

Darlington College

General further education college

Inspection dates		9–13 February 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate-4
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding-1
Outcomes for learners		Inadequate-4
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Inadequate-4
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Inadequate-4

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is inadequate because:

- the overall quality of provision at the college has deteriorated considerably; leaders and managers, including governors, presided over this for several years and failed to take effective actions to reverse the decline in the college's performance
- outcomes on study programmes for 16- to 18-year-olds are poor, with low success rates for main qualifications, poor achievement of English and mathematics qualifications, and insufficient preparation for work
- apprenticeship success rates are low, especially for 16- to 18-year-olds
- the teaching of English is inadequate and the development of English skills in vocational lessons is weak
- teachers' questioning techniques and assessment in lessons are often ineffective and fail to allow all learners to contribute and develop their skills and knowledge
- not enough lessons engage, motivate or challenge learners, including those who are more able; too many teachers plan insufficient variety of learning activities suitable for all learners
- leadership and management of 16 to 18 study programmes, provision in English and mathematics, and apprenticeships are inadequate
- accountability through governance is ineffective; monitoring and evaluation of current improvement strategies are not sufficiently rigorous, and performance management is not fully effective.

This provider has the following strengths:

- good success rates for many adults, especially in health and social care and preparation for life and work
- good provision for vulnerable learners on specialist courses such as 'Project U' and 'Next Steps'
- effective practical vocational skills teaching that is enhanced by teachers' industrial experience
- effective development of mathematics skills in vocational lessons
- governors and senior leaders have a good understanding of local and regional skills needs.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop the variety of teaching methods to engage, motivate and challenge all learners, especially the more able and improve planning to ensure lower ability learners get sufficient support in lessons.
- Improve preparation for work and increase external work experience opportunities to ensure learners develop good employability skills.
- Improve assessment in lessons to ensure that all learners participate in discussions and learning activities, receive feedback on their progress and understand what they need to do to improve further; raise expectations of staff and learners, and hold teachers accountable for their learners' outcomes.
- Improve the leadership and management of 16 to 18 study programmes, English and mathematics, and apprenticeships, so that outcomes on study programmes for 16- to 18-year-olds improve significantly, low apprenticeship success rates increase and the quality of English teaching improves.
- Strengthen governance so that effective action is taken to address poor performance at all levels; develop rigorous monitoring and evaluation of current improvement strategies to ensure that they have sufficient impact.
- Ensure that recently introduced performance management measures accurately identify weaker teaching and learning and take swift improvement actions.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Inadequate
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- Around 55% of the college's provision is made up of study programmes for 16- to 18-year-olds. Apprenticeships for both young people and adults make up a further 18% with most of the remainder being adult provision. On 16 to 18 study programmes just over half the learners are studying advanced-level qualifications, one third intermediate level and the remainder foundation level. Two thirds of apprenticeships are intermediate and one third advanced. Almost half of adult learners are on foundation level courses, with the remainder split approximately equally between intermediate and advanced level. The majority of courses are in the curriculum area of preparation for life and work, with others in vocational curriculum areas including health, public services and care, business, construction, engineering, sport, travel and tourism, arts, media, information and communication technology (ICT), catering, hair and beauty, and science.
- Outcomes for 16- to 18-year-olds on study programmes are inadequate. Too few learners achieve their main qualification aims. In most subject areas success rates have declined to below national rates, with very few signs of improving trends. At all levels of study overall success rates are below national rates.
- Many learners on study programmes have not had opportunities for external work experience and the arrangements to develop work-related skills through other relevant activities lack coherence. Advanced-level learners aiming for university are not given enough encouragement to undertake work experience even in subject areas where it would clearly enhance university applications.
- The proportion of 16- to 18-year-old learners gaining grades A* to C in GCSE English is very low. Success rates for learners on study programmes taking functional skills qualifications in English are also low. The development of English skills in both English and vocational lessons is weak, hindering progress in both spoken and written English. Too few 16- to 18-year-old

learners achieve their mathematics functional skills qualifications. Only 5% of 16- to 18-year-olds who sat GCSE mathematics in the 2014 examinations gained grades A* to C. The development of mathematical skills within vocational curriculum areas is effective.

