

Stafford College

General further education college

Inspection dates		06 – 10 October 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This college requires improvement because:

- the proportion of students who improve their performance in English and mathematics and achieve their literacy and numeracy qualifications is too low
- teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good across all subject areas
- too few students aspire to and achieve high grades
- too few students currently have work experience as part of their study programme
- the promotion of equality and diversity in teaching, learning and assessment and with apprentices in reviews requires improvement
- the improvements managers and leaders have introduced since the previous inspection have not had sufficient impact on the quality of provision.

This college has the following strengths:

- over the past three years the proportion of students completing their college-based courses and achieving their qualifications has increased and is good for those aged 16 to 18
- recently introduced measures are well conceived and are starting to bring about improvement across the college
- outstanding provision in performing arts
- the well-planned curriculum is responsive to the needs of local and national employers and the regional priorities of the local enterprise partnership (LEP).

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students who achieve their qualification in English and mathematics, by ensuring they are all allocated more quickly to classes in these subjects appropriate to their requirements.
- Raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment so that more students achieve high grades and make progress according to their potential by ensuring that:
 - all teachers plan and provide lessons that meet the individual needs of students
 - teachers develop further students' English and mathematical skills
 - teachers increase the use of information learning technology to extend and support students' progress outside the classroom.
- To improve students' performance, teachers should provide clear and constructive oral and written feedback, and should monitor and track accurately students' progress using the recently introduced electronic tracking system.
- Ensure that managers monitor rigorously all improvement actions for teachers resulting from the observations of teaching, learning and assessment, so that all teachers complete them within the agreed timescales.
- Ensure staff development supports teachers and assessors to integrate equality and diversity themes into their teaching and assessment, so that students' understanding is reinforced and enhanced.
- Improve safeguarding policies and practices by:
 - collecting and analysing data on students reporting incidents
 - developing further the relationships with police, the local safeguarding children's board and the local authority to support the transition of looked-after children and students with high levels of needs into college
 - ensuring all information on these topics on the college website is current.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- The very large majority of students are on full-time study programmes. Around two thirds of students are studying vocational courses at level 3 as the main component of their study programmes. The majority of the remaining students are on study programmes at level 2 and a small minority on study programmes at level 1. The college has a small number of students on apprenticeship programmes, mostly at intermediate level.
- Over the past three years, the proportion of students completing their college-based courses and achieving their qualifications has increased, and it is good for those aged 16 to 18. A high number of students stay on programme in the majority of curriculum areas and in particular in performing arts and information communications technology (ICT). However, adult students do not achieve as well as those aged 16 to 18, with the exception of those adults on courses at level 3, who achieve well.
- The overall proportion of apprentices achieving their qualification is high. However, it is low for apprentices in health and social care. This is due to slow progress with the completion of their English and mathematics qualifications, although this is now improving. The achievement of advanced apprenticeship qualifications has declined across all age groups, particularly for apprentices aged over 25, but it remains good.

