics and English skills for the motor vehicle industry is improving. In the better lessons, assessors encourage learners to use 'word flick pads' as an aide memoire, supporting effectively their correct spelling of terms such as 'carburettor' and 'catalyst'. Apprentices develop mathematical skills in the context of the motor vehicle industry, such as in measuring crankshaft tolerances to calculate wear and tear.
- The promotion of equality and support for diversity requires improvement. Assessors do not always positively promote cultural and gender differences. Learners do not develop wider knowledge and skills for a diverse range of situations they would encounter in the workplace. For example, learners do not know how to adjust their behaviour and communication in working with a range of different customers. Learners demonstrate respect for their peers and work colleagues, for example in providing help for each other in the development of tasks such as using technical data and geometrical equipment to re-align wheels.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, reflecting outcomes for learners. Teachers do not routinely plan to meet all learners' needs and abilities and, therefore, learners in these lessons do not have the opportunity to develop and improve their skills as needed.
- Learners' development of practical skills is weak in hairdressing, in which the majority of learners study, particularly in perming and cutting techniques. Learners are not sure what different cuts are and are unsure as to how to angle hair cutting to achieve the desired result. However, learners in beauty therapy have excellent skills, which prepare them well for industry.
- The assessment of learners' work and skills is of an inconsistent standard. Teachers' use of oral questioning is inconsistent and does not routinely check understanding or develop learners' higher-order skills. Teachers' feedback on learners' work usually identifies how learners may improve their performance; however, in a minority of instances, feedback is insufficient to support improvement.
- Teachers use peer assessment effectively to aid learning and to develop learners' greater understanding of how higher grades can be achieved. In beauty therapy, tutors constantly remind learners of what is required for higher grades and how to develop good practical skills.

- Teachers use information technology well in lessons to aid learning and develop independent learning skills. On media make-up courses, learners make good use of the internet to research the henna design techniques and different henna products that they can use for their own practice at home. Learners in hairdressing use fashion internet sites to provide creative and exciting images that they can use to develop their creative colouring techniques. Staff place all learning materials on the VLE. Learners use these regularly to support their learning outside of the classroom.
- Individual learning plans and tracking forms to monitor learners' progress are comprehensive and provide a good visual representation of learners' current progress, including their attendance. However, targets are insufficiently detailed to promote improvement effectively.
- Teachers plan well for the development of English and mathematics in lessons, in a relevant vocational context. For example, learners perform weight to height ratio calculations to determine treatment plans in beauty therapy; in hairdressing, learners use percentages and multiplication for colour mixing. Teachers pay careful attention to learners' correct pronunciation of technical terminology in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. The extent to which teachers correct errors in spelling and grammar as part of marking learners' work is inconsistent.
- Learners develop key employability skills in lessons. Attendance rates observed during inspection were good, but punctuality in hairdressing is poor. Teachers create opportunities to ensure that learners develop the wider skills they will need to succeed at work. However, teachers have an insufficient focus on the development of learners' understanding relating to commercial timings and on retailing opportunities.
- The systematic provision of work experience for all learners is underdeveloped. Not all learners undertake work experience; where they do, teachers and learners do not evaluate the impact of the work experience on skills development, learning or progress.
- Learners develop good personal and social skills. They work with a variety of local businesses and charities to provide a range of therapy treatments in the workplace. These have included work with local care homes, the hospital and an organisation supporting people living with HIV/AIDS. Learners have enjoyed this work and some have become regular volunteers. Learners develop good communication skills and interact with clients well.
- Learners have a basic understanding of equality and diversity, and how to adapt their services to meet the needs of different client groups. However, teachers do not integrate these skills adequately in all lessons. In the better lessons, teachers provide good examples of how different treatments can be adjusted to meet the needs of a wide range of client groups with differing needs.

Visual arts and media

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, reflecting outcomes for learners. Learners' achievements are good overall on media courses, but are too low in art and design in which the majority of learners study. Success rates on most AS-level courses are low because too many learners leave early.
- In the majority of lessons, tasks set lack ambition and staff expectations of the levels of work learners can achieve are too low. Tasks are often not timed, so learners do not respond with any sense of urgency.
- Attendance is low in the majority of lessons, so many learners miss the opportunity to study. Punctuality is poor, hampering effective starts to many lessons, as teachers repeat information for latecomers who are often inadequately prepared for learning.