- Attendance requires improvement. Poor punctuality is too readily tolerated, hindering the development of employability skills. Many learners do not get enough opportunities to develop wider employability skills such as communication skills and team working. Standards are not set high enough. For example, poor quality written work is displayed.
- Value-added data that compare qualifications on entry with those on exit show that learners make slower progress than would be expected on advanced-level courses. College assessment data suggest that current learners are on track to achieve better outcomes but it is too early to judge the accuracy and reliability of this.
- Learners on vocational courses develop good practical and technical skills in areas such as construction, engineering, and sport. Specialist and enrichment opportunities enable learners to develop additional skills in areas such as catering, hair and beauty, and sport.
- For too many learners, especially at entry and intermediate levels, destinations remain unknown. Where they are known, progression is reasonable with satisfactory proportions progressing to higher levels of study and employment. Outcomes for specific groups of learners with explicit additional learning needs or particular barriers to learning who are on specialist courses such as 'Next Steps' provision and 'Project U', are good. Effective support ensures that these learners develop personal skills, confidence and self-esteem that enable them to progress to higher levels of study or employment.
- Overall success rates for adults are generally good. Both retention and achievement rates are high. There is some variation across levels and courses. Adults do particularly well on courses in health and social care and preparation for life and work. For adults on full level 3 qualifications the adult success rate is about average but for full level 2 qualifications it is low.
- The most notable achievement gap is between 16- to 18-year-olds and adults. Within 16- to 18-year-olds boys do better than girls in contrast to the national picture, although both groups have success rates well below the equivalent national rates. Success rates for 16- to 18-year-old learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on mainstream provision are significantly lower than for those without. There are few gaps between different groups for adult provision.
- Apprenticeship overall success rates are low and declined significantly in 2014. Too few 16- to 18-year-olds complete their apprenticeships within the expected time frame, especially advanced apprenticeships where fewer than half are successful within the expected time frame. Males do better than females for overall success rates, although the respective rates are both too low. The gap is far wider for timely where male success rate is above national rates and female well below.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate which is reflected in the poor outcomes for study programmes for learners aged 16 to 18 and the poor outcomes for apprentices.
- Teachers are not rigorous enough in correcting some poor behaviour. For example, learners sometimes talk at the same time as teachers and their peers, and do not listen respectfully. This is accepted rather than being corrected. Behaviour such as inappropriate use of mobile phones, learners wearing heavy outdoor coats in lessons and lateness are too readily tolerated and not consistently tackled.
- English skills are poorly developed both in discrete English and vocational subject lessons. Errors in learning materials provided by teachers compound the problem. Too little attention is given to improving spoken or written English. In one lesson, learners learning about communicating with customers were expected to write about this in workbooks without enough reference to real-life examples and without actually discussing and practising how they might manage different situations.