- Students make good progress in health and social care, performing arts and ICT. Effective progression routes, for example in ICT, assist students well to progress to higher levels of study. The large majority of students have a positive destination, with a large proportion into further study, including the second year of their courses. However, progression into apprenticeships from study programmes is very low.
- Too few students as part of their study programmes achieve and improve their English and mathematics qualifications during their time at college. Achievements on functional skills English and mathematics are low. Those who do achieve their GCSE do not reach high grades. Initial assessment identifies starting points accurately, but the allocation of English and mathematics lessons, while planned, including 'booster' sessions, is too slow.
- The provision of appropriate work-related activity, including external work experience on a small minority of study programmes is still to be introduced. Managers and staff have plans in place to meet this requirement, but they have lacked urgency in ensuring all students are fully aware of the opportunities planned for them. Students in health and social care and childcare use opportunities for work experience well as part of their study programmes.
- The standard of students' work is too variable. In performing arts, students have well-developed performance skills and they take every opportunity to practise and improve these skills using the college's good resources. A minority of construction and engineering students demonstrate outstanding practical skills, including one brickwork student who won a national competition. However, in other areas, such as accounting and finance, students do not extend their understanding of their subject outside the immediate requirements of the qualification.
- A minority of students have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications to improve their employment prospects. For example, in motor vehicle, students gain additional welding qualifications related to their chosen career aims; in health and social care, students gain additional industry-relevant qualifications. Attendance at the time of inspection, early in the academic year, was just below the expectations and targets set by college managers and too variable across the subject areas.
- No marked achievement gaps exist between different groups of students on study programmes. Managers and staff have made very effective progress towards reducing gaps in achievement. Those students who need extra help with their studies or have learning disabilities and/or difficulties receive good support and achieve as well as their peers.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although the provision in three of the subject areas in this report was good, and was outstanding in one other, too much teaching, learning and assessment across the college, affecting very substantial numbers of learners, require improvement. This reflects outcomes for learners, which require improvement. The majority of students successfully achieve their qualifications and make appropriate progress, but the proportion achieving high grades in the majority of curriculum areas requires improvement.
- The rigorous assessment of students' and apprentices' starting points completed prior to or at the start of their course results in those students and apprentices who need extra help receiving good support quickly.
- The development of English and mathematics, a key weakness at the previous inspection, still requires improvement across the large majority of curriculum areas. A small minority of students have not yet joined English and/or mathematics classes due to the analysis of diagnostic assessment results and their allocation to classes being too slow. This has resulted in a very small minority of students being unprepared to sit forthcoming controlled assessments for GCSE English. Additional classes to accelerate learning in GCSE English and mathematics for students, though planned, have not started.

- Teachers are mostly confident in helping students develop their spoken English skills in classes, particularly in beauty therapy, hospitality and catering, health and social care and science. Students develop increasing knowledge and confidence in using technical vocabulary and terms such as 'occipital' and 'appendicular' in anatomy and physiology. However, teachers do not regularly correct errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar in students' work, including that produced in class. The routine development of mathematical skills in vocational lessons requires improvement in many curriculum areas.
- Most apprentices clearly understand the need to develop skills in English and mathematics and are keen to extend their learning. The approach to the provision of functional skills in the workplace is very flexible to learners' work patterns. However, the provision of mathematics functional skills is over-reliant on the completion of workbooks, which are not relevant to the workplace, resulting in apprentices not being able to apply their learning in the context of their job roles.
- Most teachers carefully plan a range of challenging, innovative and stimulating activities which motivate students to learn. Highly qualified and experienced teachers, many with recent industry experience, use their skills and experiences well to develop students' understanding of topics and themes and support their personal, technical and employability skills. For example, in hospitality and catering lessons, students skilfully and successfully prepare and cook dishes sold in the college bistro; students in beauty therapy, practise massage and facial techniques as they prepare to work with clients.
- Assessors across all apprenticeship provision use their vocational and professional backgrounds well to develop apprentices' vocational skills. Assessors are well qualified and their high levels of professional conduct and behaviour provide very effective role models for apprentices. The majority of staff plan learning activities and assessments well. Good planning results in lively and interesting learning sessions where apprentices clearly make progress and are motivated to undertake tasks often beyond those required for their qualifications.
- Where teaching and learning are least successful, teachers' expectations are too low, which results in insufficiently challenging activities to develop students' learning. Teachers do not consider sufficiently the individual needs of all students; work at an inappropriately low level for the course requirements occasionally slows students' progress. In these lessons, for example in business management, all students complete the same activities regardless of their abilities and teachers do not adequately check their understanding of topics and themes.
- Teachers in subjects such as beauty therapy, sport, performing arts and ICT use information and learning technology well to develop and extend learning in and outside of the classroom. However, in subject areas such as business studies and mathematics teachers provide electronic versions of resources from teaching sessions, but these do little to extend learning or support progress outside of the classroom.
- The monitoring and tracking of students' progress require improvement. The use of a recently introduced electronic monitoring and tracking system is not sufficiently effective and in a minority of areas it is poor. Too many teachers and students are not skilled in using the system, and too many students do not have their information or targets recorded sufficiently.
- Apprentices currently using an electronic portfolio system of monitoring and tracking progress fully understand the progress they are making and appreciate on-line feedback from assessors. This enables them to stay on track and complete assessment tasks quickly and successfully. However, in a very few cases learning reviews with apprentices do not identify sufficiently clear learning goals.
- Assessment of students' work and progress requires improvement and the extent to which it is effective in promoting learning and progress is too variable. The most effective assessment includes teachers' regular assessment of students' progress. They accurately identify the progress students are making and provide detailed and constructive feedback on how they can improve their work. Teachers, particularly in performing arts, health and social care and ICT, regularly set students challenging and specific targets to improve their work. In too many subjects such as science, mathematics and business studies, feedback is insufficiently detailed

and too generic; it does not respond to individual students' needs. In a few cases, feedback from teachers includes spelling and grammatical errors.

