

Newbury College

General further education college

Inspection dates		27–30 January 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- managers and teachers use highly effective and innovative strategies to develop students' personal, social and employability skills, resulting in high progression rates to employment and to further study at a more advanced level
- good teaching in most subjects develops students' knowledge, skills and understanding well and enables a high proportion to achieve their qualifications and make good progress
- staff provide very good information, advice and guidance that ensure that applicants follow appropriate courses; they support students well throughout their programmes and maximise students' chances of progressing successfully to employment or further study
- staff provide thorough and effective additional learning support that helps ensure those students requiring extra support make good progress
- leaders, managers and governors have a clear corporate vision, and particularly strong links with employers; these help ensure the college's broad curriculum responds well both to regional priorities set by the local enterprise partnership (LEP) and also to the employment opportunities in the region
- the college's provision for students with severe or complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities is of a high quality and ensures that these students develop greater independence.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and target setting are not consistently good across a minority of subject areas and courses, including level 2 programmes for the small number of students aged 16-18, resulting in too few students achieving their full potential in these areas
- teachers are not developing their students' skills in English and mathematics well enough, especially in vocational lessons
- attendance is too low in a small number of subject areas.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure high quality target setting and frequent progress monitoring for all students.
- Ensure all teachers provide precise and informative written and oral feedback that clearly tells students how they can improve and make better progress.
- Provide high quality training and guidance to teachers so that they have the skills and confidence to teach English and mathematics in level 1 and level 2 functional skills lessons and in vocational settings so that students achieve their functional skills qualifications and successfully improve the standard of their literacy and numeracy.
- Review and enforce strategies to ensure high attendance in all subject areas.
- Ensure staff development and improvement activities closely align to those weaker aspects of teaching, learning and assessment identified through lesson observation, and also focus on techniques that will raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment from good to outstanding.
- Explore and implement arrangements to analyse, track and monitor accurately the progress students make relative to their starting points.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Newbury College provides education and training for approximately 2,900 students. Around 30% of students are aged 16 to 18, of whom the majority are on full-time study programmes. Most adults follow part-time programmes. At the time of inspection, around 230 students were undertaking apprenticeships at the college. The college offers a broad range of provision from entry to higher level, spread across most subject areas, with around three quarters of students studying from entry level to level 2. Most students undertake vocational and functional skills courses, with only a very small proportion on academic programmes.
- Most classroom-based students complete their programmes and successfully achieve their qualifications, broadly in line with high national rates. The performance of students aged 16 to 18 has declined slightly, but the performance of the significantly larger proportion of adult students has improved and is now good. In 2013/14, not enough of the small numbers of students aged 16 to 18 on level 2 study programmes successfully achieved their qualifications. The college has identified this as a key area for improvement and is taking suitable action to raise standards for this group.
- In 2013/14, students' achievement in the majority of subject areas was broadly in line with national rates. Students achieved particularly well in construction, leisure, travel and tourism, visual arts, media, business administration and law at all levels. Outcomes for students in information and communication technology (ICT) were too low, and declining.
- In 2013/14, the proportion of students that completed intermediate apprenticeships was too low, whereas the proportion successfully achieving advanced apprenticeships was high and above national rates. The proportion of students that successfully complete their apprenticeships has fluctuated over the past few years. Managers have accurately identified those areas that performed less well, in particular horticulture; they have taken a logical strategic decision to withdraw from apprenticeships in these under-performing areas, and are expanding higher-performing areas.
- Results in English and mathematics functional skills and GCSEs require improvement. While many students achieve well at entry level, in both English and mathematics too few students

successfully achieve their level 1 and level 2 functional skills qualifications or GCSEs at, or above, grade C. Not enough teachers are sufficiently confident or skilled in developing students' literacy and numeracy skills, and teachers fail to engage and motivate the minority of students on study programmes. As a result, attendance at functional skills lessons is too low. Managers have accurately identified this area as a key priority for improvement. The college has recently implemented a range of well-founded initiatives in this area, including substantial changes to staffing, but they are yet to have sufficient impact.

