

Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology

General further education college

Inspection dates		2–6 June 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
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:

- Teaching and learning have improved significantly and are now good as a result of the strong management of staff performance, combined with a well-planned approach to using lesson observations to help teachers reflect on and develop their skills.
- Senior leaders and managers have a clear focus on developing students' employability skills in lessons and through a wide range of imaginative and successful extra-curricular activities.
- Teachers pay good attention to the development of students' English and mathematics skills in lessons and to raising their awareness of the importance of issues relating to equality and diversity in the subjects they are studying.
- Students benefit from the good and often innovative development and use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons and around the college more generally; this augments both their learning and their communications with teachers about their work.
- Strong partnerships with schools, employers and the local community are working well to benefit students.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- In 2012/13, not enough adult students completed their qualifications successfully.
- Not enough teaching and learning are yet outstanding.
- Self-assessment, although improving, is not sufficiently comprehensive in evaluating all aspects of the college's performance.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the much improved teaching and learning in the college, and senior leaders' predictions regarding students' retention and achievement for 2013/14, result in improved success rates, most notably for adult students.
- Share more of the good practice that leads to outstanding teaching and learning which are emerging through initiatives such as the learning communities and the work of the learning coaches.
- Ensure that self-assessment at all levels in the college is sufficiently self-critical and detailed in providing an accurate evaluation of all aspects of the provision and that it incorporates fully the views of all users of the college's services.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Success rates overall have remained broadly the same for the last three years and require improvement. After an encouraging increase in the proportion of students achieving their qualifications successfully in 2011/12, particularly at level 1, success rates declined in 2012/13, primarily due to a significant fall in outcomes on the same level 1 provision. Retaining both adult students and those aged 16 to 18 on level 1 programmes has been a particular problem for the college. However, success rates on level 2 and level 3 courses have mostly improved since the last inspection and are broadly average. ▪ The much larger cohort of students aged 16 to 18 perform satisfactorily, particularly on level 2 and level 3 courses. The proportion of young people who achieve their qualification having completed courses at level 3 is high. Success rates for adult students are low and declining. Both achievement and retention rates for older students are lower than they were at the time of the previous inspection. However, success rates for the considerable number of adult students on short courses improved in 2012/13 and are now broadly average. ▪ Success rates in a small number of curriculum areas are high; most notably health and social care, and hairdressing and beauty therapy, where outcomes have been consistently good for the last three years, and in construction where success rates improved dramatically in 2012/13. However, too few students have achieved their qualifications in the majority of subjects in the past, particularly in early years, motor vehicle, performing arts, media and on English for speakers of other languages courses. ▪ Senior leaders have identified those subject areas and individual courses that had a significant negative impact on success rates overall last year and have implemented a number of actions to improve performance. College data show in-year retention has improved significantly in almost all subject areas, most notably in construction and preparation for life and work, for students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses, and for both age groups on level 1 programmes. College leaders and managers are confident that this much improved retention, the good teaching and learning and the strong focus on improvement will lead to an increase in success rates at the end of the 2013/14 academic year, particularly for adult students. ▪ Students develop good practical and technical skills, as well as a sound knowledge of theoretical concepts, which they relate well to real-life experiences in the workplace. They make good progress in and enjoy lessons. Initiatives introduced by the college to develop students' employability skills, both in lessons and through work placements, have been largely successful in exposing students to the world of work in a number of different ways. Students from a wide range of subject areas develop their practical and employability skills well through regularly taking part in events held on college premises for the local community. 	

