

The Vocational College Ltd (TVC)

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		8–12 June 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
Overall enectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners	Good-2	
Quality of teaching, learning and as	Good-2	
Effectiveness of leadership and ma	Good-2	

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- a very high proportion of apprentices achieve their qualifications within planned timescales
- teaching sessions are structured well and engage learners and apprentices well in learning
- tutor assessors have high expectations of apprentices and set them good levels of challenge to develop their practical skills
- tutor assessors work flexibly to meet work patterns and plan their visits well to maximise learning and assessment opportunities
- apprentices in sport make good use of online resources to learn independently and staff and apprentices use mobile technology well to monitor progress and improve practical training techniques
- leaders and managers use their very good and long-established links with employers to develop programmes that meet the needs of the glazing industry and local and national employers particularly well.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- learners on study programmes do not have sufficient opportunities for work experience and the proportion who progress to further education, training or employment is low
- targets and actions are not sufficiently precise in identifying clearly the next steps that learners and apprentices need to take to progress
- tutor assessors do not correct grammatical and spelling errors routinely and do not develop learners' and apprentices' English skills in learning sessions
- tutor assessors do not reinforce equality and diversity consistently in learning sessions and reviews to enable all learners to gain a wider understanding of working and living in modern Britain.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the organisation and management of study programmes so that more learners gain work-related skills and experience and are more able to achieve qualifications and skills that allow them to progress to higher-level study, training or employment.
- Provide training for tutor assessors to ensure that they all set clear and precise targets for learners and apprentices consistently so that they understand what actions they need to take to make good progress.
- Ensure that all tutor assessors have the skills and competence to identify errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar to support learners in improving their English skills.
- Ensure that tutor assessors are confident in developing apprentices' and learners' understanding of equality and diversity to prepare them well for living and working in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Of the 1,553 apprentices and learners on programmes, 1,194 follow intermediate and advanced apprenticeships in manufacturing technologies and construction crafts, and 158 follow intermediate and advanced apprenticeships and study programmes at level 2 in sport, leisure and recreation. A further 125 follow study programmes at level 1. The remainder are on apprenticeship and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes in a variety of subject areas. The majority of learners are aged over 19.
- Outcomes for the vast majority of apprentices are good. The overall success rates and success
 rates for apprentices completing within planned timescales are well above the national rate and
 have been for the past three years. The majority of learners on study programmes complete
 successfully.
- Progression from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships is good. The proportion of learners who progress to further education, training or employment from study programmes requires improvement.
- Manufacturing technology and construction craft apprentices learn useful industry-related skills. Their practical work is of a high standard. They become competent in manufacturing and fitting a range of glass products used in businesses and domestic buildings. Apprentices in sport learn coaching techniques that they use well in their development as personal fitness instructors.
- Learners on study programmes gain in confidence and develop their social and employability skills well. They learn a broad range of practical skills including, for example, how to exercise correctly, how to manicure and pedicure, and skills in bricklaying. However, they do not always have work experience opportunities where they can apply and extend the valuable skills and knowledge they develop in the classroom and workshops.
- Staff use data well to compare the performance of different groups based on gender, ethnicity, age and disability. Where necessary, they create focused action plans to address achievement gaps that are identified by each department through monthly performance analysis.
- Apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications well in English and mathematics. Tutor
 assessors incorporate mathematics well in apprentices' theory and practical sessions. Tutor
 assessors do not correct grammatical and spelling mistakes routinely when assessing

