

# Furness College

## General further education college

<b>Inspection dates</b>		24–27 March 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	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:

- the proportions of students and apprentices aged 16 to 18 who achieve are high
- the quality of the classroom-based provision in engineering is outstanding
- managers use very effective systems to determine the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and, consequently, to improve teachers' skills through good staff development
- students develop good mathematical skills, which prepare them well for employment
- students benefit from very good information, advice and guidance, which ensures they undertake the most appropriate course, make good progress and support their choice of destination
- managers have very strong working and strategic relationships with employers and the Local Enterprise Partnership and have led on the development of the Furness economic delivery plan; they develop the curriculum to meet students', employers' and local skills needs very well
- the performance management system is very effective; managers' focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment increases the quality of students' learning experiences and their outcomes.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- the proportion of adult students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who succeed in gaining their qualifications is low
- the setting of short- and medium-term targets for students does not always ensure they know what they need to do to improve or by when they should gain the skills needed to make rapid progress
- the quality of written feedback on students' assignments is too inconsistent; too many students do not receive constructive advice on how best they can rectify their weaknesses and improve
- the quality of the provision in foundation English requires improvement
- the promotion of diversity in lessons and tutorials is underdeveloped; students are unaware of a wide range of aspects of diversity that should inform their future personal and working lives.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quality and supportiveness of students’ target-setting so that they know the specific actions they should take to improve their work, skills and assignments. Ensure a greater consistency of high-quality targets that include short- and medium-term aims for students to aspire to within demanding timescales.
- Improve the quality and quantity of written feedback to students so that they have a clear record of both their key strengths and their main areas for development. Monitor the standards of such feedback rigorously to ensure that students obtain constructive and challenging advice on how best they can improve, whichever course they are studying.
- Determine the main factors causing the underperformance of adult students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and take appropriate action to increase their successful outcomes.
- Ensure that teachers, tutors and assessors explore diversity matters more fully with students and apprentices, so that they are aware of the wider aspects of diversity in the workplace, in Britain and in their professional and personal lives.
- Develop the knowledge and understanding that staff and students have of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- Support middle managers and teachers to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for students in foundation English, information and communication technology and arts, media and publishing, so that students in these areas enjoy the same high quality of provision present in other parts of the college, for example in engineering. Disseminate the good practice that exists in most parts of the college to the underperforming areas.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- All students are on vocational programmes, many of them in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics areas. The college offers 16 to 19 study programmes in 13 sector subject areas. Approximately two-fifths of the students are aged 16 to 18, of whom nearly all are full-time. The largest numbers of students study on level 2 programmes. Approximately one in eight of the total student body are apprentices, most of whom are on advanced-level programmes.
- The proportion of classroom-based students aged 16 to 18 who complete their qualifications successfully has increased over three years and is high, especially for those students on levels 1 and 2 courses. Outcomes for adults have also improved over three years but are just below those of similar colleges.
- Successful outcomes for functional skills students aged 16 to 18 are above average and for adults they are typical of the sector. Although few students took GCSE qualifications in 2013/14, the proportions gaining high grades in GCSE English are low for those aged 16 to 18 and are low for students of all ages in GCSE mathematics.
- Students who attain at high levels study courses in: engineering and manufacturing technologies; humanities; and preparation for life and work, but in information and communication technology and arts, media and publishing, too many students do not gain their qualifications.
- Most groups of students from minority ethnic backgrounds succeed as well as or better than those from a White British background. Although two thirds of the students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are aged 16 to 18 and achieve as well as other students, adults underachieve.