- A significant majority of students benefit from the college's well-planned and thriving programme of extra-curricular activities. They take part in a wide range of sports and other courses to improve their health and well-being, as well as doing voluntary work and organising charity events. Students from different backgrounds and subject areas are successful at prestigious regional competitions in recognition of their good skills development. Students value highly the improvements in their self-confidence, team working and leadership abilities.
- Learners' attendance requires improvement. Their attendance has not improved from last year and varies too much between subject areas. The high cost of public transport locally is a significant barrier to ensuring students are present in lessons, although the college has been extremely successful in improving the attendance of a small cohort of students for whom it has been able to issue subsidised bus passes.
- The college has been in a transitional phase regarding the delivery of English and mathematics qualifications. As a result the numbers of students now studying for GCSEs in these subjects over one or two years increased very significantly in 2013/14. Significant improvements are evident since the last inspection in the ways in which students develop good English and mathematics skills alongside their main studies. However, whilst the college is confident this will result in much improved results at the end of 2013/14, the proportion of students who were successful in achieving GCSEs at grades A* to C was very low last year. Functional skills success rates were also very low, although this provision has now largely ceased.
- Success rates for apprentices require improvement; they are too variable and show no consistent trend of improvement. After a period of declining success rates in 2012/13, more apprentices now achieve their qualifications successfully, although, conversely, the number completing them in the timescale planned for them when they started the courses is declining. Advanced apprentices perform much better than their peers on intermediate apprenticeships.
- The college has been largely successful in reducing any gaps in achievement that existed previously between different groups of students. Male students who performed worse than their female counterparts, particularly those aged over 19, now achieve equally as well, largely due to the improvement in success rates in construction. Leaders and managers have eradicated the gap that previously existed between success rates for students at the Radbrook campus and those at the main site, which were lower. The college has been successful this year in retaining the majority of students who were in receipt of free school meals prior to enrolling at the college. However, success rates for students who were formerly looked after children are well below the college average for students aged 16 to 18 as a whole.
- The small numbers of school pupils aged 14 to 16 who attend courses at the college perform well. Almost all of the pupils on courses leading to a qualification last year achieved successfully. All pupils in the larger cohort on non-certificated courses were successful in completing their studies at the college. Half of the pupils progressed to a vocational course at the college in 2013/14.
- The focus on progression to employment is strong and is reflected, for example, in the increasing number of students aged 16 to 18 who secured jobs at the end of their studies in 2012/13. Over 90% of young people leaving the college last year had a positive outcome in terms of their recorded destinations. Internal progression is satisfactory for students on level 2 courses, and good for those on level 1 courses and in subject areas such as health and social care and early years. Progression to higher education from level 3 courses is improving, but the proportion of full-time students progressing to apprenticeships is low.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teachers have high expectations of students and apprentices irrespective of their previous educational achievement or personal barriers to learning. They set demanding targets and learning activities for students and apprentices that challenge them to achieve high grades. Students' engagement with learning in most lessons is good. They display a readiness to learn and are motivated to succeed. Arrangements for the provision of pastoral care and support are

good. Students rightly comment on the accessibility and flexibility of teachers and support staff in dealing with their needs. The college's extensive and well-attended programme of enrichment activities promotes learning outside of the classroom, as well as health and well-being and employability. For example, students on a level 3 information technology course use their enrichment session each week to carry out repairs to laptop computers brought to them by members of staff and students.

- The promotion of learning outside the classroom is particularly good. The college's specialist ILT staff have produced a valuable and widely used learning and communication resource through its virtual learning environment (VLE). Students and apprentices are able to catch up on work they have missed, submit assignments, and download courses notes and activities. More recently, college staff have made very good progress in pioneering the use of an innovative application of 'augmented reality' software as well as social media, as tools for the promotion and extension of learning outside of the classroom.
- Teachers are well-qualified and highly skilled in the subjects they teach. They deploy their expertise and enthusiasm for their subject to plan exciting and challenging lessons that help to motivate students and apprentices well. Teachers pay good attention to students' individual needs in most lessons, recording clearly strategies for differentiating learning sessions on lesson plans and schemes of work. Learning support assistants provide effective and unobtrusive support during lessons for students identified as having specific difficulties with learning. Teachers develop their classroom practice further through the college's well-thought-out programme of developmental and formally graded lesson observations. The recently established 'learning communities', which consist of small groups of teachers working together with a learning coach to develop teaching and learning strategies, have contributed to developing the craft of teaching. However, though learning communities in a few curriculum areas are now well-established, they remain at a very early stage in others.
- Initial assessment arrangements are effective in ensuring that students and apprentices enrol on a programme of study that meets their needs and interests. Through a series of 'start' events throughout the year college staff encourage prospective students and their parents or carers to visit the college, speak to tutors and gain a clear idea about the requirements and challenges of the course they intend to study. Staff have particularly good links with local schools. These links enable college staff to visit pupils in Year 9 and Year 10 and help them make decisions about whether to study on one of the college's programmes. Staff responsible for support receive detailed information from school about prospective students' abilities, aptitudes and learning needs. Admissions staff use this information well to plan additional support where necessary.
- Teachers monitor the progress of students and apprentices well. Teachers use weekly tutorials effectively to monitor attendance, identify students at risk of not achieving and for setting personalised targets. They help students to devise their own learning targets and, as a consequence, students rightly report that they know what they have to do to achieve their target grades. Teachers make good use of electronic software to monitor and record students' attendance, progress, targets and learning needs. The recent appointment of a team of 20 progression specialists has been particularly helpful in improving retention in the current year, as well as in helping students to overcome the wide range of barriers to learning they have when they come to college.
- Teachers provide helpful and constructive feedback on students' written work. As a consequence, students know how to improve the quality of their work and what they have to do to achieve high grades. In a small minority of cases feedback is overly positive and does not provide students with a realistic assessment of the work they have submitted. Apprentices receive regular assessment in the workplace, but long delays between assessment visits result in a minority failing to make the progress expected of them. In a few instances, particularly in hairdressing and in health and social care, teachers do not always give sufficiently detailed or clear advice to students on how they can improve their work.
- The development of students' English and mathematics skills is good. Teachers skilfully weave functional skills into their lessons. Schemes of work and lesson plans incorporate activities and

