

# South and City College Birmingham

General further education college

<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–20 November 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for students	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- The clear and decisive leadership displayed by the governors, principal and senior leadership team has led to many improvements in teaching, learning and assessment that benefit students.
- The college makes an exceptionally strong contribution to city regeneration projects and to meeting the needs of employers and local communities.
- Students make good progress from typically low starting points, and a high proportion successfully achieve the qualifications they study for.
- Effective curriculum planning and careers guidance support very good progression to further study or employment for most students.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good across most areas of the college, enabling students to develop good vocational and employability skills.
- Students' personal development is very good. Students behave very well and welfare arrangements are highly effective.
- The safeguarding of students from diverse backgrounds is very effective and the college has well-established strategies and protocols for the implementation of the Prevent duty.
- College teachers and support staff show a particularly strong commitment to students of different ages and from diverse backgrounds, including those who are disadvantaged or who have significant barriers to learning.

### It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Attendance requires improvement.
- Success rates on a small minority of courses require improvement, including a few level 3 courses for 16–19 year-olds.
- The teaching of discrete English and mathematics requires improvement, especially for younger students.
- In a small minority of cases, aspects of teaching and assessment require improvement.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- South and City College Birmingham was formed in 2012 as a result of a merger between South Birmingham College and City College Birmingham.
- It is a large general further education college providing vocational education from four main campuses and a number of smaller centres across Birmingham. The college provides education and training predominantly to communities and employers local to Birmingham and does not subcontract.
- The college serves a diverse community; around three quarters of students are from minority ethnic groups. Students aged 19 and over make up the largest cohort by age.
- Birmingham includes many communities in areas of high deprivation and a significant proportion of students are drawn from these areas. The unemployment rate in Birmingham is higher than the national figure. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is also above average.

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

- Improve success rates on the minority of courses where they are below average by tackling the issues that the college has identified as key factors, for example by ensuring that students are well prepared for formal assessments.
- Increase the proportions of students who achieve grades A\* to C in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Improve attendance at lessons, including English and mathematics lessons for students on study programmes.
- Ensure that the minority of weaker lessons are better planned to take into account the different needs and abilities of students so that all are suitably engaged and challenged, especially in discrete English and mathematics lessons for younger students.
- Develop better consistency in assessment practice across the college so that all students receive appropriately detailed and timely feedback that helps them to improve their work.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Senior leaders have established the clear ambition to be a leading contributor to strategic regeneration developments in the city by providing skilled, employable students. This ambition is widely shared by employers, stakeholders and staff and is accompanied by an exceptionally strong focus on employability skills. Leaders have been successful in raising the overall success rates following a decline brought about by the merger three years ago. They analyse progression and destination information meticulously. Teachers model the high levels of professionalism typical of their vocational sector well.
- Senior leaders and managers collaborate extensively and very effectively with a wide range of stakeholders, partner organisations and employers across Birmingham to plan provision that is well-matched to the city's strategic development plans such as the High Speed 2 (HS2) rail project. The Principal is the further education representative on the Local Employer Partnership (LEP) board and chairs the LEP colleges' consortium which works with the LEP and helps to ensure that the LEP is fully engaged in curriculum development. Employers work particularly closely to tailor apprenticeships which meet their needs and prepare apprentices for rapid progression at work. They offer a good range of special projects to provide realistic work experience for study programme students. Apprentices add value to their employers and are often considered for promotion in the future.
- Self-assessment accurately identifies where teaching is good and where it requires improvement. Leaders use this information to risk assess courses and programmes where there are concerns and plan a good range of interventions which support teachers to improve, such as working with learning coaches and mentors, general or specific staff development activities and peer-to-peer meetings to share good practice. Performance management is uncompromising where staff do not respond to the improvement support. Leaders and governors recognise that this improvement work is not yet sufficiently established.
- Leaders and managers recognise the strategic importance of developing students' English and mathematics skills as crucial to future employment or progression. They have been successful in achieving improved success rates in functional skills but less so for the smaller number of students who are required to retake their GCSE in mathematics or English. Literacy and numeracy are well integrated into vocational lessons in study programmes and off-the-job training for apprentices. For adult students, teachers place more emphasis on literacy skills, which is understandable given the large English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision. Adult students understand well the importance of improving their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Advisers from the college provide high-quality, valuable, impartial advice and guidance for a consortium of secondary schools in the city. This helps to ensure that students are well informed about their options at age 16. Student services' staff provide good-quality guidance for students once they arrive in the college, supplemented by contributions from employers. These help students to make informed choices and prepare well for job or university applications.
- Leaders promote the college culture of equality of opportunity and diversity well. Staff promote mutual respect and understanding of different cultures well in many lessons and around the college. Student induction activities are reinforced in tutorials and through an annual calendar of events. Relationships between very diverse groups are harmonious and any form of harassment, bullying or discrimination is firmly dealt with. There are few gaps in the achievement of different groups of students. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are particularly well supported and achieve well.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Governors are experienced and use their wide range of skills and expertise to scrutinise the quality of provision and hold leaders and managers to account. They know the college well and are fully aware of the areas that still require improvement to be consistently good.
  - Governors have provided specialist support and advice during the major restructure and rationalisation of provision following the merger three years ago and the more recent funding reductions.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Arrangements to protect students from radicalisation and extremism are strong. Senior leaders were proactive in introducing staff development ahead of the new duty under the Prevent legislation. Students' awareness was raised in induction and reinforced in tutorials and as part of the most recent 'Staying Safe' week. Relationships with the regional Prevent coordinator, the police and the local authority are strong and mutually beneficial, particularly where monitoring suggests referrals might be appropriate. Staff recognise that an important contribution to preventing vulnerable students from