- Most students make the progress expected of them, given their prior attainment and the proportion doing so has increased. In particular, students on subsidiary and extended diplomas in health studies and BTEC diploma in electrical engineering make good progress. CACHE childcare students, however, make less progress than expected. College-provided data indicate that the proportion of students achieving high grades is high.
- A very high proportion of students on 16 to 19 study programmes undertake or have planned work experience with external employers. A very small proportion undergoes work experience preparation so that they may make the most of being with a relevant employer.
- Many students develop good employability skills. For example, teachers link theory to practice and employers' needs very effectively in engineering. A teacher in construction related a practical exercise on bonding to a local well-known building to illustrate its practical application. Most students make good progress in lessons and on their course. In engineering, students work at very high practical and industrial standards. Most students are punctual and behave very well. They develop good team-working skills and increase their ability to become self-reliant.
- Attendance has increased over the last three years. During inspection, attendance was high in engineering, but low in foundation English and mathematics. Current in-year retention is much higher than at the same time last year and is high.
- The proportion of apprentices who are successful increased last year and is high, especially for those aged 16 to 18 and those on advanced-level programmes. The proportions completing their training within the expected timescale are also well above those of similar colleges.
- The rate of progression of students between different levels within the college has increased and is high, especially between entry and level 1 and between levels 1 and 2. It is lower between levels 2 and 3, mainly because of students gaining employment and apprenticeships. Progression between levels in engineering is particularly high.
- Most leavers progress to suitable employment, higher education, other further education or self-employment. A small minority of leavers, from mostly service sector areas, are unemployed. Managers have increased the proportion of engineering, advanced manufacturing and science provision in order to meet demand from employers. Managers are aware of the need to obtain the destinations of a greater number of leavers earlier in the year, so as to inform their curriculum planning.

<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good as reflected in the good overall outcomes for students. Managers demonstrate a strong commitment to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have recently developed a very effective observation system to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The ensuing staff development results in the large majority of lessons being good or better. During inspection, inspectors generally agreed with the judgements of college observers.
- Managers observe teachers and assessors at least once a year and more frequently if they judge lessons are less than good. Teachers and assessors receive good support from subject learning coaches to improve their performance.
- A large majority of teachers and assessors are well qualified and use their extensive industrial experience to develop students' and apprentices' skills. They adapt inclusive learning technologies creatively to engage, motivate and challenge students in many lessons. Additionally, most teachers promote independent learning through the well-populated virtual learning environment and students benefit from this. Teachers use web-based technology expertly to test students' knowledge, promote their development and reward them for achieving excellence in lessons. Students enjoy these challenging opportunities to compete against their peers.

- A large majority of students and apprentices develop new skills, which assist them in progressing to higher-level qualifications and into employment. Students enjoy college because they feel valued and they enjoy gaining skills that will aid their future progression.
- Teachers carry out initial and diagnostic assessments for English and mathematics systematically. However, teachers do not use the results of these consistently to plan learning activities to meet the individual needs of students. This results in a minority of students not achieving their individual goals in a timely manner.
- Teachers and assessors do not integrate the development of students' English and do not support students sufficiently to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Managers have developed a strategy to resolve this concern, and in engineering this has been successful. For example, one engineering teacher uses a range of activities and games to develop spelling skills to assist students in their practical work reports.
- The development of students' mathematics skills is more successful. Teachers' support and peers' advice encourage students to undertake vocationally relevant calculations. In one lesson, students used appropriate calculations, developed over a number of weeks, to research and quantify the materials involved in building the Forth Bridge.
- Students receive challenging long-term targets. The setting of short- and medium-term targets, however, requires improvement. Too many students do not receive specific targets to ensure that they can develop their skills and knowledge rapidly. This restricts their progress and prevents them from achieving higher grades.
- Teachers do not consistently monitor students' progress against their individual learning plans and associated targets. In particular, curriculum managers do not have a detailed understanding of the progress that students make in English and mathematics functional skills. This prevents managers from supporting tutors to help students develop their skills fully.
- The large majority of students have an adequate understanding of the progress they are making on their programme and receive frequent verbal feedback. For many students, however, written feedback is insufficient to allow them to reflect on what they have done well and to know how to develop their skills and knowledge.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Improved and clear processes put the welfare of the student at the heart of the college. Recently, managers have restructured the application and initial assessment process to ensure that students have support for their additional learning needs from day one of the programme. Staff have very effective links with external organisations to support prospective students and to give appropriate guidance to all students.
- Prospective students benefit from very effective taster days and in-depth inductions prior to their starting the course. These clearly state the high expectations placed on students by teachers. Managers contract with a weekly independent careers guidance service for students that is promoted effectively through individual and group tutorials.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires further development. Too many lessons do not contextualise sufficiently the promotion of diversity. On too many occasions, tutors reinforce negative stereotypes with their students and miss opportunities to develop their understanding of the meaning of diversity in the context of their vocational area.