- The standard of work is satisfactory in art and design lessons, with learners developing adequate practical skills; however, in most media lessons, learners' work is good. Teaching across both areas does not sufficiently develop learners' wider skills, such as reflective thinking, independent enquiry, or an evaluative approach to their own or peers' work, to enable them to make better progress.
- Teachers do not always state or explain lesson objectives, so learners are unclear about what they are expected to achieve. Objectives are frequently imprecise and focus on lower-order skills, so providing a lack of challenge for learners. Teachers' use of learner profiles is underdeveloped, with the result that teachers devise activities focusing on learners' average ability level rather than varying the level of challenge to match individual capabilities. As a result, many learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers use questions effectively to engage learners. However, questioning is often too open-ended. As a result, it does not provide in-depth checks on learners' understanding, encourage deeper learning, or explain processes learned. Teachers do not consistently check whether learners have understood the lesson or whether they have attained the skills and knowledge that activities were designed to develop.
- In the better lessons, teaching is purposeful, with planning focusing on learning and teachers setting a good pace to all activities, so learners can make good progress.
- Teachers mark learners' work appropriately. In a small minority of cases, they do not provide learners with detailed comments to help them develop skills and understanding. Teachers generate detailed explanations of assessment criteria for learners of what they must do to achieve specific grades. Learners receive good informal feedback in lessons on their progress and how to improve their work.
- Teachers correct learners' spelling and grammar errors in coursework and assignments accurately and carefully. Good posters in studios enhance learners' understanding of subject-specific words and mathematical conventions.
- One-to-one tutorials are good and assist learners in structuring their work, with good advice on progression routes. Online personal learning plans are developing, but their use is inconsistently effective; those learners that do engage in target setting set themselves meaningful goals to achieve. Learners mainly use the VLE to access class notes and assignment briefs; however, they use it infrequently to extend their learning.
- Learners receive impartial advice when they apply to the college and at interview to enable them to enrol on the most appropriate courses for their interests and abilities. Learners benefit from a thorough initial assessment process that identifies their learning needs. The provision of additional learning support is prompt. For learners who complete courses, progression is good.
- Links with employers are developing well in art and design. They are good in media where many learners test out, and improve, their skills through productive work experience in commercial environments enhancing their employability skills. Learners in fashion participate in a prestigious 'Style Forum' event, enabling them to showcase skills and build links with local employers.
- Learners appreciate the inclusive and respectful learning environment created by staff and feel very safe within the college. Schemes of work show infrequent planning for the integration of equality and diversity into assignments or lessons. In a few lessons, teachers do not make good use of opportunities to explore current equality themes. However, in media, learners consider a range of relevant topics, for example how the media industry represents ethnic minority groups.

Performing arts

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as do outcomes for learners. Attendance is low on many programmes.
- In too many lessons learners make insufficient progress. Teachers' planning for individual learning is underdeveloped. In these lessons, learners work at a slow pace. Teachers are unsuccessful in re-engaging uninterested learners. Teachers do not encourage learners' contribution to a discussion nor exploit learners' knowledge of contemporary music culture. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for learners to develop important evaluative skills.
- In the stronger lessons, learners enjoy their lessons, work diligently and develop competent production skills. Learners in the Extended Diploma in Music Technology produce work of a high, often inventive, standard. One learner is composing music by extending and contracting the recordings of the mechanical noises from a bicycle. However, written work is less competent and learners' research frequently relies on copied texts rather than personal responses.
- The standard of learners' work is high at intermediate level. Learners make good, and at times significant, progress in lessons as they develop technical and creative skills. For example, in one lesson, learners discussed the emotions and images generated by a contemporary poem which they developed into collaborative compositions with rap-style lyrics.
- Where teachers plan lessons well, with imaginative starts, timed tasks and evaluation opportunities, learners make good progress. Introductory level learners, all posing as pieces of equipment, were able to demonstrate the theory of a recording chain and signal path by passing a ball of string between themselves. Learners in performing arts evaluated enthusiastically the text of 'What are they like?', relating their own family experiences of truth, parenting and discord.
- Assessment feedback is inconsistent. The electronic feedback does not always give learners sufficient details on how to improve their grades, and many learners cannot remember the details. In a minority of lessons, the use of plenary critiques is effective for self-assessment and personal target setting. In one lesson, small groups of learners had produced alternative audio tracks for film sequences and were successfully identifying areas for improvement.
- The promotion of English and mathematics is inconsistent. Teachers in performing arts extend learners' vocabulary successfully. Learners use mathematics for estimating the length of a scene and to edit texts to fit a performance time. However, in music, teachers do not always promote technical language nor sufficiently explain the mathematics essential in music and sound theory.
- Specialist resources for music technology are excellent. The partnership with Deep Blue Sound enables learners to work with industry-standard software in a professional environment. Health and safety procedures and risk assessments are good. The content and quality of learning resources on the VLE are insufficient to support revision and independent study. Learners report links are too complex and they are unable to find what they require if they have missed a lesson.
- Additional learning support in lessons is effective and learners who receive support become confident in their learning. Teaching staff are music professionals. Learners respect their expertise. Progression to higher education is high and, increasingly, learners are able to find employment in the creative industries.
- Theatre visits, external gigs and visiting professional performers promote an understanding of vocational practice. A visit to an international mastering studio led learners to consider that critical listening was as important as high-cost equipment. Recently, an American Hip Hop producer delivered a master class in DJ techniques, encouraging learners to develop their specialist skills.
- Teachers actively promote equality, particularly with the history of music, song writing and the selection of performance texts. They enable careful discussion of sensitive issues that arise, such as addiction, censorship, race, gender and sexuality.