tasks to develop skills in language and the use of number in everyday situations. Teachers reinforce the correct spelling and use of technical vocabulary. Most teachers provide constructive feedback on students' spelling, punctuation and grammar, which helps them to improve the presentation and accuracy of assignment work.

- The college's student services team provides effective and timely support for students identified as requiring additional or specialist help to enable them to achieve. Information, advice and guidance are effective in ensuring that admissions staff place students and apprentices onto a course that meets their needs and interests. The college's higher-education coordinator provides comprehensive guidance to students considering applying to university. The college has recently established a 'Job Shop', which students and apprentices use to identify opportunities for employment.
- Teachers create an inclusive and positive learning environment and, in most subject areas, particularly engineering and performing arts, they promote equality and diversity very well during lessons. Lesson plans and schemes of work pay careful attention to opportunities for the integration of equalities topics. Students treat each other with respect and courtesy during lessons.

Health, social care and early years

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in health, social care and early years are good. Success rates on health and social care courses have been high for the last three years. In contrast, they have been low on early years programmes over the same period of time. However, closer monitoring of students' work and more rigorous target-setting are ensuring that students are on track to succeed this year. Retention is now high on almost all courses.
- Students, many of whom have low prior attainment when they enrol at college, make good progress in lessons. Many are successful in progressing to higher-level courses. The majority of current students on level 3 health and social care courses have achieved high grades and many of them now plan to progress to higher education to study nursing or teaching. Most students on early years courses gain employment in the sector.
- Students on level 2 and level 3 courses value highly the opportunities they have to gain industry-related experience through work placements. They take advantage of additional opportunities to volunteer in work settings and charity shops through the college's good programme of enrichment activities. As a result students develop excellent communication skills, the confidence to reflect on their practice, and the ability to both study independently and to collaborate together to solve problems and to carry out research.
- Teachers are well-qualified and experienced. They plan thought-provoking and interesting lessons which stimulate students' creative skills. Teachers encourage students to reflect carefully on, and learn from, their work placements, to gain a better understanding of the topics they are studying in lessons and to continually develop their professional practice.
- Students benefit from very good resources, which enhance their learning very effectively. For example, in a very good lesson observed during inspection on shaken baby syndrome, the teacher encouraged students to explain the functions of different areas of children's brains through the use of specialist dolls. Students were able to see how, once shaken, the Perspex skulls of the dolls showed bleeding whilst the sound of their cries also changed. The teacher sensitively encouraged the students to consider the long-term effects of such actions and to consider objectively the reasons why parents and/or carers might act in this way.
- Students enjoy their studies and their time at college. They use technical language and specialist terms fluently. The majority of students on level 1 and level 2 courses produce very high standards of work. However, teachers do not sufficiently challenge the more able students on

level 3 programmes to achieve their full potential. Students on all courses receive good support to develop the skills required for independent academic study and for higher education.

- The assessment of students' work is satisfactory. Teachers use effective techniques in lessons to help students recap on their learning. Students enjoy and benefit from assessment activities, such as mini quizzes, word searches and checking each other's work. However, the correction of spelling and grammatical errors in students' marked work is not always sufficiently thorough. In these instances, teachers do not correct factual inaccuracies in assignments and do not give students sufficiently detailed feedback to ensure they can achieve their full potential.
- Teachers make very good use of ILT to promote learning both in lessons and outside the classroom. They encourage students to work independently using computer tablets, laptops and smartphones. Students benefit from the college's 'augmented reality' technology whereby they can enhance their learning, for example, through viewing newspaper articles on age discrimination in health care, and video clips demonstrating a child's view from a pushchair of a busy high street. Students develop their confidence in the use of interactive technology, which is increasingly in demand in the health and early years sectors.
- Teachers develop students' English and mathematics skills well in lessons. Students benefit from being able to study for GCSEs in these subjects alongside their main vocational programme, thereby meeting industry requirements, particularly in early years and nursing. They have a good understanding of the importance of these subjects to their future progression and careers.
- Advice, guidance and support for students are very good. The provision of accurate and informative guidance when students first start at the college ensures they enrol on the right course to meet their individual needs. This contributes to the very high retention rates on all courses. Students meet with teachers regularly to discuss their specific needs, negotiate personal targets and monitor their progress.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is satisfactory. Students respect each other and their teachers and value the contributions of their peers. The good learning resources, such as text books, wall displays and specialist dolls, enhance students' appreciation of diversity. Students on level 1 courses benefit from the presence of a working dog in a number of lessons, enabling them to develop a good understanding of the role of trained animals in supporting people with disabilities.