- There are no significant differences in the performance of different groups of students, irrespective of age, gender, and ethnicity or for those students with additional learning support needs. Students generally make good progress on their study programmes relative to their qualifications on entry. Managers track the proportion of students who achieve high grades. This rate has been high over several years. The systems that managers use to evaluate students' progress do not provide sufficient insight into the progress many students make relative to their starting points.
- Students develop particularly good personal, social and employability skills through the college's branded 'passport to progression' programme. For example, as part of the programme most students on study programmes undertake a valuable block of work experience with external employers. Managers ensure that the placements are relevant to the vocational area of each student. Students also acquire very good insight into broader skills required to progress successfully to employment, for example through lessons which develop specific skills needed to secure a job, a comprehensive series of external visits, regular guest presenters and through attendance at careers fairs.
- Attendance and punctuality are good in many lessons, although attendance is too low in a minority of areas including health and social care, childcare, hairdressing and beauty therapy, English and mathematics.
- Managers record accurate, timely and reliable data on students' progression. Progression rates are high, with a significant proportion successfully moving on to suitable employment or to further study at the college at a more advanced level. Teachers are particularly good at meeting the needs and improving the skills of students with severe or complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, those students make good progress in developing greater independence.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and, as a result, students achieve well. Tutors are skilled in, and knowledgeable about, their subjects. They use their expertise very effectively to provide well-planned lesson activities, which motivate and interest students and result in them acquiring suitable knowledge and developing good practical skills. Teachers' good support, and the sound advice teachers offer individuals during lessons and in tutorials, further enhance the good progress students make from their starting points.
- Much assessment is good. In many lessons, teachers use questioning very effectively to check students' understanding. Most oral and written feedback to students on their assignments provides clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. For a minority of students, feedback on written work is cursory and, as a result, their progress is slower. Assessment practice for apprenticeship programmes is effective in driving progress.
- The assessment of students' skills at the start of their programmes is good and helps ensure that students study at the right level. Teachers generally set students clear and helpful targets to guide students' learning. For a minority of students, teachers do not set sufficiently detailed targets or review progress frequently enough; as a result, these students make slower progress.
- Learning for employment is strong. Most students, particularly those on study programmes, gain good insight into how the skills they are developing in college are applicable in the workplace; they also develop the disciplines they need for success in employment. Employability classes are a core part of the study programme and focus well on helping students improve the generic

skills needed for securing and sustaining work. Teachers frequently arrange popular visits from local businesses that help widen students’ understanding of the skills employers require.

- Arrangements to identify and meet the needs of students who require additional support are thorough and effective. For students whose level of need is high, specialist staff liaise productively with schools, parents and carers, and agencies to provide tailored support from the start of their programme. Support for the large number of students with less complex needs is good; although, in lessons, teachers do not always deploy learning support assistants to best effect. Expert learning support tutors provide good specialist help to students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Monitoring of the progress of students receiving support is frequent and ensures that support continues to match their needs.
- The majority of teachers use the college’s internet-based virtual learning environment (VLE) well as a teaching resource. Students in areas such as health and social care use it routinely and effectively to catch up on any missed work, to revise for assessments and to submit assignments. Specialist resources in media and elsewhere often match standards found in industry. In a minority of subject areas teachers do not use the VLE as effectively to enhance the quality of provision for students.
- The quality of teaching and learning to develop students’ English and mathematics skills requires improvement. Managers have put significant and well-placed emphasis on identifying and remedying weaknesses in the provision, and remedying high staff turnover in the area. Consequently, the majority of students are starting to make reasonable progress; however, attendance at functional skills lessons is often too low, and not enough mathematics teaching is good. Teaching to develop students’ literacy and numeracy in vocational lessons is not always effective, despite examples of good practice.
- The information, advice and guidance students receive are good. Initial advice is very effective in attracting students to the college and ensuring they enrol on suitable programmes. Skilled college advisers, together with weekly visits from an external careers advice service, provide good impartial advice to individual students. Students benefit from good advice and support when considering their next steps. This high quality advice and guidance contributes significantly to ensuring a high proportion of students completing courses move into employment or to more advanced levels of study at the college and elsewhere.
- Students enjoy a comprehensive programme of activities through tutorials that focus on their social, moral and cultural development. This helps ensure they appreciate the role of democracy in our society, as well as understanding the broad range of values, religions and beliefs, tolerance and respect that enable them to prepare suitably for life in modern Britain. Not all teachers underpin the promotion of equalities and diversity in their lessons.