- Students receive appropriate information, advice and guidance. Managers and staff work closely with schools and the community to advise and inform prospective students of college courses. Although students receive information on progression to university, they do not receive this information early enough in their courses, limiting choices and aspirations. Students do not receive sufficient information about apprenticeships. Recent interventions to resolve these issues have not had sufficient impact.
- Teachers and students work well together and they have developed a caring and respectful college community. Teachers raise students' awareness of equality and diversity well through college campaigns and initiatives such as Black History Month. However, the promotion and development of equality and diversity in classes require improvement. The approach taken during apprenticeship reviews to equality and diversity is superficial and adds little to apprentices' understanding.

Health and Social Care

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which leads to students making good progress in completing their study programmes. Good information, advice and guidance help students in selecting the most suitable work placement which is an integral part of their studies. Students make very good progress into higher studies at the college. The vast majority of students' attendance and punctuality are good. Students develop high-level communication skills, are confident, motivated, enjoy learning and acquire good employability skills used well during work experience placements.
- Students receive consistently high levels of care, guidance and support in lessons which help them make good progress. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They use their skills effectively in lessons to engage the vast majority of students. Male teachers act as good role models for male students coming into health and social care. Students select appropriate subjects within their study programmes such as science and health studies. They take additional short occupational qualifications to improve their occupational knowledge and employability skills.
- Well-planned learning activities inspire students effectively, linking theory to practice well and developing higher-order thinking skills. For example, students on courses at level 3 enjoyed viewing a video clip on the longevity of South African mole rats, which is better than all rodents due to their unique deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) replication. As a result, students concentrated on the subject intently and efficiently solved questions on sequencing to improve their understanding of DNA structures.
- Students on courses at level 3 produce good written work. Students on courses at level 2 demonstrate very good analytical skills when using case studies. They are confident in presenting their approach to the rationale for their work and findings. For example, they used good analytical skills to think about when is the best time in service users' care planning to include therapeutic activities to help overcome individual stress disorders.
- Effective use of resources and ILT in the majority of lessons enables a swift pace of learning and progress to help students work independently and analyse information critically. For example, students use digital handheld electronic devices to help them answer challenging questions and to check the spelling of complex technical terms. This helps improve their English.

- In a small minority of lessons, progress is slow due to teachers not always successfully establishing learning aims or providing learning activities that engage and stretch all students. They do not always spend sufficient time consolidating key points and reinforcing understanding and knowledge.
- Teachers accurately identify students' starting points to plan effective individual learning goals. Students set their own targets for working towards assignment submission dates, which extends their ability to take ownership of progress and develops skills in working to deadlines.
- Assessment of learning during lessons is effective in helping students make good progress. Teachers support students well to complete assignments and to work towards higher grades. However, the marking of students' work is not of a consistently high standard. Teachers' written feedback is not always sufficiently evaluative to help students understand what they need to do to improve.
- Students do not routinely access or use their individual learning plans to check and review their progress and achievement. This is currently affecting students on courses at level 3 to accurately review and check their learning targets and career goals during their second year of study.
- Students' English is good. Their written work on courses at level 3 is of a very high standard. They receive good support from their teachers to help them improve their understanding and to spell accurately very complex medical and scientific terms. Where students require support to develop their mathematics skills further, managers and teachers provide additional lessons which are successful in helping them to improve their use of functional mathematics.
- Students have a good understanding of different cultures and diversity. They use their knowledge well to decide how best to meet the needs of service users in care and respect their rights. They understand clearly statutory requirements and procedures for protecting vulnerable people and they know how to apply safeguarding legislation effectively to care practice.