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apprentices' and learners' submitted work. Most learners have a good understanding of career and progression opportunities and are on learning programmes that meet both local and national priorities.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Tutor assessors work highly effectively to provide apprentices and learners with very good and flexible support for learning. They set very high expectations for apprentices and learners and are keen to ensure that they make good progress. Apprentices and learners are motivated to learn and work well to be successful. They produce high standards of practical work and quickly develop good work-related skills. Beauty therapy learners provide their paying clients with a good range of treatments including manicures, pedicures, facials, nail art and camouflage make-up.
- Tutor assessors are very experienced and well qualified in the subjects they teach. They have appropriate teaching qualifications and use their skills well to plan learning; they make teaching sessions memorable and much more interesting by the use of personal experiences to enhance learning and understanding. For example, they assisted apprentices in a business administration session to list different types of organisations and explain the variety of ways they use the profits they make.
- Apprentices and learners participate well and enjoy their learning. Tutor assessors plan and structure learning and coaching sessions well using a good range of activities to interest learners and to check their progress. As a result, sessions are lively and learners develop new skills quickly that help them in their workplaces or to progress towards their career aims.
- The large majority of apprentices and learners use an electronic portfolio, about which they are very enthusiastic. They find it easy to use and report that the different sections help them to build their vocational skills and monitor their progress more effectively.
- Apprentices and learners have access to good resources to support their learning. Apprentices and learners in sport, leisure and recreation benefit particularly well from a virtual learning environment (VLE) with good online learning materials and the use of mobile technology to support their independent learning. Not all apprentices and learners yet have access to the VLE so that they, too, can continue their learning outside of the classroom.
- Apprentices and learners receive a very prompt and thorough assessment of their English and mathematical skills. The majority of learners successfully complete their functional skills qualifications early in their programme. However, tutor assessors do not always make enough use of the results of initial assessment when planning learning to meet individual needs.
- Assessment practices are generally good. Apprentices and learners receive good oral feedback and understand what they need to do to improve. Written feedback is less effective and does not always ensure that apprentices and learners are clear about how to rectify spelling and grammatical errors.
- Tutor assessors do not consistently set apprentices and learners targets that are sufficiently precise and as a result, they do not always have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and make good progress. Tutor assessors do not place enough emphasis on the personal, social and employability skills that study programme learners need to gain.
- The integration of mathematics into vocational lessons is good. Apprentices who are exempt from taking their functional skills qualifications continue to develop their skills further. In a business administration lesson apprentices used data on types of organisations to develop their skills in producing charts. In a functional skills mathematics session learners understood how to prepare tally and bar charts by counting votes from ballot boxes to elect a local member of parliament. Study programme learners enjoy their functional skills lessons and make good progress, for example in writing informal emails and producing well-structured formal letters. Tutor assessors' incorporation of English into learning sessions requires improvement.

- Apprentices and learners receive comprehensive information, advice and guidance to ensure that they enrol on the most appropriate programme. Induction programmes are good, informative and introduce apprentices and learners very effectively to the requirements of their programmes. The majority of apprentices and learners receive appropriate and effective timely learning support to meet their needs. Apprentices receive good information and guidance that help them in making decisions and choices regarding their next steps in training and employment.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Apprentices and learners have a very good awareness of their rights and responsibilities at work, of safe working practices and safeguarding. While apprentices and learners gain a clear understanding of equality and diversity in induction and in the personal and social development lessons on study programmes, tutor assessors do not reinforce equality and diversity sufficiently consistently in learning sessions so that apprentices and learners gain a wider understanding of working and living in a diverse society.

Manufacturing technologies

Apprenticeships

Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in manufacturing technologies are good because:

- a very high proportion of apprentices achieve their qualifications; apprentices make good progress from their starting points; they gain in confidence and become more effective in the workplace by being able to work unsupervised on more complex tasks
- tutor assessors are competent, knowledgeable and experienced; they use their expertise well to develop apprentices' skills in preparing and manufacturing polyvinyl chloride un-plasticised (PVCu) windows and doors to high standards
- initial and diagnostic assessments are thorough; they identify apprentices' needs and abilities well. Apprentices receive good support from their tutor assessors and functional skills tutors; induction programmes are comprehensive and help apprentices understand what they need to do to achieve their qualifications
- apprentices develop good occupational skills; the standard of apprentices' practical work is high; in one lesson, an apprentice assembled an aluminium door frame accurately and carried out quality checks to ensure that surface finishes and the dimensions of each component of the frame were within the specified tolerances
- in theory lessons, tutor assessors use good questioning techniques to check apprentices' knowledge and understanding; they use a good range of teaching and learning resources to interest and motivate apprentices; the high-quality in-house produced resource packs and handouts help apprentices well to complete their tasks successfully and achieve the stated objectives of the lesson
- apprentices have a good understanding of health and safety issues; they follow safe working
 practices particularly effectively especially when working in high risk areas such as using moving
 overhead cranes to transport consignments of glass; apprentices feel safe in their work
 environment
- apprentices develop good mathematics skills and mathematics is incorporated well in all apprentices' work; apprentices interpret quality specifications and engineering drawings accurately; they use tools and equipment ably and measure PVCu window and door components correctly; in one lesson on safe handling and storing glass and glass-related materials, apprentices worked on a chart showing the recommended safe lifting weights for males and females in terms of shoulder, elbow and mid-lower heights

 information, advice and guidance are good; apprentices value the support they receive from tutor assessors on progression routes to higher-level courses.