<p>Health and social care, child development and wellbeing</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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Teaching, learning and assessment in health and social care, child development and wellbeing are good because:

- students make good progress in lessons; most successfully complete their qualifications and, at level 3, the numbers achieving high grades are high and rising
- students work hard in lessons and respond well to the high expectations established by teachers; they quickly acquire the essential knowledge and practical skills they need to care for children and adults
- support for students is good; teachers have a comprehensive understanding of students’ individual needs and they tailor learning activities to ensure that most make good progress

- teachers have good subject expertise and relevant occupational experience that enhance their teaching and enable students to develop a good awareness of employers' expectations, such as why safeguarding and dignity are so important within the sector
- teachers ensure that students develop their good work-related skills and knowledge through a comprehensive programme of work experience in settings such as care homes, day centres and nurseries; as a result, students are prepared well to progress into employment or higher education
- teachers assess students' starting points precisely, frequently set and monitor targets in discussion with students, and track their progress well in lessons, during tutorials and work experience; this approach fosters a positive culture where students take responsibility for reviewing and reflecting on their own progress and achievement
- teachers provide thorough and detailed feedback on written work and clearly identify ways that students can improve their work
- teachers help students to develop their English well; teachers also frequently reinforce relevant terminology such as clinical terms and take opportunities to develop students' oral communication and literacy skills
- staff provide good pre- and on-course information, advice and guidance which ensure students enrol on the most appropriate programme and are clear about the routes they must take to secure future jobs
- teachers promote equality and diversity well, with frequent references to the diverse needs of clients and effective challenge of stereotypical ideas; all students show good appreciation of the relevance of this to their work.

Teaching, learning and assessment in health and social care, child development and wellbeing are not yet outstanding because:

- attendance and punctuality are too low; teachers do not challenge students sufficiently if they are late or absent
- teachers do not place sufficient focus on the development of students' basic numeracy and mathematics skills; this limits students' opportunities to progress, particularly for those aspiring to higher level courses and jobs such as nursing
- teachers in childcare make very little use of, and students have very limited access to, suitable interactive learning technologies to enhance learning.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

16-19 study programmes
19+ learning programmes

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in hairdressing and beauty therapy require improvement because:

- teachers in hairdressing do not always have sufficiently high expectations of students and too few students achieve their qualifications
- students' attendance in lessons is too low
- teachers do not sufficiently build students' knowledge of hairdressing theory and, consequently, some of the students' technical knowledge is not good enough
- written feedback from teachers on hairdressing consultation sheets and assignments does not always tell students what they need to do to improve

- teachers do not identify clear targets to develop students' English and mathematics skills; the written resources of a minority of hairdressing teachers contain grammatical and spelling errors
- students have too few opportunities to carry out assessment on a broad range of clients; as a result, students are not always fully prepared for the challenges of the workplace
- the proportion of hairdressing students who gain relevant employment following their training is too low.

In hairdressing and beauty therapy the provider has the following strengths:

- vocationally experienced teachers use their industrial knowledge and expertise well to develop students' practical skills; students on study programmes make good progress relative to their starting points and develop useful practical skills, such as blow-drying and applying thermal face masks
- well-qualified staff provide a nurturing environment and successfully encourage students to develop their team working skills
- beauty therapy teachers use a broad range of well-chosen techniques to develop students' technical knowledge; for example, in a particularly effective lesson, a series of activities successfully tested students' knowledge of anatomy, such as the structure of the skin and the muscles of the leg
- beauty therapy students develop skills in communicating with, and caring for, clients particularly well by practising on paying clients early in their training; this enables them to develop suitable employability skills
- students receive good pre- and on-course advice and guidance and many successfully continue their studies at more advanced levels
- support for students in lessons is good; in practical sessions, students value teachers' good individual support and developmental oral feedback.