ICT for practitioners and users

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The curriculum content changes and the newly created courses and study programmes are enabling good development of students' knowledge. This is contributing extensively to the vast majority of students staying on programme and achieving their qualifications.
- Teachers use good ICT knowledge and extensive computing skills well to develop students' programming abilities and to motivate their engagement in learning. Teachers are enthusiastic; they challenge and extend successfully students' knowledge and skills in computing concepts and programming techniques. Students develop very good industry-standard skills. For example, the use of statements in spreadsheets, understanding the concepts that support programming statements and developing the creative skills to develop computer commands. In these lessons, verbal feedback is extensive, very useful and supports students' learning.
- Where teaching and learning are less effective, teachers do not structure and manage learning well enough, so that group work is insufficiently productive and students do not face enough challenge to encourage them to take responsibility for their own studies. As a result, a few students lose interest and progress is slow.
- In a very small minority of lessons, teachers rely too much on additional tasks of the same level of work to deal with students' differing abilities rather than varying the complexity of tasks to enable students to achieve the best that they can. For example, in one lesson, students with a

GCSE background struggled with programming which was too complex for them to complete their tasks in comparison to those with a vocational background.

- Students benefit from well-resourced ICT workspaces, such as the information technology lounge, which provides them with a positive and creative learning experience. For example, students on courses at level 2 made good use of internet research to talk knowledgeably about Alan Turing's contribution to computing development and the recent media interest in his life. Students use the extensive on-line resources well and they demonstrate good independent learning skills. Teachers provide good support that focuses on improving students' computing skills and promotes independent learning, preparing them well for transition into higher education or employment.
- Teachers review students' work and progress well. In the majority of the reviews, students' targets focus on personal and academic progress, such as attendance, punctuality and vocational skills development. This reflects the good in-year progress with attendance being above that expected by college managers. However, in a minority of reviews, targets do not take fully into account students' initial assessments of literacy and numeracy needs to extend their course achievements or to develop their employability skills as part of their study programme.
- Additional learning support for those students with an identified need is good. Students value the support they receive and staff work well together to ensure support is relevant to the vocational skill requirements. Students feel safe, listened to and supported. However, teachers do not use information regarding individual students' starting points well enough to plan teaching, slowing a few students' literacy and numeracy development.
- Assessment practices are sound. Teachers set regular electronic assignments to monitor the progress of students' learning and ensure they are developing the correct vocational skills to succeed on their courses. However, written feedback does not always contain enough detail to show students how to improve their work, or challenge them to attain high grades.
- At inspection, a small minority of students had not joined English or mathematics classes or joined classes late as part of their study programmes. This is slowing the progress of their literacy and numeracy skills despite the allocation of extra support sessions to aid progress.
- Teachers help develop students' spelling and grammatical skills well, as they promote the importance and impact of incorrect spelling on programming, for instances when using British versus American spelling in computing language, using the word 'right' versus 'write' in copyright and the spelling of words such as 'plagiarism' and 'hypothesis'.
- ICT students receive good information, advice and guidance at the start of their programme to support their progress. Managers and staff shape the content of subjects and courses well to establish coherent progression routes between courses for ICT users and those for ICT practitioners. This results in a significant improvement in students' in-year progress. However, students' understanding of how to progress to higher education, apprenticeships or employment requires further development. Students are not sufficiently aware of apprenticeship programmes, or how to apply to universities.
- Teachers' promotion of equality, diversity and their tackling of discrimination are good. Students have a respectful attitude towards each other, in class and while working together. Most teachers are confident in tackling negative attitudes and representations that may promote discriminatory behaviour. However, a small minority of teachers do not promote sufficiently equality and diversity themes within their lessons.