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

Good

- The good teaching evident in many sessions has not yet raised success rates, which remain below national rates in most areas. However, wider outcomes for learners are good. These include very good cooperative working with learners showing tolerance of each other's opinions, much improved oral confidence and the development of a sense of social responsibility. Adult learners develop very effective research skills, leading to independence in learning, through good guidance by tutors.
- Most lessons are at least good, with outstanding teaching evident in adult functional skills sessions and in pre-entry sessions. This higher standard of teaching and learning is an improvement from the previous inspection. Teachers now use clear schemes of work and detailed lesson plans with clear learning targets in almost all cases. However, targets in individual learning plans remain insufficiently focused on what skills and knowledge learners need to develop, an area for improvement remaining from the previous inspection.
- Teachers recognise the positive effect on their practice of individual support from teaching, learning and assessment coaches. This has led to improved techniques in assessment for learning and in focused questioning. This, in turn, has resulted in improved learning and more confident learners.
- Teachers challenge learners well through stimulating debate and analysis on a range of written media. A particularly thought-provoking activity entailed learners designing headlines on real-life newspaper stories. Each learner explained to the group which stylistic techniques they had used to make their headline appealing. Teachers encourage learners in GCSE English both to peer assess work and to use formal grading criteria to assess their own examination preparation assignments. This is a very effective aid to learning and progress.
- In a very well-planned pre-entry session, the development of learners' language skills took place through questioning other learners' work experience activities.
- The very few weak functional skills sessions are marked by teachers' poor planning, activities having little relevance to learners' needs, interests or experiences, and teachers' poor use of time.
- Initial and diagnostic assessment is generally effective in placing learners on the correct qualification level. In adult functional skills, very good wide-ranging assessment results in teachers having detailed pictures of each learner's background. Teachers use this information well to plan particularly relevant and interesting activities to meet learners' needs and interests. Feedback on assessment is very effective in most cases. Teachers use frequent verbal feedback to check learners' understanding. In most discrete GCSE English and functional skills English sessions, teachers mark work accurately, ensuring that spelling and grammar are corrected.
- The development of learners' literacy skills across subject areas requires further development. There have been discernible improvements over the last six months. However, the good practice evident in, for example, health and social care is not common across the college. In a number of subject areas, including motor vehicle and childcare, teachers have identified subject-specific vocabulary. They are meeting with success in encouraging learners to use these words correctly.
- Teachers have a strong focus on developing learners' written and spoken skills, particularly with adult learners whose first language is not English. In a very effective intervention, the teacher encouraged the correct articulation of the word 'exaggeration' and simultaneously developed the understanding of syllables. The effect was that learners became more careful in ensuring their oral responses were carefully spoken.

- Information, advice and guidance for adults' next steps require improvement. At this stage of the year, adult learners are unclear what levels of qualification will be available to them. Teachers ensure that visual resources are clearly presented to ease readability, thus minimising potential barriers to learning. Where relevant, teachers plan precisely and well for learners to develop their understanding of specific aspects of equality and of diversity. However, teachers make insufficient use of naturally-occurring opportunities to develop learners' awareness of diversity.