Engineering and motor vehicle

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes
Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in engineering and motor vehicle are good. Although success rates have been low in the past, particularly on motor vehicle courses, in-year retention is very high and students are making good progress this year. Since the last inspection, the new curriculum manager has taken a number of appropriate and very timely actions to improve the standard of the provision and to rectify previous inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Quality improvement activities, such as lesson observations, are very thorough and provide targeted support and development activities for those teachers whose classroom practice requires improvement.
- Teachers make good use of their extensive knowledge and experience to enthuse, motivate and challenge students. They have high expectations of what students can achieve, resulting in high standards of work and the development of good practical skills. In the best lessons, teachers design very effective introductory activities for the topic being taught, often using engineering components and assemblies skilfully to relate theory to industry practice and to introduce complex ideas in a way which students can easily understand.

- Teachers make very good use of ILT in lessons. For example, inspectors observed a teacher using ILT very effectively to provide an animated demonstration of the analogy between the flow of water and electricity through a circuit and how it supplies power to charge a vehicle battery. Students at the college and apprentices in the workplace use the college's VLE frequently to look at the high-quality, course-related materials.
- Focused individual coaching and support in practical lessons enable students to make good progress and to understand what they need to do to improve their skills. Teaching skilfully builds on students' prior knowledge so that students become very adept at combining their skills and knowledge to work quickly and independently on tasks in workshops. However, teachers do not always meet the needs of all students appropriately. In a minority of lessons, the assessment of students' knowledge and understanding is not sufficiently comprehensive. The poor use of non-directed questioning often leads to more-confident students dominating the lesson to the detriment of their quieter peers. It also prevents the teacher from being fully aware of the progress of all students in the lesson and slows the progress of the less-able ones.
- In a small number of lessons, students occasionally struggle to relate their theory learning to practice. The use of challenging questions clearly identifies those students who are making slow progress in understanding important engineering concepts. For example, when asked to suggest modifications to an engineering product to overcome a clearly defined disability, students were able to offer a range of perceptive solutions to the problem. However, when questioned further, a number of the students were unable to recall a simple mathematical formula to prove the effectiveness of their suggested modifications.
- A wide range of good enrichment activities supports the development of students' personal and employability skills. These include entries into international competitions and overseas trips to gain work experience with employers in unfamiliar environments and on different types of cars. Weekly enrichment activities enable motor vehicle students to hone their skills in a realistic working environment through diagnosing and repairing faults on vehicles belonging to both staff and students.
- Training for apprentices in the college's engineering workshops is good. Students learn very effectively from their peers, particularly when the older and more able students and apprentices support those who are less experienced. Safe working practices are very evident in all workshops and on employers' premises. The standard of workshops and engineering resources is good.
- Initial assessment is thorough and includes additional diagnostic testing to check students' mechanical aptitude prior to them enrolling on courses. Teachers use this information to compile detailed group profiles, which clearly identify each individual student's strengths and barriers to learning. However, the use of these profiles is variable. Where teachers use them well, students benefit from good support, often from specialist staff who help them to make good progress. Work-based learning staff involve employers fully in apprentices' progress reviews. Assessors provide good verbal feedback to apprentices during assessments of their skills at work and keep employers fully up-to-date on the progress their employees are making at college.
- Assessment of students' written work is thorough. Assessors provide apprentices with detailed written feedback on the quality of their work and useful comments on how they can improve it further. The accurate correction of spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes is helpful for all students. Teachers' verbal feedback during lessons is detailed and thorough. However, assessment activities lack sufficient planning and structure for a few apprentices. Consequently, they are unclear about the targets they need to achieve in order to maintain the level of progress.
- Teachers' integration of English and mathematics into the engineering curriculum is highly effective. Teachers continually reinforce students' good use of the correct spelling of technical words and phrases. Students use complex formulae well in most lessons to develop their understanding of engineering theory. They receive good encouragement from teachers to use the VLE to support their learning and to develop their English and mathematics skills further.