Warehousing and Distribution

Apprenticeships

Good

- Good teaching, learning and assessment have increased the proportion of apprentices achieving their qualification; high numbers achieve within their planned timescales. A large majority of apprentices enjoy their training, make the progress expected of them, and are on track to complete their qualifications on time. Apprentices have increased confidence and develop a good range of skills, such as working with others, problem solving and improving their own performance, all of which are essential for sustained employment.
- Assessors liaise and work with apprentices well. They are enthusiastic, experienced practitioners with sound operational warehouse knowledge, which ensures apprentices develop the competence and skills to work effectively in a warehouse and distribution environment. During a workplace observation at a warehouse, an apprentice made good use of the company's storage and handling systems and demonstrated a high standard of health and safety working practice.
- Warehouse apprentices develop good operational skills valued highly by employers. For example, apprentices have good skills in locating and re-packing goods to save storage space. A small minority of apprentices have taken on extra responsibilities and progressed further in their employment by taking on supervisory roles during training.
- Assessors provide timely and effective support to apprentices during workplace training. A workplace assessor provided an apprentice with additional assessments planned into the apprentice's training to catch up lost ground in training, because of the demands of the increased volume of deliveries into the distribution centre. Apprentices and employers value the flexibility of workplace training and assessments around their shift patterns, including weekend, late night and early morning visits.
- Good initial advice and guidance ensure that apprentices have a clear understanding of the expectations and requirements of the qualification they want to take. Following the confirmation of apprentices' starting points, good support helps them complete their training successfully. Assessors ensure apprentices make very good use of tailored employer training programmes to meet the requirements of the job role and employers' business needs.
- Assessors use a wide range of assessment methods well, to ensure apprentices are able to demonstrate the required knowledge and competence. Assessors make good use of professional discussions to check apprentices' knowledge of picking, sorting and moving goods efficiently.
- During workplace assessments, assessors skilfully question to check their knowledge of the correct use of specialist lifting equipment. However, assessors do not make sufficient use of technology in assessments to involve apprentices more in their training and to accelerate assessment. For example, the use of digital recorders to log professional discussions and cameras to provide photographic evidence of packing and storage is insufficient.
- Apprentices develop their English skills well during training. Apprentices are confident in discussing and explaining their material moving handling skills during discussions with assessors. They demonstrate good independent learning skills when challenged to find out for themselves the answers to any questions they cannot answer.
- Apprentices develop their numeracy skills by using them in practice, and collecting the evidence from the work they do such as weighing, measuring and handling volumes. However, assessors do not routinely assist the development of mathematical understanding as part of the assessment process.
- Assessors and employers integrate equality and diversity into training well. To help less confident readers, one employer makes effective use of photographs of storage containers holding quantities that need to be unpacked before picking. Apprentices show appropriate

understanding of equal opportunities and recognise diversity when dealing with customers and colleagues. They use constructive and non-stereotypical language in their writing and during discussions. However, during assessments in the workplace the further development of the understanding of equality and diversity in apprentices' work roles is insufficient.

Performing Arts

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding and reflect the high proportion of students who achieve their qualification outcomes. Almost all students stay and achieve, with almost no students in the past two years leaving without success. Attendance and punctuality are very good. All successful students on courses at level 3 have progressed to higher education or employment.
- Well-planned and innovative lessons develop a high level of learning independence. Teachers' expert subject knowledge guides their excellent coaching skills to stretch and challenge all students. Most teachers use questions that require students to think beyond the recall of facts, to hypothesise and make their own connections to deepen their understanding of their subject.
- Most teachers make particularly good use of the strong development of students' technical vocabulary in music and performing arts lessons in personal and group critique sessions. The majority of students are articulate and critically self-aware, and demonstrate their ability to set their own areas for development.
- Learning resources are very good and students' access to rehearsal spaces and technology between lessons allows them to learn effectively and independently. Teachers create environments in which students feel able to take risks and experiment in their learning without recrimination. An encouraging learning environment enables students to give and receive developmental feedback well.
- The momentum and focus on learning by teachers and students are outstanding. This is in part due to well-planned learning activities which produce clearly defined learning outcomes, but also because of the culture of high expectations firmly established at the start of the academic year. Rehearsal discipline is also excellent and for the most part, this requires little or no intervention by teachers.
- The consistently strong monitoring of students' progress helps all of them stay on target to achieve on time. Staff and students make particularly effective use of the college's electronic system for monitoring short-term and interim targets. This ensures that students hand final assignment work in on time.
- Students make very good use of and very much appreciate the use of social media as a communication tool with staff. Success stories and the ready stream of advice and recommendations stimulate students very well to invest their time in learning between lessons. Very good on-line resources promote further learning and research opportunities, and students use this extensively.
- Managers and staff have a particularly effective focus on careers and the management of students' aspirations. Well-planned weekly discrete careers sessions and their integration into general lessons help students concentrate on progression opportunities. For instance, students are able define the relevance of lesson objectives to their career aspirations and work opportunities. Students use an on-line programme for careers very effectively to source opportunities for work placements. They benefit highly from visits from successful former students. All students perform in college and in public venues.