Visual arts and media

16-19 study programmes
19+ learning programmes

Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in visual arts and media are good because:

- the proportion of students who successfully achieve their qualifications is high, and increasing; students attend well and make good progress in their studies
- students benefit from good equipment and resources; they develop good practical and technical expertise and readily acquire the skills they need to evaluate and reflect on their progress
- students produce a high standard of work, sketchbooks contain lively images, insightful annotation and detailed research; for example, in a media assignment, students produced sophisticated animations and good promotional films
- teachers inspire and motivate students well, providing good support and helpful advice in lessons which encourage them to generate interesting ideas and grasp technical processes well
- teachers manage learning well, resulting in students achieving suitably challenging learning objectives set out by teachers at the start of each lesson
- teachers devise excellent skills projects working with a wide range of employers; this allows students to practise skills needed in employment, such as working in teams, to time constraints, and understanding the needs of varied client groups

- initial and on-course advice and guidance are good; teachers skilfully guide students to the right course at the most appropriate level and well-planned inductions help students settle into college life quickly
- a high proportion of students successfully continue to the next level within the college
- in group tutorials, students engage in productive discussions and acquire a broad range of new knowledge and skills
- valuable feedback from teachers in individual tutorials enables students to track and monitor their progress frequently
- teachers provide good oral advice in lessons and detailed written commentary on completed projects so students understand how to improve their work
- teachers correct spelling and grammar thoroughly in assignments and help students to practise their written English skills; for example, in media, students maintain comprehensive production logbooks
- students expand their cultural horizons well, for example by studying a range of creative practitioners, which helps inform their own practice.

Teaching, learning and assessment in media and visual arts are not yet outstanding because:

- in a minority of lessons students make slower progress because teachers do not use a wide range of strategies to challenge views and ideas or check understanding of topics
- planning to meet the individual needs of students is not always good enough and teachers make too little use of the virtual learning environment to extend learning
- students do not develop their numeracy and literacy skills to a good level because of high staff turnover and ineffective tracking of progress in English and mathematics lessons
- not enough media students aged 16 to 18 on study programmes undertake work experience with external employers.

Accounting and business management	Good
16-19 study programmes	
19+ learning programmes	

Teaching, learning and assessment in accounting, finance and business are good because:

- the standard of students' work is good, students make good progress and a high proportion successfully complete their qualifications and move on to appropriate employment or to more advanced studies
- teachers set high expectations and support students well; for example, adult accounting students receive good support outside their usual lessons through a weekly support workshop
- attendance and punctuality are good and students enjoy their learning experience
- most students on study programmes develop good skills for employment, particularly through the application of live business projects and involvement in purposeful work experience
- in the majority of lessons teachers demonstrate clearly how business theory underpins professional practice, which very effectively develops students' understanding of commercial settings
- all students use a wide range of high-quality resources which support learning both inside and outside the classroom

- information, advice and guidance are good and ensure teachers place students on the right course for their needs and receive the help they need as they progress through their course
- all students on the study programmes benefit from a stimulating range of visits and speakers from the business community who provide students with insight into business topics and help prepare students for working life.

Teaching, learning and assessment in accounting, finance and business are not yet outstanding because:

- teachers do not use group profiles effectively when planning and teaching lessons to ensure they meet the needs of individual students; in a small minority of lessons, teachers do not provide activities that stretch the more able students, and all students complete the same activities
- teachers rarely use probing questions to test students' understanding
- teachers do not develop the mathematics skills of accounting and business students sufficiently
- in a minority of tutorials, teachers do not set suitably detailed targets; as a result, a small number of students do not make good progress
- teachers do not help students to discuss how equality and diversity matters affect businesses, and their implications in the wider business community
- written feedback on a small minority of students' work requires improvement to identify clearly how students can do better; staff do not always return students' marked work promptly.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- The Principal, senior managers and governors have a clear vision for the college that focuses closely on meeting local community needs by reducing unemployment, raising adults skills levels and especially through their longer-term plans to attract young people into science-related fields.
- Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement across the college and provide highly effective challenge and support to the leadership team. This helps ensure that leaders maintain a strong focus on the quality of provision, and financial security of the college, and are successful at remedying any emerging underperformance. For example, the quality of management of the apprenticeship programme, workplace learning and the teaching of English and mathematics have recently been key priorities for improvement. Recent action is resulting in more students achieving their planned qualifications. The college has clear strategies in place to raise standards in these areas.
- The college has a thorough performance management process, which closely links personal development to college priorities. Managers have effective mechanisms for evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which include lesson observations and thematic learning walks. They do not yet use all the findings from these activities to drive improvements. Managers use individual teacher mentoring and coaching well to maintain good classroom teaching, learning and assessment and reduce the amount of teaching that is not good enough. However, staff development priorities do not identify a sufficiently wide range of measures to help improve teaching, learning and assessment in those areas that are not yet good, or to raise standards in stronger areas from good to outstanding.
- Self-assessment is thorough and inclusive. The college invites external partners, including representatives from other colleges and from local employers, to support the process and increase its rigour. Although action plans deal with most areas requiring improvement, they lack precision and challenge to raise the quality of provision beyond good. For example, in a small