- The pace of learning in theory lessons is often slow and fails to inspire learners to improve their knowledge and understanding. More able learners are not given tasks that allow them to work to their full potential while less able learners do not receive the help and support they need. Business administration apprentices, for example, routinely work on complex projects in their workplaces but tasks in lessons are often less challenging than those already encountered in work.
- Arrangements to widen learner horizons, ambitions and develop employability skills through external work experience are weak. The full range of employability skills for 16- to 18-year-olds are not developed effectively enough. There are not enough opportunities for students on some study programmes to learn and practise skills such as team working and communication, and in some cases independence is not promoted well.
- The arrangements for providing individual support in lessons are not managed well. Although initial assessment is carried out to identify learners' starting points in English and mathematics, staff do not use the information effectively in lesson planning. On courses where generic lesson plans are used, these take no account of the needs of individuals in different classes and objectives are sometimes too vague or general to be useful. Teachers are not explicit enough about their expectations of learning support assistants and the quality and skill of the support provided is too variable. During the inspection a number of lessons were observed where support assistants made little or no contribution during the lesson.
- Ongoing assessment in lessons is not sufficiently developed. Teachers rely too heavily on open questions that do not involve all learners. Typically, brief initial answers are accepted without supplementary questions that would deepen thinking and encourage more articulate responses. Failure to use directed questions often results in only a few learners answering while others contribute little.
- Individual target-setting is weak. Although there are some good examples, too often individual targets are not specific enough to promote improvement and are not monitored and reviewed effectively. A new system has been established to provide advanced-level learners with minimum target grades to aim for but it is not yet clear whether it will be effective in raising achievement significantly.
- Learners benefit from the personal and academic support given by qualified and vocationally experienced teachers. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and industry experience to establish credibility with learners. They form good relationships with their learners that allow learners to feel safe to ask questions. Learning resources in the college are generally of a good standard and are used effectively.
- Teaching and learning in practical vocational lessons are often effective. Learners enjoy tasks where they can be creative and that result in good quality products. For example, catering learners took pride in making Chinese duck and pancakes to serve in the restaurant. Learners appreciate the tips and professional advice they receive. Hairdressing learners watch the professional demonstrations of complex 'up-styles' carefully to ensure they can replicate the skills for national competitions.
- Mathematics skills are well embedded into vocational lessons and learners practise skills in relevant contexts. For example, sports learners calculate body mass index and energy consumption and plan suitable exercise regimes. However, this learning is not linked to the discrete classes in mathematics and learners' achievement of GCSE at grade C and above is low.
- Teaching and learning on the 'Next Steps' course for learners with learning difficulties are good. On this course, work experience that is wide and varied has a good impact on learners' development. Excellent relationships with teachers help learners studying on the 'Project U' course who arrive with significant barriers to learning to form positive relationships with adults. As a result, their self-confidence and self-esteem improve and most progress onto further education or training.
- Initial information, advice and guidance during the recruitment process are good. Learners receive clear information about courses and possible progression routes. Transition arrangements for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are particularly good. Careers

guidance and advice during courses are provided but require further improvement. The quality of advice and guidance in tutorials is variable and the effectiveness of using progression coaches in this role has not been adequately evaluated.

- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Learners benefit from an inclusive, welcoming approach at the college. Lessons do not include many references to the diverse nature of British society, or the needs of different groups that could help learners in their future employment. Staff do not do enough to promote equality and diversity during apprentices' reviews.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in engineering and manufacturing technologies require improvement because:

- the overall success rate for engineering apprenticeships declined to below the national rate in 2013/14; in manufacturing technologies a high proportion of apprentices do not complete their qualifications within the planned timescales
- the current in-year retention has not improved significantly above that of last year; however, it is too early to judge the impact of strategies that have been put in place to address the decline in outcomes for apprentices
- in theory lessons, teachers and assessors do not use the results of apprentices' initial assessment and their profile effectively to inform lesson planning; they do not set challenging targets for individuals; for example, apprentices are not set different tasks based on their initial assessment information
- most teachers and assessors do not plan sufficient activities to help apprentices improve their English skills; they often overlook apprentices' grammatical and spelling mistakes; a minority of teachers and assessors make grammatical and spelling mistakes also in their written feedback on apprentices' work
- in progress reviews, assessors and reviewers pay insufficient attention to equality and diversity; issues such as bullying are not discussed; health and safety is not covered in sufficient detail.