- Second-year music students all write, record and promote their own albums to a high standard as part of their study programmes. They work through all of the ancillary business aspects of sourcing a public performance venue to stage their final shows. Staff have worked hard over the past few months to secure a significantly increased commitment from a wide range of industry-related local businesses to provide the rewarding work-experience element of students' study programmes. All music students also work towards the staging of a 'trade show'. This requires them to research a business idea individually or as part of a small team, then prepare and present a feasibility study to other students.
- Students achieve and work towards improving their English and mathematics component of the study programmes well. However, the integration of functional mathematics into lessons is insufficient. Discrete functional skills sessions focus too much on the completion of learning activities and do not improve sufficiently students' understanding of English and mathematical concepts.
- Pastoral support is highly effective in helping students to stay and achieve. Assistance for students requiring extra support is very good. However, the conditions for the successful termination of the support at the start of the intervention are not clear. In the observed sample, this encouraged dependency on the support rather than a concerted effort by all parties to work towards the removal of the barriers the student faces to work independently.
- Students enjoy developing their understanding of diversity. Both music and performing arts students are completing project work in advance of performances to celebrate Black History Month. Students' understanding of equality is good and teachers promote this well. Students' understanding of discrimination is very good. Virtually all students succeed and no significant differences exist between the different groups of students. However, classroom data projectors and classroom lighting are inadequate and result in a lack of clarity for all learners, particularly for those with visual impairments.

Foundation mathematics

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment on programmes for GCSE mathematics and functional mathematical skills require improvement, and this reflects the low achievement of high grades on GCSE mathematics and declining success rates on programmes for functional mathematical skills. Teachers have high expectations for students, but due to timetable disruption, low attendance and some poor punctuality, not all students are benefiting from this. Those who attend regularly and punctually develop a positive attitude to learning and make good progress during lessons.
- In the large majority of lessons, teachers use good subject knowledge and challenge lateness and poor behaviour effectively. In the majority of better lessons, teachers are effective in motivating students and planning stimulating learning activities to sustain interest. For example, young students enjoyed converting fractions while competing in teams against the clock using the interactive white board. In the best lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions, and this helps students build confidence and improve their understanding of mathematical concepts and methods.
- However, teachers do not sufficiently plan learning to meet the various needs or abilities of all learners. As a result, the more able do not access systematically extension activities to take them to the next level of learning. Less confident students disengage from activities when teachers do not plan sufficient teamwork to allow the more able students to share their own effective methods. Although learning support assistants provide timely and effective support

during lessons, less able learners struggle to resolve their mathematical problems when this support is not available.

- Teachers do not sufficiently use inspirational methods and the virtual learning environment to stimulate students' responses and to develop analytical skills and independent learning. They do not set systematically learning activities in contexts that closely match the vocational goals or the working lives of students. As a result, students are not always sufficiently inspired or engaged.
- The assessment and collation of information regarding students' starting points are comprehensive. However, teachers do not routinely use the information from diagnostic assessments to inform the planning of learning early enough in courses, often resulting in frustration for those students attending their classes. The delays in allocation of timetables and the finalising of students' groups early enough in the year is slowing the opportunities for a small minority of students to improve their mathematical skills. However, the allocation of 'booster' classes is starting to aid their progress.
- Written feedback in assessment requires improvement. Teachers provide helpful and encouraging oral feedback during lessons and this helps students understand what they need to do next. Marking of completed work is not so effective in guiding students on what they need to do to improve, or in reinforcing methods and progress.
- Those who attend functional skills and GCSE lessons appreciate the importance of improving both mathematical and English skills in order to achieve their learning goals and life ambitions, or to improve their performance at work. However, in too many vocational lessons, teachers do not sufficiently plan or use opportunities to develop students' mathematical skills in context. On mathematics courses, teachers do not systematically check spelling, and grammatical errors remain unchecked.
- Students receive effective information and advice on their progression routes to develop their mathematical skills. Good induction processes include robust diagnostic assessment and the much-improved screening for those who have not yet achieved high grades in GCSE mathematics. These have led to double the number of students entering mathematics programmes in September this year as part of their study programmes. However, too many students are yet to enter GCSE mathematics classes, or have not joined functional skills courses sufficiently early due to timetabling problems.
- Students benefit from a safe and supportive learning environment based on mutual respect in mathematics lessons. Teachers skilfully encourage short discussions to promote diversity: for instance, when young students commented on images of cross-dressing displayed on the interactive white board. However, teachers do not sufficiently use life examples to broaden students' knowledge of the wider world.