minority of action plans, responsibility for the actions and priorities for improvement is not explicit.

- Leaders and governors strongly value students' feedback and use a range of well-organised approaches to gather their views. Students recognise and appreciate the timely responses and improvements that result from their feedback.
- The Principal, senior managers and governors use their skills and contacts with the local businesses and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership very well to develop strong employer links for the benefit of students. Managers and staff place a very strong emphasis on developing employability skills of students, particularly those on study programmes. Curriculum and support teams use their links with employers very effectively to provide students with meaningful work placements or projects.
- Leaders and managers use local information well, including labour market information and existing students' ambitions for their next steps, to plan and develop the curriculum. Managers design and plan courses well, based on employment opportunities, need and viability. In order to meet the needs of different cohorts of students, managers offer a good variety of learning types, for example distance learning courses in health and care. This flexible approach helps managers cater well for a diverse adult part-time student cohort.
- Leaders and managers adopt thorough systems and processes to promote equality and diversity. Well-designed recruitment procedures are increasing the diversity of staff and students. Managers ensure suitable specialist staff are available where necessary to support students with specific needs, irrespective of their location; for example, a specialist in dyslexia provides support to students in the workplace. Managers with responsibility for work-based learning ensure employers are aware of the college's expectations regarding equality and diversity. Although managers promote equality and diversity themes well through cross college events and publicity materials, teachers do not always promote the themes in lessons.
- The college's approach to safeguarding learners is good and managers meet their statutory duties. Senior managers ensure all staff focus sufficiently on promoting suitable health and safety practices around the college to ensure the environment is safe. Students feel safe in college. Managers maintain good links with local safeguarding agencies. Staff respond decisively to any issues related to bullying. The college has a trained 'champion' in place who is responsible for responding to a current local authority priority of raising awareness of, and supporting, anyone who is experiencing domestic violence. Managers have yet to develop fully a formal approach to the 'Prevent' agenda; however, they already have strong and effective partnerships and liaison with external organisations, including the police.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Visual arts	2
Media and communication	2
Accounting and finance	2
Business management	2

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	14+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2550							
Principal/CEO	Dr Anne Murdoch							
Date of previous inspection	November 2009							
Website address	www.newbury-college.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+
	162	532	108	1205	250	183	2	21
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	52	87	38	52	1	-		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	4		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	9							
Part-time	-							
Number of community learners	1,100							
Number of employability learners	-							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency, Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Qube Qualification and Development, Ltd ■ MNT Training Limited ■ Marian Heelas ■ Adviza Partnership 							

Contextual information

Newbury College is a small general further education college located in West Berkshire, operating from one campus situated on the outskirts of the town. Its catchment area is predominantly rural, covering West Berkshire, Reading and North Hampshire. The current population of West Berkshire is around 155,000; it is rising and projected to increase by around 10% in the next decade. West Berkshire is a relatively prosperous area, with a few pockets of deprivation some of which are close to the college. Unemployment in the region is low. The proportion of the local population from a Black and minority ethnic background is lower than average. West Berkshire has 10 secondary schools all of which have sixth forms. The proportion of students from West Berkshire secondary schools who achieve five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is below the national average. The college provides training and development for around 400 employers in the region, as well as full-time study programmes for students aged 16 to 19, community learning, employability programmes and foundation provision for students with profound and complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Peter Nelson HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Deputy Principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on students' achievements over the past three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students, parents 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:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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