Independent living and leisure

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, resulting in outstanding outcomes for learners. Learners improve their independent learning skills very well, as is shown for example in their ability to use public transport, prepare meals and deal with money. Progression into further learning or higher level courses is excellent.
- Teachers have high and demanding expectations of learners. They motivate them to succeed through the use of imaginative and creative topics. For example, learners make models and use them to produce their own animated films.
- In another example, a teacher skilfully used second language learning as a developmental activity and a group of adult learners successfully used their acquired Spanish language skills to order food on a visit to a local tapas bar. They also produced a set of language learning tips for other learners based on their own experiences. The teacher improved their general oral communicative ability through the use of fun activities such as Spanish tongue twisters.
- Teachers produce very high-quality and relevant learning resources at appropriate levels to meet learners' individual needs. In a gardening lesson, the teacher gave learners laminated cards containing photographs and explanations of common weeds and asked them to identify them in the college garden. They did this successfully and independently and went on to use the information to produce a weed identification application for a tablet computer.
- Learners enjoy their learning immensely and this inspires them to extend their capabilities. For example, learners in a performing arts class, several of whom will not use oral communication, successfully took part in a group miming task. They all contributed to an activity based on responding to a Bollywood song through the use of percussion instruments or through excellent, rhythmic dancing.
- Teachers are particularly adept at ensuring learners consolidate their learning through the use of very regular reviews and assessment. Learners demonstrate excellent recall of earlier learning. For example, in one lesson they could relate the key skills employers look for when recruiting staff. Teachers use good quality photographs and prompt cards, where appropriate, to support this process.
- Support for learning is outstanding. Highly skilled British sign language interpreters enable the inclusion of deaf learners in all aspects of lessons, including sharing incidental comments made by other learners. Links to external support agencies are very comprehensive and lead to very useful targeted support. Links to specialist agencies ensure learners in the workplace benefit from continued support during the holidays and when they have left college.
- An innovative internship programme, run in conjunction with Bristol City Council, provides learners with an excellent introduction to the world of work. They attend full-time for an academic year and gain a wide variety of skills via a rotating programme of work. Plans are in place to extend this programme. Staff provide gradually-reducing levels of support in the workplace as learners develop their skills.
- Teachers develop learners' communication skills very well. Learners become much more competent at speaking to others and develop the confidence to make their views known. Where

appropriate, they improve their English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills to a high standard compared to their starting points.

- Teachers manage learners' behaviour extremely well. They ensure learners treat each other with high levels of respect. They focus very well on providing learners with a clear understanding of safety, including e-safety. They ensure learners avoid stereotypical views and develop their understanding of the wider world very well through external trips, thought-provoking visiting speakers and activities.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. Performance management was very weak at the last inspection. Since then, the progress made in introducing a standard, college-wide appraisal and performance management system, applied from recruitment onwards, has been good. Managers have much easier access to essential performance information, such as lesson observation outcomes and student progress and achievement; they make good use of this information in quality improvement.
- The measured approach to improving performance management has resulted in a focus on working initially with teachers who are considered to be most in need of improvement, in order to reduce significantly or eliminate inadequate teaching. The introduction of teaching, learning and assessment coaches has been particularly effective in supporting these teachers to improve, and the impact is evident in their better lessons. While the scale of the need has made this strategy understandable, there is further progress to be made to ensure all learners experience good teaching.
- Senior leaders and governors alike recognise that governors did not respond sufficiently to the weaknesses in teaching and learning identified in the October 2010 inspection. This resulted in failure to prioritise the recommended improvements, which led to the more critical findings of the 2013 inspection. Since then, significant staff changes at all levels from the governing body to individual course teaching teams have taken place as part of a leadership strategy to bring about sustainable improvements in the quality of provision. Staff value the frequent and regular opportunities to meet the Principal and contribute to the improvement strategy.
- Over the past 18 months, governors, many of whom are new, have been instrumental in supporting the improvements in the college. Their technical ability and enthusiasm for improving teaching and learning have ensured that financial efficiency savings have secured much needed resources to support this work. The rapid progress the college is making in improving efficiency means the college is on track to achieve its financial recovery plan, despite the commitment to extensive staff development.
- Self-assessment is thorough and self-critical. The most recent self-assessment report echoes the findings of the February 2013 inspection, but adds a detailed analysis on causes for the weaknesses. These include ineffective staff development leading to dull and uninspiring teaching, poor access to management information and ineffective performance management by senior leaders. Action plans are rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as the key priority. The accuracy and rigour of curriculum area self-assessment is weaker in the small minority of cases where managers do not include sufficient analysis of learners' outcomes. Governors have welcomed their involvement in the informal observation of learning activities. This informs usefully their quality improvement discussions.
- Leaders and managers have planned and structured study programmes carefully to ensure that learners develop the skills, knowledge and qualifications to enable them to progress to the next level of education or training or to increase their opportunities of gaining employment. The design of study programmes meets the needs of individual learners, including tutorials, and supports the development of learners' English and mathematics, and academic, vocational and employability skills. The college has developed new bridging courses between introductory and intermediate and intermediate and advanced level courses to enable learners to progress, and

so develop further their skills and confidence and reduce the risk of learners being unable to progress.