Accounting, finance and business management

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Although they are effective in ensuring students achieve well on their main vocational programmes, they are less effective at expanding students' understanding of wider business contexts as part of study programmes which include the development of English, mathematics and employability skills.
- The vast majority of teachers have high expectations of students. However, they do not always convert this into consistently good teaching. Teachers assess students' abilities at the start of their programme well and set individual targets for completion of assignment work during lessons. However, teachers do not use this information effectively to ensure that all lessons

meet individual students' needs. In most lessons, teachers set all students the same work; this does not extend the learning of the more able or focus on the specific areas individual students need to develop.

- Teachers support students well, are encouraging and positive. They recognise and praise students' efforts well, and students have the confidence to answer questions, share their ideas, and work together. In the better lessons, teachers plan effectively, combining confident explanations of subject matter with appropriate teaching and learning techniques, which students appreciate and enthusiastically take part in. In a minority of lessons, the assessment of students' knowledge and understanding is not sufficiently comprehensive and slows progress. The poor use of questioning often leads to more-confident students dominating the lesson to the detriment of their quieter peers.
- Students gain good vocational knowledge and skills and make good progress in their understanding and knowledge of how to deal with key terms and legislative requirements such as 'benchmarking' and 'The Proceeds of Crime Act'. However, teachers stick too rigidly to assignment project roles, which results in insufficient development of students' knowledge of business concepts or the application of these to the workplace.
- Teachers are well qualified and the majority use their relevant industry and professional experience well to link their explanations of theory to workplace practices and protocols. Teachers make good use of ILT to promote learning both in lessons and outside the classroom. They encourage students to work independently using tablets, laptops and smart phones.
- Advice, guidance and support for students are good at the start of their course. 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 and aspirations. However, only a minority of students are aware of the broader opportunities, such as apprenticeships, as part of their progression options.
- Staff use questioning and prompts effectively so that students become more able to identify key information and develop their responses. Teachers provide comprehensive and constructive oral feedback that provides students with guidance on how to improve and/or develop and apply their business skills. However, teachers' written feedback on assignments is weak. Although positive and encouraging, it is very brief. Teachers do not correct students' use of long or poorly structured sentences, nor do they routinely correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The availability of external work experience opportunities and other realistic work-related activities as part of study programmes requires improvement. Managers and staff have developed an enterprise programme in collaboration with the local chamber of commerce and the LEP to provide students with the opportunities to engage in business development and enterprise schemes. However, this has not had sufficient impact.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is adequate. Very few teachers take up opportunities to discuss with students the effects of business practices on race, gender, age and religion in a national and global context. Students respect each other and their teachers and value the contributions of their peers.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement. Governors and senior leaders have not acted quickly enough since the previous inspection to implement the improvements required to become a good college. The recently appointed Principal and the new senior management team have worked energetically to develop a strategy with the aim of the college becoming outstanding in a short space of time. They have a well-developed strategy for the rapid improvement of teaching, learning and assessment and establishing the college as a provider of outstanding vocational education for local employers