## Engineering

**16-19 study programmes**  
**19+ learning programmes**

Outstanding

### Teaching, learning and assessment in engineering are outstanding because:

- the proportions of students making better progress than expected, moving on to higher levels, and achieving their qualifications are very high; students benefit greatly from using 'Pass Plus', which motivates them to exceed their minimum targets

- teachers have extremely high expectations of learners; the standard of students' work is particularly high and this gives them considerable confidence that they can meet the demands of work and higher education
- teachers use target-setting very effectively to record and monitor students' progress in a timely and ordered way; they use the very well-considered tutorial programme to agree clear and very challenging individualised targets. Students take responsibility for their own learning and agree very demanding goals
- teachers give particularly constructive feedback on practical activities that identifies clearly what learners have done well and how they can best improve their skills; feedback is less effective, however, when students submit assignments electronically
- links with employers and the local community are exceptional and very well-established; students' progression into employment is extremely high; employers and teachers ensure students are aware of, and implement, very thorough health and safety practices
- full-time students engage with extremely meaningful work-related activities to help them develop very good skills for employment; teachers adapt experiences from real-life situations very effectively to give meaning to classroom-based activities so that students appreciate their value and application
- teachers are very well qualified and experienced; accommodation, resources and equipment are of a very high standard and local employers provide outstanding specialist materials, tools and equipment
- teachers embed applied mathematical skills very imaginatively in lessons; for example, students use very sophisticated measuring equipment to good effect and to ensure that their work is completed to very precise tolerances. Teachers' development of students' English skills, however, is less effective and spelling and grammatical errors remain uncorrected
- teachers exploit opportunities in lessons to explore social and cultural diversity very effectively; for example, students discuss wheelchair design, drug use and stereotypical attitudes maturely in a well-supported environment
- students develop extremely useful additional and relevant skills; for example, they undertake an additional unit in computer-aided design which complements their main qualification and increases their employability skills
- teachers use a web-based system extremely well to check students' understanding and learning; students engage very effectively with a wide range of activities, including extension work to challenge the most able and less complex topics to support the less advanced

## Manufacturing Technology

Good

### Apprenticeships

#### **Teaching, learning and assessment in manufacturing technology are good because:**

- the large majority of apprentices complete their programmes successfully; they develop good vocational skills, become more confident and work with minimal supervision
- apprentices produce a high standard of work, for example, those studying fabrication and welding make submarine components to exacting standards
- enthusiastic, highly motivated and highly qualified teachers and assessors have good industrial experience, which they use effectively to inspire their apprentices to develop their skills, resulting in their making good progress
- teachers and assessors provide effective one-to-one support on a frequent basis, helping apprentices to make good progress; for example, an assessor helped an apprentice to learn more about extended welding techniques by providing her with a video that explained and demonstrated key concepts

- teachers give good support to apprentices to help them prepare for examinations and to study additional subjects that improve their employability skills
- staff provide their apprentices with good information, advice and guidance before, during and on leaving their courses; consequently, many apprentices are employed in very supportive workplaces that meet their aspirations and many progress to positions of responsibility or to higher education
- teachers and assessors promote and develop apprentices’ use of mathematics effectively. They take particular care to reinforce mathematical concepts during lessons; for example, apprentices calculate angles, dimensions and complex true measurements of conical shapes
- teachers make good use of learning resources, including the virtual learning environment, to enrich learning and to support apprentices’ progress; apprentices use information learning technology frequently in lessons and also to research and present assessed work and, consequently, they develop good independent study skills.

**Teaching, learning and assessment in manufacturing technology are not yet outstanding because:**

- teachers and assessors do not routinely help apprentices to improve their English skills; they overlook apprentices’ punctuation, grammatical and spelling mistakes, and their feedback on apprentices’ assessed work does not identify sufficiently how they should improve their skills
- apprentices’ development targets, set during progress reviews, are not specific enough; they do not focus upon the development of apprentices’ skills or provide challenging timescales for the completion of assessed work
- teachers and assessors do not develop apprentices’ understanding of diversity effectively; teachers’ questions are superficial and so apprentices do not realise the diverse nature of the customers and colleagues with whom they work.

