

Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates		14–17 April 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
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:

- good and well-considered actions by senior leaders and managers have secured improvements to teaching, learning, assessment and outcomes for students
- well-managed changes to the curriculum including the introduction of specific entry criteria have increased its appropriateness to students; those on AS courses now make much better progress than they did in previous years
- enthusiastic and passionate teachers are committed to delivering high-quality provision
- teachers carry out good monitoring and assessment of students' learning; planning for further improvement is particularly effective in raising students' achievement
- staff provide highly effective support, advice and guidance which result in a high proportion of students progressing to the next stage of education or employment
- increasingly effective governors successfully challenge senior leaders and hold them to account for improving the provision
- staff at all levels are much more accountable for the quality of their work as a result of good performance management and staff appraisal arrangements.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- self-assessment and performance management processes have yet to eliminate underperformance on all courses; students' progress and the proportion who achieve high grades require improvement in a minority of subjects
- not all staff sufficiently guide students to learning resources or activities to help them improve their English and mathematical skills
- not enough teaching is outstanding; staff development and support arrangements insufficiently encourage teachers to evaluate critically the quality of their teaching as a means of improving their own practice
- students with identified support needs do not routinely receive good additional learning support and they do not achieve as highly as their peers.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers must continue to take action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and through this, students' outcomes on the minority of remaining underperforming courses.
- Provide teachers with training so they are all able to recognise the improvements that students need to make in their English and mathematical skills. Improve teachers' awareness of resources and activities that they could guide students to use to improve these skills outside of lessons.
- Leaders and managers must implement staff development and training that build on the lesson observation and performance management procedures to ensure that more teachers regularly deliver outstanding lessons. A key component of this should be to ensure that teachers understand how to critically evaluate and reflect on their practice, identifying how they can improve it.
- Ensure that all students who need additional learning support receive it. Teachers and support workers must plan support effectively so that it enables students with additional support needs to make good progress and achieve well.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Most students are aged 16 to 18. The vast majority follow level 3 study programmes with the remainder following level 2 study programmes. Most students on level 3 programmes study AS and A levels. The college has broadened the curriculum available to students this year, which has resulted in a significant minority combining their academic studies with vocational qualifications. Of the small number of adults at the college, the majority work towards vocational qualifications at levels 2 and 3, mainly in health and social care. The remaining adults study AS and A levels or take GCSEs in English and mathematics. The college does not subcontract any of its delivery.
- The declining trend in students' achievements noted at the previous inspection has been successfully reversed. More stringent entry criteria and a wider and more appropriate range of programme options, including mixed academic and vocational study programmes, have contributed to students making much better progress this year.
- A higher and good proportion of students who started AS courses in 2014 have remained on their courses this year. The majority of students on AS and A levels are making good progress towards achieving challenging target grades in their chosen subjects.
- Students make very good progress based on their prior attainment in law, film studies, government and politics, German and physical education at both AS and A level and at A level in English language, French, history, and physics. Managers have successfully reduced the considerable variability in student outcomes between different subjects noted at the last inspection. This has been particularly successful at AS; although a minority of underperforming subjects remain.
- A good proportion of adults taking level 2 and 3 certificates in health and social care successfully gain valuable workplace skills and achieve their qualifications. A high proportion of adults taking GCSE English and/or mathematics achieve the qualification although for the small number who take GCSE mathematics few achieve A* to C grades.
- Students' attendance is good on the vast majority of courses. Attendance for the small number of students following study programmes at level 2 requires improvement.