being radicalised is to improve their qualifications and support their progression into employment.

- E-safety is well managed to protect students from making naïve mistakes when posting information on social media or other internet sites, as well as monitoring use of college systems to protect students from radicalisation. The tutorial programme and regular 'Staying Safe' weeks focus well on key safeguarding concerns in the locality such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation, with good contributions from appropriate partnership organisations.
- The single central record of staff recruitment checks is comprehensive and well maintained. Security on the college sites is good.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good across all provision types. Teachers have high expectations of students and set them high standards. Students benefit from teachers who are well qualified and have good subject and vocational expertise. Teachers use their occupational knowledge well to motivate and engage students in learning. They also use the good range of resources within the college to enhance learning.
- Teachers plan lessons well. Their planning indicates how they will integrate English and maths, employability, and equality and diversity into learning. Teachers promote and integrate English and maths particularly well in vocational classes and draw out the relevance to the occupation being studied. For instance, in a painting and decorating class the teacher taught students about different types of sandpaper. He passed around one type, aluminium oxide, and asked some students to spell this on the whiteboard. Their spelling of this, and other terms, was usefully explored and checked later in the lesson.
- Teachers use a good variety of methods to check students' understanding in classes. They often use questions skilfully to explore students' understanding of a topic. In one science class, the teacher was not satisfied with vague answers and used probing questions that encouraged the students to think and answer with more clarity. Teachers in these lessons use students' existing knowledge and skills well to extend their knowledge. They also use interactive learning technology effectively in lessons, for example getting students to use their mobile phones to answer interactive quizzes. This checks learning and motivates the students well.
- Initial assessment identifies students' learning and support needs and staff use the information to swiftly provide additional support to those who need it. When required, learning assistants provide highly effective and seamless support in the classroom.
- Teachers monitor the progress of students carefully and most make good progress on their course. They grow in confidence as a result and the standards of the majority of their work are good. Assessors on apprenticeship provision use the online tracking system well to track the progress of students. Apprentices are also able to use the system and most know exactly how well they are progressing. Employers are increasingly accessing the system to keep themselves informed of what apprentices are doing so that they can contribute to their development.
- On study programmes teachers design interesting assignment briefs and mark students' work well. They return work promptly with detailed comments suggesting how students might improve their work. In one foundation English class, students were keen to show how their English had improved as a result of the detailed and specific feedback they received on their assignments from their teacher.
- In a few instances, teaching, learning and assessment do not reflect the generally good standards across the college. The quality of teaching and learning in discrete English and mathematics courses requires improvement, particularly for students on the study programme. While teachers usually refer to equality and diversity in their lesson plans, in a minority of lessons teachers failed to follow up the opportunities they had planned for in the lesson. Written feedback is not always detailed enough to help students improve their work.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not differentiate activities sufficiently to meet the needs of individual students. In these lessons, students do not always work at the required level and therefore do not make the progress that they are capable of.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good**