- The overall curriculum offers good progression routes for learners, from introductory to advanced level and beyond. It is more strategically and coherently planned and is aligned to the needs and ambitions of the city and local area. Work with employers is beginning to include social enterprise activities in order to enable more learners to develop work-readiness skills and attitudes. Relationships with the local authority and the local enterprise partnership are well established and effective at planning to meet the needs of all learners, including those predicted to be affected by the raising of the participation age.
- Stakeholders, partners and subcontractors recognise improvements in the college's strategic approach to curriculum planning, both within the curriculum areas and where outside organisations are involved. However, a few key partners are critical of a lack of communication and engagement with them to plan high-quality, efficient and effective programmes that meet their needs and those of their customers.
- The management of subcontracted provision is now more robust. The recently-appointed manager communicates regularly with subcontractors. Managers monitor more frequently learners' progress and achievement. They take effective remedial action where necessary. The college and subcontractors are now working more closely and beginning to share best practice in teaching, learning and assessment. College managers work closely with subcontractors to respond promptly to learners' feedback and continually improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The college has a clear strategy to improve learners' English and mathematics skills; however, the implementation of the plan is at an early stage. Specialist English and mathematics teachers work closely with academic and vocational teachers to support the development of learners' skills. This work has had a positive impact on the quality of provision, as seen in lesson observation grades, but requires further development. The extent to which teachers integrate and develop mathematics skills and identify and correct effectively learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar is inconsistent across the college. The majority of learners on a range of full-time programmes follow appropriate courses of study in functional skills. The training to improve teachers' ability to improve learners' English and mathematics skills within the context of their subject area is beginning to have an impact on teaching and learning. Although the proportion of learners studying for GCSE English or mathematics, in addition to their main qualification, has increased, it remains low.
- Recent changes in the management of work-based learning have brought a sharper focus to ensuring that learners achieve their qualifications on time, although it is too early to see the full impact of these changes. Frequent meetings between the newly-appointed apprenticeship manager and curriculum managers enable closer monitoring of learners' progress and achievement. This leads to prompt remedial action where necessary. Focused staff training is proving effective in tracking learners' progress and improving their achievement.
- The college is successful in recruiting a higher proportion of learners from diverse ethnic heritage backgrounds than are found in the local area. Learners enjoy being in college, relationships are mutually respectful and culturally sensitive. Their behaviour is very good.
- Managers use regular and detailed analyses of complaints particularly well to identify themes that may indicate a deeper-rooted concern about a particular aspect of the learners' experience. In one instance, this led to significant improvements to a programme.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good and supported by good links to a range of organisations and agencies offering specialist help to learners at risk and supporting staff development. Safeguarding officers are well informed about emerging risks to vulnerable learners, including potential extremism, sexual exploitation or forced marriage. The lead governor for safeguarding is particularly experienced and uses her expertise robustly in her scrutiny and challenge role. The college meets its statutory requirement to safeguard learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

City of Bristol 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	-	-	3	-	3	3	-	-
Outcomes for learners	3	-	-	3	-	3	3	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	-	-	3	-	3	3	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	-	-	2	-	2	2	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	3
Early years and playwork	3
Science	2
Motor vehicle	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Visual arts	3
Performing arts	3
Foundation English	2
Independent living and leisure skills	1

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	14+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	16,706							
Principal/CEO	Ms Lynn Merilion							
Date of previous inspection	February 2013							
Website address	www.cityofbristol.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+
	1,487	4,083	1,681	3,677	1,498	1,018	10	223
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	718	853	347	532	28	38		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	-							
Part-time	237							
Number of community learners	18							
Number of employability learners	-							
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"> ■ The Skills Network ■ N-Gaged Training and Recruitment ■ Hartcliffe & Withywood Ventures ■ QTS ■ Youth Education Service ■ Hedley Hall Training 							

Contextual information

City of Bristol College is a large general further education college, serving Bristol and the wider conurbation from eight main campuses spread across the city. Bristol is the largest city in the south west of England and the eighth largest in the country. The key employment sectors in the city include financial services, health services, information technology and business services. The greater Bristol area includes large multinational engineering companies. Some 75% of Bristol's young people aged 14 to 19 are from White British backgrounds. The choices available to learners to continue their education at the end of their GCSE courses include the City of Bristol College, a sixth form college, and sixth form provision in thirteen of the city's secondary schools. In addition, some 20 providers offer work-based learning provision, either directly or through subcontracting arrangements. The proportion of learners in Bristol schools achieving five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is below average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Russell Jordan HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and nine 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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