<p><b>Foundation English</b></p> <p><b>16-19 study programmes</b></p> <p><b>19+ learning programmes</b></p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
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**Teaching, learning and assessment in foundation English require improvement because:**

- the proportion of students who gain their functional skills qualification is high, but teachers do not always consider sufficiently thoroughly students’ entry qualifications when choosing their most appropriate level of study; consequently, too many students with a grade D in GCSE English study towards a level 1 functional-skills qualification
- expectations of students are often too low and teachers do not encourage their independent learning. Teachers do not challenge level 2 students adequately through their written work; for example, students analyse visual features of advertising rather than language aspects and produce posters with a very limited amount of text
- planning learning to meet the needs of individual learners requires improvement; in the majority of lessons, teachers use standardised lesson plans that do not take account of individual needs and, as a result, level 2 learners experience insufficient challenge and make insufficient progress
- teachers’ monitoring of students’ progress over time requires improvement; their over-reliance on verbal feedback relating to students’ progress means that learners do not know how well they are progressing and whether or not they are on target to achieve their aims.

**In foundation English the provider has the following strengths:**

- in the best lessons, students are engaged effectively and teachers motivate them through a wide range of activities with a high rate of progress; for example, teachers use mini white-

boards and on-screen timers well to encourage students to contribute fully to activities looking at examples of particular features of language

- teachers give good written feedback to students, which is effective in identifying the specific skills that they need to improve and which directs them to additional resources that may help to develop their skills; for example, teachers advise students who frequently make errors relating to homophones to use BBC Skillswise resources for further practice
- the development of speaking and listening skills in lessons is good and students benefit from valuable interactions in which they are able to learn from each other; for example, students discussed the appeal of one advertisement over another and explained terms such as slogans and rhetorical questions to each another
- the majority of students are well engaged in English lessons which most of them enjoy, and this is encouraged by the good links that tutors make to employment skills and future progression; students appreciate that they have developed skills, such as confidence in making presentations, and how this will help them in their future careers.

## Foundation mathematics

16-19 study programmes  
19+ learning programmes

Good

### Teaching, learning and assessment in foundation mathematics are good because:

- a high proportion of students studying functional mathematics achieve their qualifications. Students increase their confidence in breaking down mathematical problems; for example, in how to apply ratios related to real-life situations
- teachers use the results of initial assessment effectively to meet students' individual needs; students are placed on the correct level of study and receive the required additional support to help them to make progress, such as a student with a physical disability who benefits greatly from support to get to and move freely within lessons
- teachers structure lessons effectively and so motivate students to be involved and make progress; teachers have good relationships with students and learning activities match students' interests closely; for example, students calculate the savings they can make when buying a discounted games console
- students develop good work-related skills in lessons, especially when teachers embed examples of different applications of mathematics to the work place; for example, in how to use Pythagoras's theorem to measure the incline of a roof
- teachers integrate information learning technology very effectively to develop students' self-study skills. They encourage students to use their mobile phones to participate in online quizzes, to research the meanings of words and to solve problems; for example, how to work out body mass index
- teachers support the development of students' English skills effectively. They encourage students to use dictionaries to find out the meanings of words and their correct spelling; for example, the names of different-sided polygons
- teachers monitor the progress of students' progress well; they use skilful questioning techniques and assess students' skills through a wide range of activities.

### Teaching, learning and assessment in foundation mathematics are not yet outstanding because:

- too few GCSE mathematics students achieve grades A\* to C; current students do not make enough progress to achieve these higher grades