- Induction activities for students are thorough and helpful and provide prospective students with a wide range of information on engineering courses. Staff organise introductory courses in the first six weeks of the new academic year, which allow students the option to transfer from one programme to another if they choose.
- Students at the college and apprentices in the workplace are able to articulate a good understanding of equality and diversity during both tutorials and progress reviews. During a tutorial, inspectors observed a teacher skilfully guiding students to talk frankly and openly about different types of discrimination. Teachers use naturally occurring opportunities in lessons well to introduce and discuss relevant aspects of equality and diversity with students.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, and this is reflected in the consistently high success rates in both subject areas. A number of aspects of the provision are outstanding. Students enjoy coming to college and are highly satisfied with the quality of the teaching they receive. They are very committed to both the college and their teachers, with whom they form excellent relationships. However, in contrast to almost all other parts of the curriculum across the college, retention has declined during 2013/14, partly due to a number of students successfully gaining full-time employment before finishing their studies.
- Teachers have high expectations of students and set high standards in practical lessons, which reflect industry standards and practices. As a result students develop excellent employability skills. However, the personal presentation of a very small minority of students in beauty therapy and complementary therapies does not meet industry expectations.
- Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities, including regular visits by external manufacturers of hairdressing and beauty products and demonstrations of new treatments. They take part in many cross-college events for the local community alongside students from other subject areas, which develop their entrepreneurship skills, teamwork and self-confidence. Students participate in work placements through which they often gain part- or full-time employment.
- The well-qualified and highly experienced staff plan lessons very effectively to stimulate students' interest and to encourage them to explore their own creative skills. Students work well individually and in groups, challenging each other to improve and to develop the confidence to practise their skills, particularly when working on clients for the first time. Teachers pay particularly careful attention to planning and explaining complex activities, such as creative colouring of hair, through the use of the correct products and techniques. Students on the level 2 nail art course achieve a high standard of finish when applying acrylic nails to clients. Their peers on hairdressing and facial make-up courses demonstrate good artistic skills in competition work.
- In the best lessons, students set the pace of their own learning and devise their own incremental development targets. They benefit from good peer assessment and critiques which help them to plan their forthcoming work. They use ILT well, including the college's 'augmented reality' technology, to access video coaching and to take photographs of their work as evidence for their portfolios. In a few instances teachers lack the necessary skills to stretch and challenge students' knowledge and understanding through targeted and extended questioning.
- The monitoring and recording of students' progress is thorough. Teachers know their students well and prepare detailed group and individual student profiles, which help them to plan lessons very effectively. Assessment is rigorous and fair. The feedback received by students for their written work on beauty and complementary therapy courses is constructive and developmental. Teachers are assiduous in correcting spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. However, a

small minority of comments on client consultation sheets are too brief and do not provide students with clear guidance on what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. The lack of sufficient clients in a few practical lessons hinders students' ability to practise their skills and to gather evidence for assessment.

- Teachers integrate the teaching of mathematics and English well with hairdressing and beauty therapy lessons. They are particularly good at prompting students to solve short mathematical problems at the start of lessons, for example, by asking them to calculate the cost of particular treatments. Students often receive fractional marks for their assessed work which teachers then encourage them to add up to calculate an overall mark. Teachers encourage students to use dictionaries in most lessons to confirm the spelling and explanation of complex words. Students develop very good interpersonal and communication skills in lessons through delivering regular presentations to their peers.
- Initial advice and guidance for students are good. Students value the helpful pre-course guidance and information they receive, which assists them in preparing for their studies. Teachers gather a wide range of evidence and information about students at the recruitment stage, which they then use very well to identify individual skills and characteristics.
- Students appreciate the regular support they receive from teachers and all staff in the college, which helps them with personal and work-related issues. They value the opportunity to attend additional lessons to catch up on any work they have missed. Teachers provide students with in-depth, realistic advice regarding their potential for a career in the hairdressing and beauty therapy industry.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good. Teachers plan topics carefully to include references to different cultures and to broaden students' awareness of the different types of clients. They use realistic scenarios in lessons to enable students to discuss how they would deal with sensitive situations.