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

- monitoring apprentices' progress is inconsistent; targets for improvement in the review process are not all sufficiently specific to help apprentices improve their work
- most apprentices do not submit detailed written work for assessment; tutor assessors do not encourage apprentices to write narratives describing their work to facilitate the development of their written communication skills and written feedback on work submitted for assessment is minimal and does not identify improvements clearly
- tutor assessors do not promote equality and diversity through teaching and learning sufficiently well to increase apprentices' awareness; in reviews apprentices use a standard template and tick boxes which do not encourage discussions.

Construction crafts	
Apprenticeships	Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in construction crafts are good because:

- the vast majority make good progress in completing their apprenticeships; they develop good vocational skills, become more confident, work with minimal supervision and produce a high standard of work; apprentices studying installation of glazed products produce and install components, such as windows, doors and conservatories to high standards
- enthusiastic, highly motivated and well-qualified tutor assessors have relevant industrial experience and qualifications, which inspire apprentices to develop their skills well; tutor assessors and employers have high expectations of apprentices and challenge the more able to undertake qualifications higher than their apprenticeship demands
- In theory sessions and assessments, tutor assessors use good questioning techniques and engage apprentices well in discussion and debate; as a result, apprentices demonstrate good progress and understanding; they are able to explain well the differences between the types of glass used during domestic installations, for instance the use of toughened and frosted glass for shower units
- tutor assessors give good support; they plan visits very well to suit the needs of apprentices and employers including meeting shift patterns and giving extra support for those who need it; tutor assessors are rigorous in ensuring that apprentices have developed the necessary skills to be competent in their chosen field of glass installation, handling and fitting
- apprentices' starting points are effectively established during initial assessment and the levels attained are used to plan teaching and learning sessions well; assessors track and monitor the progress apprentices make very well using a newly introduced electronic portfolio system; where apprentices are not able to access this facility independently, tutor assessors use electronic communications methods to ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of the progress they make

- staff provide good information, advice and guidance; apprentices are employed in very good workplaces that meet their aspirations and a high proportion progress to positions of responsibility
- all apprentices implement health and safety procedures particularly well in their workshop and work environment; for example, by making sure that colleagues remain safe from tripping hazards or brick dust; they feel safe and enjoy their learning and work
- apprentices receive good oral feedback during classes and assessment; they have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work; as a result, the quality of practical work is high
- the majority of learners, who study functional skills early in their training, develop their English and mathematics well; they are prepared well for their developing roles in the workplace and for completion of their vocational portfolio.

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

- tutor assessors do not provide consistent help to apprentices who have yet to complete functional skills qualifications to improve their English skills; too often they overlook apprentices' punctuation, grammatical and spelling mistakes
- apprentices' development targets, set during progress reviews, are not always specific; they do
 not routinely focus upon the further development of apprentices' skills or set challenging
 timescales for the completion of assessed work
- tutor assessors do not develop apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity effectively; questions asked during learning sessions and reviews are superficial and do not develop apprentices' understanding of the diverse nature of the customers and colleagues they work with.

Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in sport, leisure and recreation are good because:

- a high proportion of apprentices complete their qualifications successfully within planned timescales; their work is of good standards with many achieving or exceeding their apprenticeship requirements; current learners on the study programme make at least the progress expected of them
- apprentices develop good sports-related skills; tutor assessors have good industry knowledge and use this well when planning and delivering learning sessions; apprentices improve their coaching techniques well in sessions aimed at becoming personal fitness instructors
- support and care from tutor assessors are good and ensure that all apprentices and learners are challenged well; for example, tutor assessors set tasks that match individuals' ability and understanding in lively and engaging gym sessions
- resources used in practical sessions are good, and enthusiastic tutor assessors encourage apprentices to undertake background research; resources on the VLE are of a high quality and include interactive quizzes; the VLE provides good preparation and support for fitness and exercise sessions and develops independent learning skills well