- teachers' written feedback on students' marked work and in progress reviews lacks detail; consequently, students cannot subsequently refer to their areas for improvement, and make slow progress
- attendance in both functional and GCSE mathematics is too low; teachers do not reinforce the consequences of poor lesson attendance sufficiently, nor do they emphasise that employers would not tolerate such absence in the workplace
- students do not receive sufficient homework to reinforce their learning; although a very good online resource is available for students to use out of college, too few students are encouraged to use it and too few take advantage of it.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders and senior managers set high expectations of their staff and their students. This is reflected in the improving and good outcomes for students. Managers disseminate their strategic priorities successfully to all departments and monitor their implementation rigorously through regular performance reviews.
- Governance is good. Governors have a broad knowledge of the performance of staff and students. They receive comprehensive reports and relevant data to inform them of the progress made to meet the key strategic and operational targets. They bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the college and demonstrate a good awareness of local and regional priorities.
- Employers and students hold the college in high-esteem, as evidenced by surveys of their views and also through meetings with them. Managers and teachers make significant contributions to the community by increasing the skill levels of the local and regional population, especially at levels 2 and 3, and so reducing unemployment.
- The development of the curriculum to meet local skills priorities is very good. Managers work very effectively with the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Chamber of Commerce to identify the key skills needs within the region. Managers work collaboratively with local employers to identify particular skills deficiencies in the area to inform the design of the curriculum; for example, the identification of groundworks in construction and work with the National Health Service.
- Learning environments, workshops and resources for learners are very good. Managers collaborate with employers to provide current industry standard equipment in most areas. Students use innovative software programmes that motivate them and develop their skills.
- The range and appropriateness of learning programmes are good. Leaders and managers are acutely aware of the requirements of the study programme and the great majority of students undertake work experience. The development of students' mathematics skills is good, but the development of students' English skills to aid their future progression into employment or higher education requires improvement.
- Senior leaders use in-year data effectively to assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and identify overarching key strengths and main areas for development. They obtain these data from a rigorous internal lesson observation system, which identifies accurately the most appropriate aids to learning and barriers to learning in lessons.
- Performance management procedures are good. Teachers benefit from good staff development and coaching support to develop a range of teaching, learning and assessment strategies to enhance their performance. Managers take appropriate action with teachers whose poor performance fails to improve sufficiently even after considerable professional advice and guidance.
- The self-assessment report identifies accurately the main strengths and areas for improvement. Inspectors agree with managers' judgements. The report contains good evidence, including well-presented data, to inform these judgements. The quality improvement plan links to the main areas for improvement in the self-assessment report and is coherent. Its progress section,



however, often refers to actions taken without evaluating the impact of these on students and their ongoing progress.

- All staff and students are committed to being respectful and inclusive. Managers promote equality and diversity matters thoroughly with staff at their induction and staff replicate this with students during their induction. Managers scrutinise outcomes data by different groups of students to ensure that they identify any underachievement. Their actions to resolve any differences are very successful, except for adult students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who underachieve. Managers adopt positive recruitment strategies to challenge stereotypes, such as the recruitment of female teachers in engineering and construction.
- Safeguarding arrangements for students are good. Managers meet the statutory safeguarding requirements and maintain the single central register rigorously. All staff receive appropriate training in child protection at levels 1 and 2. Referral systems are effective and managers work closely with the local safeguarding board and other agencies to support students. Managers have not yet informed students and staff fully of the risks associated with radicalisation, grooming and extremism. Students are very confident that the college is a safe environment.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Furness 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	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2	2	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2	2	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2	2	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2	2	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Engineering</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Manufacturing technologies</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Foundation English</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Foundation mathematics</b>	<b>2</b>

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	General further education college							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	3,121							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mrs Anne Attwood							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	December 2010							
<b>Website address</b>	www.furness.ac.uk							
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	249	524	440	731	531	452	10	106
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	81	86	91	159	1	14		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A							
<b>Full-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Part-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RV Projects (Europe) Limited.</li> </ul>							

## Contextual information

Furness College is a small general further education college situated on one site in Barrow-in-Furness. It attracts learners from Barrow and the wider area of South Cumbria. It offers provision from entry level to level 3 in 14 subject sector areas. Within a 25 mile radius of the main campus, there are three schools with sixth forms and a sixth-form college. The college serves an area of considerable deprivation. Barrow has a population of 70,000 of which 98% is from a White background. Approximately one fifth of Barrow-in-Furness residents are qualified to level 4 and above, which is below the national figure. Approximately a quarter of residents have no qualifications and this is higher than in the rest of the region and nationally. A lower proportion of local employees work in the service sector than is the case nationally. Most employers are either large or micro-businesses. Unemployment is slightly above the national average. The level of household income in Barrow-in-Furness is below the national average. The proportion of young people not in education, training or employment in Barrow-in-Furness is nearly 6%. The proportion of students aged 16 in Barrow-in-Furness who achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics in 2014, is below the national average.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Shaun Dillon HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), an associate inspector and four additional inspectors, assisted by the Director of Young People's Learning 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 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:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012)

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