Performing arts, media and communication

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in performing arts, media and communication are good. Although success rates have been low on most courses over the past three years, the recent appointment of a new curriculum manager and a strong focus on supporting the development of teachers' skills has resulted in significant improvements in the provision this year. College data show in-year retention is high and the college is confident in its predictions of much improved success rates at the end of 2013/14. At the time of the inspection it was too early to judge the impact on the quality of the provision of some aspects of recent course re-organisations.
- Students benefit greatly from teachers who have worked in the creative industries and who are well-qualified. Teachers display excellent subject knowledge in lessons and are very adept at encouraging students to develop their skills to a professional standard. They have high expectations of students.
- In the best lessons, teachers focus very clearly on students setting and achieving targets within very precise timescales. This ensures students work at a realistic pace in an atmosphere that reflects the standards and timeliness required of them in industry. Teachers are mindful of allowing students the space to experiment in order to explore their strengths and areas for development. Students relish answering questions and being able to discuss their work with their peers. This results in a creative and vibrant learning environment in lessons. Teachers integrate the use of ILT very well with their teaching.
- Teachers are very adept at ensuring students meet rigorous industry expectations, both in their standards of dress and their performances. For example, students in musical theatre lessons wear appropriate clothing and footwear, have their hair tied back off their faces and remove any

jewellery. Standards of choreographic work produced by students in rehearsals are good and reflect their acknowledgement and understanding of the requirements of the profession.

- In a small minority of lessons, poor attendance and punctuality have an adverse effect on projects where students are learning collaboratively. The sharing of best practice is under-developed and, whilst most lessons are good or better, this results in quite wide variations in the standards of teaching and learning across the two subject areas. In a few instances, teachers devote too much time to the completion of basic tasks by students, which restricts their progress. Strategies to involve all students in these lessons and to ensure they learn from their participation in classroom discussions and question and answer sessions are ineffective.
- Students benefit considerably from the opportunity to perform in professional venues. They gain experience of working to tight timescales and within cost restrictions whilst dealing with the expectations of a live audience. Performances are diverse with one group, for example, performing *'The Little Shop of Horrors'* with considerable verve and panache whilst another company of students presented *'Twelfth Night'*. Music technology students gain valuable employability and personal skills through performing a series of live concerts in local venues.
- The standard of assessment is good. It is thorough, helpful and supportive in contributing to the good progress made by students. Teachers match their judgements about the standard of assessed work to assessment criteria. Consequently, students know exactly what they have to do to improve their work further. Teachers and students alike make good use of peer assessment, especially during rehearsals on stage. Teachers of media have developed a number of innovative and successful assessment strategies. However, the level of detail in teachers' feedback is not always consistently good across the whole of the curriculum area.
- Teachers focus strongly on the good development of students' mathematics skills in lessons. Students are very aware of its relevance to their learning and future careers. For example, in budgeting for a forthcoming production, performing arts students had to calculate how many tickets, including concessionary ones, they had to sell to 'break even' and to cover the costs of the venture. Teachers diligently correct students' poor spelling and grammatical errors, but occasionally are less careful themselves in ensuring the same standards when they prepare their own presentations and written assignments for students.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance for students requires improvement. A number of students have withdrawn from one course in particular because it was not what they expected. Similarly, a few existing students are disappointed that their prior expectations of their course do not always match their experiences. However, most students appreciate the good support they receive from teachers who know their students well. They receive very good guidance about their options for progression to higher education and to careers in the creative industries.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good. Students respect each other's views and work well together. Teachers clearly recognise the differing abilities and needs of their students in the planning and delivery of lessons. Whenever possible, they take the opportunity to discuss cultural issues within the arts and the impact of gender stereotyping on people's perceptions of the performing arts and media industries. Female teachers who are extremely adept at teaching large, all-male student groups, act as important role models in areas of the industry traditionally dominated by men.

Business

16-19 study programmes 16-19 study programmes

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good across all business courses, including business management, administration, accounting and trade union studies. This reflects the much improved and now mostly good success rates, although quite wide variations exist in the performance of individual courses. Whilst success rates were high on courses in trade union studies and on level 2 accounting and level 3 business programmes in 2012/13, students

achieved less well on level 3 accounting and business administration courses and on level 2 business programmes. Students from different age groups, and male and female students achieve equally well. A strong focus on improving the standards of teaching and learning has had a positive effect on students' experiences in the classroom and on their outcomes. The majority of students progress to relevant employment in the many small and medium-sized businesses across the region.