- Students behave well across the college. They are polite, courteous, respect each other and show a willingness to learn. They display a pride in their work and are keen to talk about what they are learning. Students grow in confidence as a result of their studies.
- Students develop good employability skills as a result of teachers promoting them well in lessons. For example, they often draw attention to skills that students are practising whilst engaged in group work or other tasks, such as 'team work', 'listening' and 'reaching a consensus'. Teachers make good use of occupational contexts and examples to reinforce industry standards and expectations.
- The tutorial and enrichment programme covers the practicalities of students' safety and well-being effectively. Students have a good awareness of sexual health matters, the dangers of radicalisation and how to be safe online. Teachers and trainers promote health and safety well in lessons across the college. Students feel safe.
- The vast majority of students on the study programme benefit from high-quality work experience linked to their chosen vocation. A group of motor vehicle students are extremely positive about a work experience opportunity they had through an Erasmus project 'gearing up' in Turkey. The course has had a considerable impact on increasing their confidence, self-awareness and ambitions for the future. Students on the foundation course also have access to good work placements to prepare them for the world of work.
- High-needs students receive highly effective support and develop good independent skills. They have detailed study plans which teachers use well to support them in their lessons. The specialist support they receive in class helps them to make the same progress as other students in their class. High-needs students also receive detailed careers advice on their future options, whether further study or employment. As a result they have increased in confidence and are ambitious for their futures.
- Supported students develop high levels of confidence and good skills for independent living. Activities are very well planned and enable students to develop the attributes and attitudes required to progress to higher levels of study.
- Careers guidance and support across the college are good. Most students have a very clear idea of how they want their career to progress. Many students, particularly those studying hairdressing and beauty therapy and the construction trades are keen to set up their own business when they leave the college. The college is aware of this and encourages students to develop the communication skills, attitudes and professional approach that will help them to do this. It also provides workshops and organises events around entrepreneurship for them.
- Attendance in the college has improved slightly over the last three years but is not yet good enough, especially on English and mathematics courses where it is significantly lower than the college average.
- While the college enrichment programme provides a wide range of additional activities to develop students' social and personal well-being, managers do not monitor the participation of students well enough.

## **Outcomes for students are good**

- Students make good progress from typically low starting points. As a result of effective teaching, support and guidance, students improve their confidence and self-esteem, achieve qualifications and are motivated to progress to higher levels of study or employment, including self-employment.
- A high proportion of students are successful in gaining the qualifications they study at college, and this figure has increased steadily in recent years. As well as completing their main vocational courses and gaining technical skills, students develop a range of employability skills and many gain additional relevant qualifications.
- There are few significant differences in the outcomes for different groups of students. Both adults and younger students learn well and make good progress. Almost all groups of students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are at least as successful as similar groups nationally.
- Students from Black and minority ethnic heritages do well. Many groups have substantial numbers of students and almost all groups make good progress with success rates above comparable national figures.
- Substantial numbers of adult students take courses in English for speakers of other languages and

progression from these is good. High proportions are successful in achieving their qualifications and in 2015 about 75% progressed to a higher-level English qualification or further study. A further 10% gained employment.