- The majority of students develop good attitudes to work and produce good quality coursework. They develop a good range of personal, social and work-related skills. Many students come to the college with low prior attainment and quickly improve their confidence and study skills. Students participate in a good variety of enrichment activities, including work experience, which prepare them well for their next steps in education or employment.
- Science students improve their mathematical skills well. In geography, students improve their understanding of statistics when calculating crop yields and analysing climate change. Students studying law, English language and literature develop good English skills. However, students do not improve their English and mathematical skills consistently well across all subjects. A good proportion of students who join the college without GCSE A* to C grades in English and mathematics achieve these grades at the college although a few have to resit several times.
- College managers have implemented a range of strategies to reduce differences in the performance of identified groups of students. The gap between the proportions of males who achieve compared to females has been reduced considerably. However, the gap between the achievement of students who need additional help or support to engage in their studies remains unchanged.
- A high proportion of students, many the first in their family to do so, enter higher education. Increasing proportions apply to and take up places at prestigious universities. Developments to the curriculum enable students to follow more varied programmes, which have helped a good proportion to move directly into employment or apprenticeships. Increasing numbers of students enter higher-level apprenticeships with local employers.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good reflecting the good outcomes for students. Attendance of the vast majority of students is good. The introduction of a broader curriculum more suited to students' individual circumstances and prior attainment, and good application of more rigorous entry criteria have ensured students are on appropriate study programmes. Students make good progress, an improvement on previous years, because of much improved teaching and rigorous assessment and monitoring of their achievements.
- Teachers have high expectations of students. They set students challenging targets, motivating them well to aspire to achieve high grades. They use their academic knowledge and technical expertise effectively to support students to develop good study and vocationally related skills. Teachers' good use of coaching skills encourages students to reflect on their work and identify how they can improve.
- Teachers provide the majority of the most able students with additional, highly challenging learning activities to stretch their knowledge and understanding further. The college provides good additional study sessions and one-to-one coaching for all students. These are particularly effective for students who aspire to achieve the highest academic grades.
- Because of outstanding teaching, law students excel in their studies. Very well-planned learning activities significantly help students challenge each other to extend their legal knowledge. Through excellent, inspiring and enjoyable lessons, students in French are particularly skilled in speaking the language. Teachers use engaging illustrations and depictions to explain meanings of complex words and sentences.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers encourage students to make good use of information and communication technology (ICT). For example, computer studies students design technical diagnostic systems to test hypothesis and theories. Teachers in health and social care effectively guide students to use the internet for research. In one lesson, students gathered a good range of information to design professionally presented presentations promoting healthy diets.
- Teachers' assessment of students' work has improved since the previous inspection and is good. They regularly assess students' work and provide detailed verbal and written feedback. Teachers

guide students to access frequently their assessment grades using the college electronic tracking system, set new targets independently and take responsibility of their own studies and progress.

- Although the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, it still requires improvement in a minority of lessons. In weaker lessons, teachers do not inspire or motivate students to learn sufficiently. They provide little opportunity for students to interact with their peers. Although available, teachers do not use information and learning technology (ILT) to make learning more interesting in these lessons or guide students sufficiently to use it to learn outside of lessons.
- The quality of the additional support provided for students who need it requires improvement. Not all students receive specialist support that they require during lessons. As a result, they are less involved in lessons and make slower progress in improving their knowledge and skills.
- The college has developed good partnerships with local employers and use these well to provide students with relevant work experience. Teachers support students well to use this experience when writing statements for university applications or to apply for jobs. Access to appropriate work experience has helped students to progress into professional roles such as in medicine and veterinary practice and into higher apprenticeships in the pharmaceutical, chemical and engineering industries.
- Students receive regular and good individual tutorials. Appointed since the last inspection, personal progress mentors meet regularly with students providing them with good support, advice and guidance. They work closely with subject tutors to review students’ progress and set challenging targets.
- A specialist teacher and personal progress mentors ensure students receive good impartial careers advice and guidance. A varied programme of visiting speakers from a wide range of employers and regular careers events provide students with good information to assist them in planning and preparing for their next steps in education or employment.
- Not all staff sufficiently guide students to learning resources or activities to help them improve their English and mathematical skills. In science, students are not always encouraged to use more complex technical terms. In business management, students are not always effectively signposted to learning resources in order to correct spelling, punctuation and grammar in their written work.
- A culture of respect and positive relationships pervades the college. Staff and students promote diversity well throughout the college. For example, students studying government and politics demonstrated a high understanding of equality and diversity when analysing the social composition of The American Congress, expertly considering membership characteristics relating to gender, religion and military service.

<p>Science including psychology</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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Teaching, learning and assessment in science are good because:

- the large majority of science students make good progress given their prior attainment; retention, attendance and punctuality are good in all the science subjects
- teachers have high expectations of their students and through challenging practical activities enable students to develop good subject knowledge; students work hard in lessons to complete experiments and investigatory work
- teachers use their good knowledge of the science curriculum to plan lessons and provide good quality learning materials that enable students to develop a good understanding of essential scientific principles; students make good use of high quality resources on the college’s virtual learning environment

- teachers monitor students' progress well and take swift action when they fall behind; students value the additional workshops that enable them to catch up and attendance at these workshops is excellent
- teachers encourage students to evaluate each other's work and skilfully use this to encourage students to help their peers make good progress; in a chemistry lesson students who had quickly grasped the concept being explored, identified how they could help students who were struggling to understand
- teachers help students to develop good mathematical skills; in physics, for example, students learned how to use vectors to calculate force directions and magnitudes
- teachers provide students with detailed written feedback on assessed work giving clear direction about how to improve and achieve higher grades
- teachers provide good assistance and support to prepare students for university and work in the science sector; students are well prepared for the interview processes through working with ex-students and undertaking relevant work experience in the science sector.