- The implementation of a range of improvement initiatives, such as the introduction of study programmes, in pursuit of this strategy has increased the numbers of learners achieving overall, but it has not raised outcomes for learners in English and mathematics substantially, or removed weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment across different subject areas.
- Governors are very committed to the college's mission, and have a good understanding of its current strengths and areas for improvement. They are beginning to hold senior managers to account, and the level of challenge for senior managers is increasing. Governors have a closer view of students' experience at the college through taking part in observations and working with specific departments.
- Managers support and develop the significant majority of teachers well. Teachers who require improvement receive individual packages of support, mentoring, additional training and they take part in programmes to improve their coaching skills. However, managers' interventions to ensure the completion of improvement actions from lesson observations are too slow. Too often managers leave these until the teacher's annual appraisal. This is too late to ensure that students receive promptly a higher standard of teaching and learning. Targets set at appraisals are specific and detailed, setting out clearly what teachers need to do to improve.
- Staff at all levels take an effective part in self-assessment. Self-assessment includes good input from students and sub-contracted providers. Managers' understanding and use of data to analyse the quality of their provision have improved and are now good. As a result, the very recent self-assessment report is now more accurate and evaluative in identifying the key areas for improvement. However, the recording of progress against quality improvement actions requires further development in order to accelerate the rate of improvement.
- The management of the college's two main subcontractors is highly effective. Both subcontractors, from the hospitality and hairdressing sectors, provide students with good work experience placements in real vocational settings. Apprentices develop good employability skills valued by employers. For example, apprentices in warehousing and distribution are able to collate orders unsupervised and meet tight quality control requirements.
- Curriculum planning is improving, well informed by, and responsive to, the demands of the local labour market and major employers. Relationships between managers and the LEP are good and managers have secured funding to become an engineering manufacturing hub for Staffordshire. However, not all students are aware of, or understand the very recently introduced curriculum, including the need to improve their English and mathematical skills, and the work experience elements of their study programmes. This is causing some confusion in the allocation of lessons, work experience and timetables.
- The understanding of equality and diversity at college level is good. Support and access are particularly effective for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners, through well-designed induction activities and the targeting of additional support. Managers are quick to identify any gaps in achievement and close them effectively. Relationships in the classroom are respectful, with learners feeling free to try out ideas without fear of ridicule.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning requires improvement. In good lessons, teachers build into their plans specific topics and activities relevant to their subject. However, too often teachers fail to capitalise on subjects that would stimulate discussions among students on equality and diversity. The use of equality and diversity themes in apprenticeship reviews is particularly formulaic and does not develop a deeper understanding of specific concerns relevant to the apprentices' workplace or the wider world.
- Safeguarding requires improvement. Learners are safe at college. The central register of staff is up-to-date, accurate and complete. Procedures for checking the details of contractors coming onto site, and checks on employers where learners are on placement are good and implemented rigorously. However, the implementation of good safeguarding practice is not routine and systematic. Managers and staff report on the number and type of incidents, but are only just putting in place a system to analyse the characteristics of the learners who report those incidents. Apprentices are not fully aware of the importance of e-safety as part of their training programme. Managers have only recently established protocols with the local authority to

support looked-after children and as yet, the protocols have shown no impact. The bullying and harassment policy on the college website is out-of-date.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Stafford 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	2		
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3			3		3	3		
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3			3		3	3		

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and Social Care	2
ICT for practitioners	2
ICT for Users	2
Warehousing and Distribution	2
Performing Arts	1
Foundation mathematics	3
Accounting and Finance	3
Business Management	3

Type of college	General further education college							
Age range of learners	14+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4356							
Principal/CEO	Ms Beverley Smith							
Date of previous inspection	April 2003							
Website address	www.staffordcoll.ac.uk							
College 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+
	215	66	537	309	1476	284	0	73
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+	
	88	370	52	119	0		0	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	8							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	8							
Number of community learners	32							
Number of employability learners	12							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the college contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commercial Consultants Europe LtdFrancesco’s Group (Holdings) LtdTividale Football ClubThe Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire Safer Communities Interest Company (CIC)Welcome Skills Ltd.							

Contextual information

Stafford College is a large provider of vocational education and training serving Stafford and a proportion of Staffordshire. It operates from a main campus in the town centre and a smaller construction and engineering centre few hundred yards from the main campus. The number of pupils aged 16 who achieve five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C including English and mathematics in Staffordshire is slightly above the national average. The local employment rate is above the national average. A small proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups, which is broadly representative of the local population.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Stephen Hunsley HMI

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

What inspection judgements mean

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

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

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

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