- initial assessment is good and clearly identifies learners' and apprentices' needs and abilities; tutor assessors review progress regularly and set targets for apprentices particularly well to ensure that they are challenging and linked to personal, social and employability development; for example, an apprentice received help to set personal targets for rest and recovery due to a recent sports injury
- assessment of apprentices' work and progress is good; verbal feedback is detailed and tutor assessors make good use of mobile technology to ensure that apprentices know how to improve their skills and understanding; for example, recording apprentices' exercise technique when using free weights provides instant analysis and feedback to identify errors or make adjustments or improvements
- apprentices develop good mathematical skills; for example calculating exertion levels during fitness and exercise sessions; apprentices also develop increased skills in speaking and listening through the correct use of complex biological and technical terminology
- staff provide good information, advice and guidance to apprentices and learners and ensure that they are on the correct course associated with their career aspirations; apprentices and learners benefit from receiving this prior to enrolment, during induction and at different stages in their learning programme
- tutor assessors develop understanding of valuing differences well in learning sessions; staff stress the need to adapt fitness training plans in order to cater for the different needs of clients.

Teaching, learning and assessment in sport, leisure and recreation are not yet outstanding because:

- not all tutor assessors provide sufficient feedback to apprentices and learners on ways to improve writing skills; tutor assessors do not check spelling, punctuation and grammar routinely or do not identify copied work submitted by learners on the study programme
- targets set for learners on the study programme are not sufficiently detailed to allow them to reflect on their progress or on achieving vocational and personal goals.

Employability training Requires improvement 16-19 study programmes Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in employability training require improvement because:

- not enough learners progress to further education, training or employment from their study programmes
- tutor assessors do not set sufficiently detailed personal targets to enable learners to overcome barriers to learning and progression quickly
- too many learners do not participate in sufficient planned and meaningful work experience; this prevents them from using the practical, English and mathematics skills that they have acquired on their study programmes in the workplace or to increase their chances of gaining employment
- tutor assessors do not consistently provide written feedback that is sufficiently detailed, or identify spelling, punctuation and grammar errors routinely in learners' work; too many learners

are not sufficiently aware of how to improve their written work, and cannot spell key relevant terms accurately

tutor assessors do not promote diversity routinely during sessions; they do not build on the knowledge learners gain from educational visits, such as to develop further learners' understanding of Islam, to increase learners' awareness of life in modern Britain so that they are better prepared for life and work in a diverse society.

In employability training, the provider has the following strengths:

- the majority of learners complete their study programmes; they develop a range of useful skills, for example, sports coaching skills and using a spirit level to check that a wall is plumb
- the majority of tutor assessors have high and realistic expectations of learners during sessions and use these well to enable the majority of learners to reach their potential; in a beauty session learners carried out a full manicure, using a wide range of techniques such as removing cuticles, exfoliation and nail buffing
- the majority of tutor assessors use teaching and learning activities well to challenge learners to develop a range of practical skills; in a brickwork session learners made good progress in building a wall with a 90 degree half brick corner
- learners benefit from good opportunities to develop and apply their mathematics skills during sessions; in a joinery session learners compared alternative prices for a project based on the costs of different qualities of wood; learners on a course to prepare them for employment in the uniformed services learned about the use of ratio in map scales enabling them to apply their knowledge to reading maps and calculating distances between two points.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The senior leadership team has a clear ambition and strategy to sustain TVC's national reputation for delivering good apprenticeship provision for the glass processing and installation industry while developing apprenticeship provision into new areas of delivery. For example, they have broadened the range of programmes to meet the needs of the businesses they work with by introducing apprenticeships in administration and business management. Although very committed to delivering study programmes for young people in Liverpool and Birkenhead, leaders and managers have been slow to implement all the requirements of study programmes.
- Leaders have a clear and well-developed plan to provide all learners and employers with flexible access to training and assessment through information technology. Implementation of the plan has begun through the introduction of an electronic portfolio and an electronic assessor and the development of the VLE in sport, leisure and recreation and suitable training for staff.
- Performance management arrangements are good. Directors translate their expectations for the development and performance of the business well. Managers use a good range of performance data in regular meetings with tutor assessors, holding them to account for the progress of their apprentices and learners. Managers provide a good range of professional development and support for staff to maintain their occupational competence and improve their practice as tutor assessors.
- Performance management meetings consider the outcomes of observations of teaching, learning and assessment well. However, the quality and level of detail in observation reports is often not sufficiently evaluative. Reports do not focus sufficiently on the quality of learning. As a result, managers do not routinely set tutor assessors appropriately detailed actions to improve their practice.