- Students develop very good business skills and knowledge. They receive strong encouragement from teachers who have high expectations and who insist they work to professional standards commensurate with industry practice. This was demonstrated recently through the exceptional achievement by the college's business students in the region's 'Young Enterprise competition'. Students in administration demonstrate confidently complex document formatting techniques to their peers. Teachers set students targets of 100% and challenge them to reduce errors in each piece of completed work.
- Students benefit from a wide range of visiting guest speakers and external trips to a variety of locations to learn how businesses of different types operate. They participate in a considerable number of enrichment activities across the college designed to develop their enterprise and entrepreneurial skills, for example, seminars led by prestigious local employers. These events help to stimulate students' interest in particular aspects of running a business, such as how to start up a new company. Specialist competitions such as 'Global Entrepreneur' week and other business-related events provide valuable experience for students to apply their learning to real-life contexts and develop their team-working skills and self-confidence.
- Teachers plan the majority of lessons well, combining confident delivery of the subject matter with teaching techniques and learning strategies, which enthuse students and ensure they take part in, and contribute fully to, classroom activities. Teachers are well-qualified and use their relevant industry and professional experience very effectively to link their explanations of theory to workplace practices and protocols. They make good use of peer learning and assessment to share ideas.
- Students produce good standards of work and enjoy their lessons. They value highly the activities teachers plan for them. In an outstanding lesson observed during the inspection, students particularly enjoyed the team relay activity. The teacher challenged students to remember as many terms and definitions from a previous topic and then asked the students to explain them to their peers in a meaningful context.
- Social media are used well to promote social and business networking and are an important learning and communications resource for students on business courses. Teachers encourage students to use social media professionally and responsibly, reminding them constantly to follow the college's guidelines on digital safety. Teachers also use social media to remind students of deadlines for the submission of their work. Students make good use of the VLE for revision purposes to practise for examinations and to catch up on any work they have missed.
- Teachers and the college's staff who support students in what they will do after their current course, provide good support on the employability and enterprise course. They help students to identify personal achievements and set challenging targets to improve employability skills such as their time management and punctuality.
- Teachers take great care to provide students with constructive individual feedback on their written assignments so that they know how they can improve their grades in future. Students also receive regular encouraging feedback on their performance in lessons, which motivates them to work hard and participate fully. They value the increased levels of confidence and the feeling of being well prepared; a result of completing practice examination papers. Teachers encourage students to assess each other's work to encourage independent learning skills. Whilst teachers routinely identify spelling and grammar mistakes in assignments, they do not always provide sufficient guidance on the correct words and phrases to use.
- Students develop good English and mathematics skills in lessons through activities such as proofreading and the regular checking of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Teachers encourage students to use an online thesaurus during tutorials to extend their vocabulary and

improve their writing skills. Accountancy students carry out complex financial calculations. Students on business management courses carry out business planning and financial forecasting for external companies, and when entering competitions. Teachers in all lessons encourage students to use specialist business terminology.

- Teachers provide students with regular information and guidance on course options and levels. They prepare students well for employment and progression to higher-level courses. Students appreciate the support they receive to resolve personal issues which prevent them from participating fully in learning. Where appropriate, individual students receive additional support from teachers to help them succeed.
- Teachers promote a culture of mutual respect and support in lessons and challenge any instances of inappropriate comments immediately. Students discuss topical issues in lessons, such as gender equality and pay differentials, as well as the importance of ethical working practices for businesses and the impact they have on their local communities. Students understand how an appreciation of diversity in relation to business ethics and morals is essential for most companies when hoping to secure and retain contracts. Learning resources reflect diversity and challenge stereotypes appropriately.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. The Principal, senior managers and governors have a clear and well-reasoned strategic plan, focusing clearly on the needs of students and the local community. Their drive and enthusiasm has led to steady improvements since the last inspection with a strong capacity for future developments. Prompt and sound actions to address the vast majority of key areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been largely successful. The re-structuring of the senior management team following the last inspection has led to clear roles and responsibilities, greater accountability and good communication with staff. The college manages its sub-contracted provision well.
- Particularly strong partnership working ensures that the college achieves its strategic objectives. The Principal's involvement on the local business board has helped to ensure the needs of local employers and the community are clearly met. A strong and productive partnership with a regional organisation promoting local foods and produce has created excellent training opportunities through a newly established college shop and the college training restaurant.
- Governance is strong. Governors are very knowledgeable about the college, its performance and strengths and areas for improvement. They participate actively in college life and the many events that take place on college premises. They support curriculum areas well through their attendance, for example, at celebration events. They possess a good range of experience and knowledge, which they use effectively to monitor the academic performance of the college, provide appropriate challenge and identify key performance targets for the Principal and senior managers.
- Performance management is rigorous. Significantly improved and more sophisticated processes to judge teachers' performance have been instrumental in developing the confidence of senior managers to tackle poor performance and to provide directed support for staff. The vast majority of staff feel valued and have a clear and shared understanding of the importance and need to perform well for their students and apprentices.
- The college has taken suitable action in areas of underperformance through the provision of intensive support and challenge. Clear performance targets are set for all courses and progress checked through rigorous and regular programme reviews. 'Mini' inspections are completed which focus on monitoring quality improvement plans, progress, teaching and learning and student views. Where courses have been issued with a 'notice to improve', actions taken have generally led to swift improvements. The appointment of new curriculum managers in several areas has also contributed to improvements to teaching, learning and assessment.