Teaching, learning and assessment in science are not yet outstanding because:

- teachers provide insufficient learning and enrichment activities to enable the most able students to develop their scientific skills and knowledge to the extent they are capable of achieving
- science teachers do not sufficiently encourage students to improve their English skills; students are insufficiently encouraged to talk about their understanding of technical vocabulary or how to apply this better when answering exam questions
- in a minority of lessons teachers are not sufficiently aware of scientific misconceptions or misunderstandings that students have in order to be able to deal with these.

Business 16-19 study programmes 19+ learning programmes	Good
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Teaching, learning and assessment in business management are good because:

- the large majority of current students are making good progress; the standard of students' work is good and a high proportion of students, many with low levels of prior attainment, achieve their qualification at or above their target grades
- as a result of well-planned teaching and assessment, students develop good knowledge and understanding of business principles; students use current business performance information well to identify the impact of corporate social responsibility on business costs and reputation
- teachers and personal progress mentors support students very well to help them remain in learning; students at risk of not achieving target grades attend frequent individual support meetings and agree attendance rates at additional workshops where they can improve their understanding of business topics
- teachers provide students with comprehensive written feedback on their work; students can identify what they have done well and what they need to do to improve and as a result, achieve higher grades in subsequent assessments
- teachers guide students to make very good use of additional learning resources to extend their learning outside the classroom; students use work booklets well to plan and record their learning and use the college's virtual learning environment which includes video clips to enhance their learning and help them achieve good marks
- teachers help students to develop good analytical skills and as a result, they are able to extract information from long and often complex documents very well; for example in one lesson

students read a long article about a high profile oil spillage and correctly identified pertinent facts relating to the corporate social responsibility of the organisation

- teachers support students well to develop a good understanding of equality of opportunity in most lessons; students are able to identify the impact of selling Fairtrade goods on a business's reputation as well as understanding the working conditions of workers in developing countries when manufacturing products for sale in the United Kingdom.

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

- in a small minority of lessons, teachers do not check students' understanding before progressing to the next activity to ensure that they can apply their knowledge effectively
- teachers do not give students information about learning resources they can use to help them further improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar to enable them to achieve higher marks in examinations.

Law

16-19 study programmes

19+ learning programmes

Outstanding

Teaching, learning and assessment in law and legal services are outstanding because:

- as a result of outstanding teaching and assessment, students develop excellent knowledge and understanding of legislation and case law; the very large majority of students, many with low prior attainment, complete their qualification and achieve high grades
- teachers motivate students particularly well to gain excellent understanding of criminal and substantive legislation and to quickly identify and refer to correct case law; in a lesson on manslaughter, students were able to accurately identify the characteristics of different manslaughter aspects and relevant case law
- experienced, enthusiastic and highly knowledgeable teachers have very high expectations of all students and plan lessons to ensure that all students take part in fast paced lively activities; for example, in one lesson, students successfully worked together to quickly identify the stages in court procedures for a range of offences
- teachers encourage students to develop excellent independent learning skills which enable them to develop a greater understanding of case law; students make excellent use of record cards to record cases they have researched outside lessons and map these against relevant legislation and offences
- teachers support students particularly well to help them achieve high grades; students make excellent use of additional workshops, student buddies and law knowledge clinics as well as a curiosity corner where they can post questions on a noticeboard and teachers or other students provide answers
- teachers give students excellent detailed and thorough written feedback on their work helping them identify what they have done well and how they can improve; students use this information along with their own reflections on their performance to help them improve their next piece of work
- teachers help students to develop good English reading and summarising skills; for example when reading letters from clients they can identify points of law accurately
- teachers and personal progress mentors give students outstanding career advice and guidance helping them make informed choices about their progression; at the start of their course students receive a very detailed information welcome booklet which identifies universities, their