In engineering and manufacturing technologies the provider has the following strengths:

- most apprentices produce a high standard of practical work and particularly so in the workplace; for example, fabrication and welding apprentices used low carbon steel to design a hollow box section with aluminium cover plate to form a good maintenance support frame
- most apprentices make good use of learning technology; they use two- and three-dimensional computer-aided design and the college's virtual learning environment frequently to help them with their assignment work and to develop their independent study skills
- teachers assess apprentices' work accurately; they provide supportive and constructive feedback on how well apprentices have done and what they need to do to improve the quality of their work
- mathematics is embedded well in apprentices' work; in one lesson in electrical and electronic engineering, apprentices drew diagrams of three capacitors connected in parallel and calculated accurately the charge stored in each capacitor
- information, advice and guidance are timely and effective; teachers and assessors support apprentices with their curriculum vitae and applications to employment and higher education; group tutorials are well received by most apprentices and cover topics including safeguarding.

Building and construction

16-19 study programmes
19+ learning programmes

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in building and construction require improvement because:

- too many learners on full-time study programmes, particularly in brickwork, painting and decorating and the extended diploma in construction and the built environment leave early and do not achieve their expected objectives and qualifications
- the new strategies put in place to improve retention and attendance have not had sufficient time to impact on better learner success
- not all learners benefit from good teaching, learning and assessment; in the weaker building craft sessions teachers do not plan well or use a range of engaging activities; they do not routinely check learning is taking place
- only a minority of construction learners have access to a broader range of activities during their study programmes to further develop and enhance their employability skills through valuable work experience opportunities, site visits and team building activities
- one-to-one progress tutorials are not effective in setting targets to support and challenge learners to complete their course on time
- teachers do not consistently promote the development of learners' literacy and English skills in their planning and teaching.

In building and construction the provider has the following strengths:

- the teaching and assessment of learners' technical skills are good and learners produce practical work of good quality
- learners in construction and building services develop good technical skills; for example, building technician learners researched building control procedures, undertook a survey of part of the college building to house a new storage area, produced drawings, location plans and completed a submission to building control, which would be expected in the industry
- learning takes place in excellent spacious construction training facilities which are well maintained, equipped to industrial standards and are valued by learners
- mathematics are integrated well into courses and contextualised to the trade areas to better support skills development; for example, in a bricklaying session learners had to calculate quantities of bricks, blocks, volume of concrete, labour and total costs for a client's retaining wall
- learners who need additional support benefit from good planned support in class and the majority complete their qualifications
- learners make good use of the college virtual learning environment together with mobile technology in their learning; for example, learners in plumbing used mobile technology, researched various construction site and services drawings so they could better understand and interpret them to ensure the correct installation of pipework and positioning of radiators.

Sport and travel and tourism

16-19 study programmes
19+ learning programmes

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in sport, travel and tourism require improvement because:

- outcomes for learners are inconsistent with no clear improving trends; success rates for most general vocational sport programmes are well-below national rates and too few learners on advanced courses make good progress given their starting points
- learners are not sufficiently challenged in lessons; many make slow progress in developing their subject knowledge; teachers fail to plan learning activities to effectively develop the independent learning skills of advanced learners; as a result, many learners are over dependent on their teachers and struggle to maintain their attention and focus in lessons
- many teachers have low expectations for learners' effort and productivity; too many learners arrive late to lessons and class notes and portfolios are often of a low standard; opportunities for learners to apply and develop their practical skills in work-related contexts are underdeveloped
- the effectiveness of teachers' questioning skills needs improvement; questions often fail to challenge learners to further develop their initial responses and promote more critical, analytical and evaluative thinking
- learners are not always set useful and challenging targets in formal progress reviews; targets are often brief and generic and do not support learners to make rapid and effective improvement
- the development of learners' English skills requires improvement; teachers do not consistently highlight or correct spelling and grammar errors or embed opportunities in lessons to develop learners' applied English skills
- opportunities to enhance learners' understanding of equality and diversity in the travel and tourism sector are underdeveloped; for example, many learners have only a limited understanding of the diversity and specific needs of tourists and travellers.