- High-needs students also achieve well, developing independence and skills as a result of the very effective individual support they receive from teachers and support staff.
- Students achieve well in functional skills English and mathematics. Of the relatively small numbers of students studying GCSE English or mathematics, too few gain GCSE A\* to C.
- Highly effective provision for 14 to 16-year-olds with a carefully planned curriculum enables them to overcome barriers. They develop appropriate attitudes and improved personal and social skills, as well as qualifications that fit them well for the next stages of their education. Almost all move on to further study.
- Care leavers and those in the care of the local authority achieve well, with most moving on to positive destinations.
- Outcomes for apprenticeships have improved significantly, and the percentages of those achieving the qualification are now above average. Apprentices develop good technical and personal skills, adding value to their employers, and progression to higher-level apprenticeships or permanent employment is very good.
- A small minority of courses have below-average success rates, including a few level 3 courses for 16 to 19-year-olds. Nevertheless, the proportion of 16 to 19-year-olds on level 3 gaining high grades has increased and value-added data show that these students generally make expected progress based on prior attainment. About 60% progress to higher education and around 30% gain employment.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### are good

- The college provides study programmes in a good range of subject areas. The largest areas are preparation for life and work, health and care, construction and engineering. Currently there are almost 3,000 students on study programmes.
- Teachers have high expectations and use their considerable expertise to challenge students to produce work of a high standard. Teachers make very effective use of realistic and industry-standard resources to contextualise learning, for example music studios and games consoles which enable students to develop highly relevant skills.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers make effective use of questioning to check learning, extend understanding and encourage students to develop their thinking skills. Teachers provide helpful feedback on what students need to do to develop their work. A very supportive assessment process in childcare placements enables students to evaluate and develop their own skills. The large majority of students make good progress and gain confidence.
- Students benefit from a broad range of opportunities to develop their employability skills including work experience, realistic projects and additional qualifications such as first aid and food hygiene. As a result, students develop valuable skills. Motor vehicle and hospitality students gained considerable benefits from overseas work experience projects. Construction students develop good tool skills, and health and safety are the cornerstone of all their work. The restaurant at Hall Green provides a professional environment with real customers where students provide a very good service and high-quality food.
- In the majority of vocational lessons, teachers provide students with opportunities to develop their English and mathematics skills in a vocational context so they see their relevance. However, in discrete English and mathematics lessons, teachers do not always prepare well and some activities are mundane and do not meet students' individual needs.
- Careers advice and guidance are strong and provide students with a clear understanding about their future careers and next steps. Through a good range of activities, including input from employers, careers fairs and job clubs, students receive helpful advice on preparing for employment or higher education. For example, applied science students used their research into science and technology organisations to produce well-structured personal development plans for their long-term career goals. Travel and tourism students are inspired and motivated by opportunities overseas.
- The curriculum is designed well to meet the requirements of the study programmes and meet individual

needs. For example, the college offers a very broad range of trade skills in response to skills shortages in the construction industry. Students are confident about their choice of course and are proud of their learning.

## Adult learning programmes

are good

- Around 7,500 adults follow programmes across the seven college sites. Of these students, just under half study programmes for English for speakers of other languages. The vast majority of the other students follow courses that are vocationally related. Most students are not in employment.
- Teaching and learning across the very large majority of the provision are of good quality and most students are successful in gaining their qualification or achieving their learning aim. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and, as a result, students are highly motivated to learn and succeed. Students work productively during sessions and actively support each other's learning. Teachers have high expectations of their students. They constantly encourage students to reflect on their work and to take responsibility for their own learning. In some sessions, students self-assess their work or are challenged by teachers to identify any errors in their work without teacher support.
- Students receive good oral feedback on the quality of their work which helps them to improve and reach higher standards. Written assessment does not always provide students with sufficient guidance on how to improve their spelling and grammar.
- Students develop good personal skills which prepare them well for their next steps in education or employment. Teachers promote the development of confidence, which is especially effective for those who start with low self-esteem. Teachers deploy a good range of strategies to ensure that students develop the vocational skills that enhance their employability.
- Students make good progress during their courses, and their progress is mostly well tracked and recorded. Students have a clear understanding of what they have achieved and what their next steps are. Managers have improved the monitoring of students' progress and ensure timely interventions are provided if required.
- Progression to further learning and employment is high. Most students at entry and foundation levels progress to further learning and students at intermediate and advanced levels progress to higher levels of learning or employment.
- Information, advice and guidance are effective in ensuring that students have a good understanding of their next steps and how to achieve their ambitions and goals. They receive guidance about work placements, ladders of progression, employment opportunities and independent living.
- English and mathematics are integrated well into vocational sessions. Teachers make good use of opportunities to promote the relevance of both mathematics and English to students' vocational subjects and to employment. Teachers ensure that students develop their reading skills linked to mathematical calculations.
- College leaders have very strong links with a range of partners to ensure that the college provides well-devised programmes which meet the needs of students, local employers and identified local skills shortages. As a result, the community and individuals participate well in learning and courses are popular. College sites are situated in the most deprived areas of Birmingham so that they are easily accessible to local communities most in need.
- Managers use the community learning fund well. In conjunction with the local authority, managers identify students who have high degrees of vulnerability and who do not speak English. These students are offered short introductory courses which then lead to further courses of learning.
- Retention across all adult provision is good and the proportion of students who succeed in their course and achieve their learning aims are in line with rates of students in similar provision nationally.