entry requirements and the suitability of courses for a range of intended careers in the legal profession.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The Principal, senior leaders and managers have high expectations for all students. They are committed to providing high-quality educational opportunities to enable students of varying abilities to fulfil their potential and to progress to higher education, apprenticeships or employment. Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have been relentless in their efforts to secure sustained improvements to teaching, learning, assessment and outcomes for students.
- The appointment of an additional director and more clearly defined responsibilities for senior staff has strengthened the effectiveness of the senior leadership team. The middle tier of management, consisting of three heads of learning, is successfully focusing on improving the quality of provision throughout the college.
- The Principal remains committed to working collaboratively with local schools and colleges to ensure there is a wide choice of post-16 provision in Barrow-in-Furness. He is actively involved in a diverse range of partnerships, including Furness Educational Consortium, Furness Education and Skills Partnership and Lancaster University, and is highly successful in raising the profile of the college in Cumbria and beyond.
- Governors are increasingly proactive and considerably more successful in challenging senior leaders and holding them to account for improving the effectiveness of performance management and the quality of learning than they were at the previous inspection. They are more involved in the ongoing work of the college, for example by participating in subject-review meetings. They have significantly improved their understanding of the college's day-to-day work by going into classes and observing lessons, talking to students and attending student union meetings. Recently appointed governors have good industrial or educational experience.
- Managers have strengthened performance management arrangements since the last inspection and these are now good. Staff at all levels are increasingly accountable for the quality of their work. Managers challenge underperformance rigorously. Several teachers, including those in underperforming subjects, have left the college or changed their role.
- Staff are committed, hardworking, enthusiastic and passionate about raising the quality of provision and students' experiences. The improved rigour of the staff appraisal process places much greater emphasis on setting staff clear targets for students' attendance, retention and outcomes. However, staff development and support arrangements insufficiently encourage teachers to evaluate critically the quality of their teaching as a means of improving their own practice.
- Self-assessment and quality improvement processes are robust. Managers have clear plans and actions in place to improve the few remaining weak subject areas. Staff training and continuing professional development are good. However, self-assessment and observations of teaching have not identified sufficiently the need for all teachers to have the required knowledge and skills to be able to improve students' English and mathematical competencies.
- Leaders and managers have responded well since the previous inspection to provide a curriculum that is more appropriate for all students. They remain committed to offering an extensive range of AS and A levels. The introduction of technical qualifications and clear entry criteria enable students to follow appropriate study programmes that meet their needs and the needs of the local and national economy. Developments to the curriculum have involved skilful budget management by senior leaders as funding has declined to minimise any adverse impact on students.
- Managers ensure that students have good opportunities for undertaking work experience appropriate to their study programmes. A good range of enrichment activities successfully develops students' personal, social and work-related skills.

- Equality and diversity has a high profile in the college. Well-designed study programmes meet the needs of individual students. Heads of learning monitor students' progress well. When their attainment is lower than predicted, rapid action follows. The college successfully protects students from harassment, bullying, unfair treatment and discrimination.
- Managers monitor the performance of different groups of students well. However, targets set to reduce differences have had variable impact and a few lack sufficient challenge. Actions to improve female retention and male achievement on AS levels are bringing about the necessary improvements. However, managers have been less successful in improving outcomes for students with additional learning and support needs.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. The college meets its statutory requirements to safeguard students. The central register of staff cleared to work with young people and vulnerable adults is comprehensive and up to date. The college has good information about and strategies for helping students who have health-related problems, such as mental-health issues, eating disorders or who self-harm. The college meets its statutory duties to implement a Prevent strategy, although managers recognise that they need to make students more aware of the dangers of extremism, radicalisation and terrorism and have plans in place to do this.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form 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	NA	NA	2	NA	2	NA	NA	NA
Outcomes for learners	2	NA	NA	2	NA	2	NA	NA	NA
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	NA	NA	2	NA	2	NA	NA	NA
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	NA	NA	2	NA	2	NA	NA	NA

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Science	2
Psychology	2
Business management	2
Law and legal services	1

Provider details

Type of provider	Sixth form college							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	880							
Principal/CEO	Mr David Batten							
Date of previous inspection	November 2013							
Website address	www.barrow6fc.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+
	N/A	N/A	38	185	511	30	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
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"> ■ None 							

Contextual information

Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College is a small sixth form college. It is the only sixth form college in Cumbria. The majority of the students are aged 16 to 18. The proportion of school pupils who achieve five GCSEs at A* to C, including English and mathematics in Barrow-in-Furness is below the national rate and the rate for the North West region. Based on the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation, Barrow-in-Furness is one of the most deprived local authorities in England. Unemployment in the area is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Malcolm Fraser HMI

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

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