In sport, travel and tourism the provider has the following strengths:

- experienced vocational teachers and professional coaches use their expertise effectively to develop sport learners' confidence, team working and practical sports skills
- learners are effectively encouraged to develop their mathematics skills in meaningful applied contexts; for example, travel and tourism learners calculate different time zone changes for travellers on long haul flights to a range of international destinations
- a well-established football academy partnership and a good range of out-of-college opportunities are effective in helping learners to apply their practical skills and develop their understanding of the sport, travel and tourism industries.

Visual arts and media and communications

16-19 study programmes
19+ learning programmes

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in visual arts and media and communication require improvement because:

- the proportion of learners who successfully complete their qualifications is below national rates

- teachers' questioning techniques are restrictive; some learners are not targeted so they can contribute to lessons that involve group discussions
- frequently, especially on advanced art and design courses, learners, are not challenged enough to develop their knowledge and as a result, work at a lower level than they are capable of
- group profiles are not always used to identify appropriate teaching strategies, and the needs of specific learners are sometimes not sufficiently recognised in planning and delivery
- the planning and implementation of additional learning support lack focus and do not always help raise learners' achievement effectively
- in written assessments teachers do not support learners adequately to raise the quality of their written English skills which, in some specific instances, severely restrict eventual employment ambitions; in some lessons teachers do not correct spelling and grammar errors as they occur
- opportunities for work experience are underdeveloped
- teachers are not rigorous enough in their insistence of what acceptable classroom practice is and how it relates to eventual employment; in some lessons attendance and punctuality impact adversely on collaborative learning.

In visual arts and media and communication the provider has the following strengths:

- there is a strong sense of mutual respect between teachers and learners
- equality and diversity matters are highlighted, dealt with sensitively and learner understanding enhanced; learners speak openly about on-line harassment and demonstrate empathetic understanding for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues
- teaching and learning are well supported by good accommodation and specialist equipment; learners' work is displayed and celebrated and a stimulating, safe and inclusive environment created
- learners are developing skills well and understand the importance of technique; for example, learners on a level 1 media course demonstrated excellent presentation skills while speaking to projected images and with no recourse to notes
- teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and some integrate learning technology effectively into their lessons; demonstrations are expert, and immediate problem-solving impressive; creative media learners especially demonstrate sophisticated information and learning technology skills
- assignments are well designed and reflect potential workplace scenarios; on occasions learners are able to work with clients based within the community; the tracking of subsequent learner progress is very clear and informative
- the application of mathematics in fashion lessons is good; learners are required to cost out proposed designs that involve some sophisticated calculation and are realistic and relevant to future employment.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes
19+ learning programmes

Inadequate

Teaching, learning and assessment in Foundation English learning are inadequate because:

- success rates in 2013/14 declined; the achievement gap between 16- to 18-year-olds and adult learners significantly increased and the majority of 16- to 18-year-old learners who studied functional skills as part of their study programme made inadequate progress
- learners' attendance and punctuality are poor; absenteeism leads to learners making slow progress and does not prepare them well for employment

- teachers do not use learning support staff effectively to decrease dependence over time; for example, learning support staff provide answers to tasks and do not encourage learners to proof read their work or identify incorrect spelling and punctuation
- teachers do not pay sufficient attention to learners' different abilities; teaching, learning and assessment activities are not well planned and executed to meet individual needs; learners studying for different levels complete identical writing activities and higher-level learners are not encouraged to extend their writing skills
- learners do not complete sufficient work in lessons to make the expected progress over time and so do not develop more technical language skills or have the opportunity to practise and develop their spoken and written English skills
- teachers do not have sufficiently high enough expectations of learners
- teachers do not always take sufficient account of initial assessment and prior attainment when planning learning and assessment activities; as a result, learners do not receive challenging tasks to develop a wide range of transferable work-related and interpersonal skills
- learners do not benefit from being set short- and long-term goals and targets that are reviewed and updated regularly; teachers mark practice assessment papers and provide verbal feedback but do not follow through with a robust progress review that identifies further development or sets more challenging targets to achieve
- teachers rely heavily on the use of observation, non-directed questioning techniques and practice paper tests to complete formative assessment in the classroom; some learners do not volunteer answers to questions and the teachers are unclear of learners' starting points for the lesson or the progress individuals make
- learners do not benefit from constructive feedback; feedback is generally positive but lacks critique to show learners how to improve further and develop their writing skills
- teachers do not raise the standard of learners' work through careful correction of grammar, punctuation and spelling errors in learners' writing or learning activities; learners continue to repeat mistakes in the correct spelling of key vocational vocabulary.