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- Management of the subcontractors is good. Managers consider the performance of subcontractors, and the feedback from subcontractors' staff and apprentices well in the selfassessment processes. Subcontractors' managers and staff are involved well in quality reviews and staff development activities.
- Leaders and managers review the quality of provision regularly and use a good range of data and feedback from employers and learners to support this and to update the self-assessment report. Although the report is judgemental, it does not recognise sufficiently some key areas for improvement, particularly in the study programmes. Consequently, inspectors found this provision to be over graded. Improvement plans identify clear actions but a few actions do not have specific targets to monitor the progress of their implementation.
- Leaders and managers use very good and long-established links with employers in the glass processing and glazing industries to develop apprenticeship programmes that meet the industry needs particularly well. They consult with leaders and employers in the sector regularly to develop good progression routes for those who work in the industry. Leaders actively seek to engage with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) locally and nationally to respond to local priorities.
- The strategy for delivery of English and mathematics within apprentices' and learners' programmes is good. Managers have reviewed this recently and made improvements to it. Apprentices take functional skills early in their programmes and often at a level higher than their prior attainment, even if this exceeds the requirements of their programme. Learners on study programmes follow functional skills qualifications at appropriate levels. However, although managers have provided professional development for vocational tutor assessors the extent to which they support apprentices and learners to develop English skills in subject-based learning and assessment is inconsistent.
- Managers maintain good links with local schools and provide alternative vocational pathways for pupils at risk of not attending. Study programmes for young people meet local needs and learners' needs, many with significant barriers to learning, well. Aspects of study programmes require improvement. For example, managers have not done enough to secure sufficient work experience placements for learners and the proportion of learners who progress to further education, training or employment is low.
- Leaders and managers use data well to identify gaps in achievement between groups of apprentices and learners, taking swift action to address any differences. Managers regularly audit lesson plans and observation reports to ensure that tutor assessors plan to integrate equality and diversity and English and mathematical themes into their sessions. Inspectors found too many tutor assessors ask only superficial questions and complete a tick list during equality and diversity sessions. They do not understand how to integrate diversity themes into their delivery of lessons and assessments to make them vocationally relevant.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. The central register of staff cleared to work with young people and vulnerable adults is comprehensive and up to date. A named safeguarding officer maintains very good links with the local authority and other agencies. TVC has good policies and procedures in place to record and deal with any safeguarding incidents and to keep learners safe when online. TVC has an appropriate Prevent strategy in place and tutor assessors have received training.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

The Vocational 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	3	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	2	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	
Manufacturing technologies	2
Construction crafts	2
Sport, leisure and recreation	2
Employability training	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,283
Principal/CEO	Edward Stopforth
Date of previous inspection	July 2010
Website address	www.vcoll.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below			evel 2	Lev	el 3	3 Level 4 and abov		
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18		16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
(excluding upprentices inps)	72	3	39	20	0	3	0	0	
Number of apprentices by	Inte	rmedia	te	Ad	anced	_	Higher		
Apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19	€+	16-18	19+	16	-18	19+	
	44	9	91	18	353	()	0	
Number of traineeships	16-19				9+		Total		
	10			0		10			
Number of learners aged 14-16									
Full-time	N/A								
Part-time	N/A								
Number of community learners	N/A								
Number of employability learners	125								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	 Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency Apecs PE & Community Sport Ltd LivAva Beauty Therapy Academy SS Simon & Jude Church of England Primary School 								

Contextual information

The Vocational College is a private limited company incorporated in 1995 with its head office in Bootle, Liverpool, and a training skills centre based in Wallasey. It provides training programmes in the North, Midlands, and the south of England. It offers a 16 to 19 study programme for learners in Merseyside from a specialist centre on the Wirral. Three owner directors manage the business and are supported by 12 managers, 38 tutor assessors, 21 administration and support staff.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Robert Hamp HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Performance Manager For Business Sector 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 telephone calls 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 provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

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

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

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

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