- There has been a relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Processes to monitor, judge and improve the quality of teaching and learning are successful with good teaching now evident across many areas, and particularly good development and use made of ILT. The successful formative and summative internal lesson observation process is designed to bring about uniformity and dissemination of good practice. Advanced learning coaches support teachers well, and the recent introduction of learning communities has provided teachers with a supportive forum to further improve the variety and quality of their work.
- Managers and governors use 'learning walks' effectively to help them to identify good practice and judge performance. Outcomes of observations are used appropriately to inform staff appraisals, leading to suitable target-setting and continuous professional development.
- The ambitious new building and refurbishment projects, which are under way, aim to improve the campus and provide modern facilities offering enterprising opportunities for students.
- Quality improvement arrangements are good and self-assessment is a largely inclusive and accurate process. The college clearly identified most of the key strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors, although a minority of practices identified as strengths in the most recent self-assessment report are normal practice. Some aspects of provision are given insufficient attention in the report, for example, judgements about the apprenticeship programme and the quality of work carried out by subcontractors. However, quality improvement planning is generally effective. After a period of many years the college has made considerable improvements in the overall quality of its provision.
- Curriculum planning is good. Local data and management information are used to ensure that suitable progression routes are available in all curriculum areas. The good links established with schools and parents, along with the effective use made of innovative augmented reality technology in marketing materials, such as the college prospectus, ensure students' experience a well-planned transition to the college.
- Managers have adapted provision well to the requirements of the new study programmes. Students have sufficient opportunities to gain work experience with provision to extend this further through the college 'agency'. Senior leaders and managers place a strong emphasis on promoting GCSEs in English and mathematics for all students who would benefit from retaking these subjects and improving their grades. Although teaching of English and mathematics is good in vocational lessons, this has not yet resulted in improving outcomes in GCSE results.
- The management of equality and diversity is good. Managers analyse equality and diversity data well and take appropriate action to tackle under-performance. Incidences of bullying or harassment are low.
- The college listens carefully and responds well to students' views. Students are represented on a range of fora including the governing body. They value the safe and supportive environment at the college. The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students. Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough. Staff pay close attention to ensuring that students are aware of how to stay safe online.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology**

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Early years and playwork	2
Engineering	2
Motor vehicle	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Performing arts	2
Media and communication	2
Business	2

Type of provider	General further education college								
Age range of learners	14+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	10,618								
Principal/CEO	Steve Wain								
Date of previous inspection	November 2011								
Website address	www.shrewsbury.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+	
	178	271	368	1,652	740	343	4	12	
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+		
	155	132	99	189	N/A		7		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total				
	N/A		N/A		N/A				
Number of learners aged 14-16	33								
Full-time	N/A								
Part-time	33								
Number of community learners	386								
Number of employability learners	N/A								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspire To Learn Ltd J & D Training Solutions Ltd Nova Recruitment Services Ltd Plato Training (UK) Ltd QSP Ltd SR Education Ltd Security and Facilities Education Ltd Tribal Education Ltd 								

Contextual information

Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology is a medium-sized general further education college which serves the town of Shrewsbury, much of north Shropshire, parts of the south of the county and Telford. The college has two main campuses in Shrewsbury and a construction centre in Telford. It recruits students from diverse parts of the county that includes areas of relative prosperity as well as wards where the local community faces challenging personal and economic circumstances. Most businesses in the local area are small and medium-sized, with most jobs being in skilled trades, care, leisure, public administration, health, education and retail. The unemployment rate in 2013 was below both the national rate and the rate for the West Midlands region. Just over half of the residents of working age are qualified to NVQ level 3 or above. The number of pupils at schools in the county attaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is just below the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Richard Moore HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and nine additional inspectors, assisted by the assistant principal for quality and curriculum support 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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