In Foundation English learning the provider has the following strengths:

- success rates for adult learners studying functional skills English qualifications at entry level are high
- learners' behaviour in lessons is good; teachers encourage consideration that fosters good relationships
- teachers use practical learning and problem-solving activities well in a few theory lessons; for example, learners improve their confidence and depth of understanding of persuasive and instructive text through following a peer instructions to make a food product, modelling an amusement park ride for a Dragon's Den pitch concept and designing a biscuit advertisement to appeal to a range of cultural customers.

Business administration

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in business administration require improvement because:

- overall success rates for apprentices remain below national rates; too few apprentices complete their qualifications on time, and the pace of progress in achieving better outcomes for apprentices is slow
- the quality of assessment requires improvement; in review meetings, assessors' questioning is often limited and feedback fails to make clear what is required for apprentices to improve and to meet module requirements effectively

- too often, teachers and assessors frame tasks and activities which fail to challenge and extend all learners; while effective tracking of achievement takes place, target-setting lacks rigour and high aspiration
- teachers regularly reinforce apprentices' English skills, while doing job-related tasks, but feedback on written work is not detailed enough to help learners to improve their understanding and accuracy; errors are not always highlighted and in a few instances, there were written errors in materials shared with learners
- teachers and assessors encourage good relationships and create a respectful learning environment, but in most lessons and reviews, promotion of the awareness of equality and diversity is not sufficiently developed; apprentices' understanding of the impact in the workplace is limited.

In business administration the provider has the following strengths:

- teachers and assessors use their skills and expertise well to plan and deliver theory and workplace support, which helps apprentices to apply understanding, to gain confidence and to develop good employability skills; teachers and assessors collaborate well with employers and other partners, to plan and support progress in learning
- mathematics are well-integrated into workplace programmes and learners have good opportunities to reinforce skills, which help them to achieve their job aims; Contact Centre apprentices are adept at calculating telephone tariffs and accounts
- apprentices speak positively about the support they receive and information, advice and guidance are good; assessors and workplace managers provide helpful inductions and apprentices receive timely information on further opportunities and progression routes
- apprentices develop good ICT skills, within the workplace and outside lessons; they benefit from the access to drop-box, to the virtual learning facilities and value highly their ICT lessons.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The overall quality of provision at the college has deteriorated considerably since the previous inspection in 2009. Leaders and managers, including governors, presided over this deterioration for several years and failed to take effective actions to reverse the decline in the college's performance. The self-assessment report only partially acknowledges these failings.
- A new principal and deputy principal were appointed less than a year before the inspection. They have jointly worked hard to reverse the college's fortunes by adopting a tougher approach to performance management, strengthening the governing body, recruiting new staff and applying more stringent criteria for assessing teachers' performance. Early indications suggest evidence of improvements in a few aspects of the college's provision, but it is too early to assess the full impact of all of the measures that the senior team has taken.
- Following concerns about the poor attendance of a minority of governors, senior managers and the governing body took appropriate steps to address the issue and strengthen the board. The governing body now consists of very experienced individuals who bring with them expertise in industry, further and higher education, safeguarding, law and finance. Governors receive regular and detailed reports on all aspects of the college's performance which they scrutinise. However, governors have not had a sufficient impact on the overall quality of the college's provision. For example, they have not challenged declining success rates for apprenticeships effectively.
- Leaders, managers and teachers have failed to set sufficiently high expectations and standards. They have not successfully tackled significant weaknesses in the management of study programmes for learners aged 16 to 18, apprenticeships and English. Leaders and managers rightly recognise that considerable improvements are required. They have appointed staff coaches to work with underperforming teachers, increased the monitoring of progress, and

raised the college's profile with LEP's and employers. However, it is too soon to assess the impact of these measures.