## Apprenticeships

are good

- The college has 542 apprentices with most in construction, engineering, retail and commercial enterprise, business administration and law. Health, public services and care, information and communication technology, arts, media and publishing, and education and training have small numbers of apprentices.
- Apprenticeships are well managed and apprentices' progress is carefully monitored. Most apprentices

currently in learning make good progress. The proportion of apprentices completing their frameworks is increasing and is now good, as are the numbers completing within planned timescales.

- Apprenticeships meet local and regional needs well. The staff communicate well and are responsive to the needs of employers. Partnerships with employers are strong and benefit apprentices through the job opportunities that ensure good skill development and progress.
- Staff assess apprentices' needs well and quickly provide the right support for those who have additional learning needs. Staff are easily available and apprentices and employers appreciate the regular reviews that monitor progress and provide the apprentices with achievable targets. Employers report that assessors play a considerable role in teaching the apprentices vital skills. Employers value this input and the considerable benefit that this brings their companies.
- Teaching and learning are good both in the college and in the workplace. Teachers are enthusiastic and plan sessions well, often using humour appropriately, so that teaching inspires apprentices. Teachers and assessors give detailed verbal feedback to apprentices on their progress so they know what they need to do next to progress.
- Written feedback is often too brief and lacks sufficient detail. As a result, apprentices often do not know what they can do to improve further.
- Staff are well qualified and have relevant experience. Apprentices appreciate that they are able to relate the training to their workplace experience and extend their learning. Staff give relevant information about workplace opportunities that help apprentices to plan their careers.
- Staff embed English, mathematics and use of information and communications technology throughout the apprenticeships. Apprentices gain good employability skills such as communication skills and time-keeping. They know how to keep themselves safe. Staff promote safe working practices thoroughly. Construction and engineering apprentices are very clear about what personal protective equipment they need to wear. Apprentices know their rights, become more confident and carry out tasks at their workplaces to a high standard.
- All apprentices develop good technical skills. For example, construction apprentices learn about planning regulations and how to apply for approval; business administration apprentices learn how to take minutes for a meeting; and painting and decorating apprentices learn how to prepare walls for decorating and mark up for papering.
- Progression for apprentices is very good. Many progress from intermediate to advanced level and a large majority secure permanent employment or go on to further training.



## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	General further education college
<b>Age range of students</b>	14+
<b>Approximate number of all students over the previous full contract year</b>	18,685
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mike Hopkins
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.sccb.ac.uk">www.sccb.ac.uk</a>

## 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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
<b>Total number of students (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	1,070	4,911	766	1,395	1,133	1,107	0	0
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	188	161	100	82	0	11		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
<b>Number of students aged 14–16</b>	173							
<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>	No subcontractors							

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Ruth James, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nick Gadfield	Her Majesty's Inspector
William Baidoe-Ansah	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maxine Mayer	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alison Loxton	Ofsted Inspector
Penny Mathers	Ofsted Inspector
Priscilla McGuire	Ofsted Inspector
Jean Webb	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the quality manager, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. Inspectors observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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