- Senior managers have implemented a well-considered procedure for observing classroom practice, but this has not yet resulted in enough good or better teaching. Observers write action plans for teachers following observations that are generally well thought through, but too many lessons are over-graded. Staff coaches carry out a range of support activities with weaker teachers, including supportive observations and individual coaching and mentoring which in some cases lead to timely improvements in performance. However, inspectors did not agree with the college's view that most lessons are good or better.
- The management of subcontractors has improved over the last year and improved procedures are now in place to ensure that subcontractors meet the college's quality and performance targets. The college has decided to terminate contracts with several subcontractors for reasons related to quality. Performance management arrangements for the six subcontractors that the college now contracts with include regular and detailed reviews and clear lines of accountability.
- The self-assessment report is generally self-critical. Managers make use of data to support self-assessment judgements. However, the self-assessment report does not give sufficient weight to shortcomings in the management of study programmes and apprenticeships or to weaknesses in foundation English. Learners and employers receive questionnaire surveys each year and the results of these are very positive. Managers take appropriate action to make improvements following feedback from users.
- Senior managers plan the curriculum to meet local and regional needs. They work closely with two regional employer partnerships and a further education umbrella organisation to identify and meet local needs and to avoid duplication of provision. Managers have a good understanding of the regional economy and of the key gaps in employment and skills. Though college managers have secured links with a wide range of local employers, the proportion of learners benefiting from external work placements is too low. For too many learners, especially at entry and intermediate levels, destinations remain unknown.
- The college promotes an inclusive and supportive environment for learners. Teachers and learners are respectful to each other and to college staff. In the last two years the college has recruited an increasing number of learners who have a wide range of mental health, emotional and social needs. The college's learner services team has worked well with these learners to help them progress and achieve and they promptly tackle incidents of bullying and harassment.
- Safeguarding arrangements for learners are good. The two designated safeguarding officers are well trained to carry out their role effectively. The human resources department maintains an accurate and up-to-date single central register. The designated safeguarding officers deal promptly and efficiently with safeguarding incidents and record these electronically. A senior staff member represents the college at the local children safeguarding board. The college does not have a policy to prevent radicalisation and extremism and plans to address this are at an early stage of development.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Darlington 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	4	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	3	4	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	4	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	3	4	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	4	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	3	4	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	4	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	3	4	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Engineering	3
Manufacturing technologies	3
Building and construction	3
Sport	3
Travel and tourism	3
Visual arts	3
Media and communication	3
Foundation English	4

Business	3
Administration	3

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	8557							
Principal/CEO	Ms Kate Roe							
Date of previous inspection	May 2009							
Website address	www.darlington.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+
	295	876	531	533	869	540	2	179
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	245	386	145	171	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	39		3		42			
Number of learners aged 14-16	19							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	19							
Number of community learners	155							
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"> ■ Baltic Training Services Ltd ■ Nordic Pioneer Ltd ■ Optimum Skills Ltd ■ Thermal Insulation Contractors Association ■ Working Links 							

Contextual information

Darlington College is a medium-sized general further education college with the main campus in Darlington. The catchment area includes Darlington and the neighbouring areas of North Yorkshire and County Durham. The college provides basic skills for Army personnel based at the Catterick Garrison and a second campus at Catterick offers specialist vocational provision for young people who would not otherwise be engaged in education, employment or training. Unemployment levels in the locality are above the national rate. In 2014, the proportion of school pupils in Darlington achieving five GCSEs at A* to C, including English and mathematics, was slightly above the national rate.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Ruth James HMI
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Three 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 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, 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. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across 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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