

Middlesbrough College

General further education college

Inspection dates

20–23 September 2016

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement	Adult learning programmes	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
		Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Senior leaders and managers have not brought about sufficiently consistent improvement in students' achievements or in their progress.
- Governors have been too slow to challenge senior leaders to tackle key weaknesses quickly.
- 16-to 19-year-old students on A-level programmes, and to a lesser extent those on vocational courses, do not achieve the grades that they are capable of in key subjects.
- Not enough students across the college's provision achieve their English and mathematics functional skills qualifications, and too few students achieve high grades in GCSEs.
- A significant minority of students are not given sufficiently challenging work in lessons.
- Teachers do not set precise enough targets for students and do not provide them with sufficiently helpful feedback on how they can improve their work and aim for higher grades.
- Managers have been overly optimistic in their self-assessment of key judgements, with the result that they have not been able to evaluate what needs to improve quickly enough.
- Lesson observations focus too little on the impact of teaching on students' progress.

The provider has the following strengths

- Progression rates onto further and higher education and employment are high.
- Highly effective support services keep students who face multiple barriers engaged in education and training.
- The principal and other senior leaders have successfully reshaped the curriculum to offer more science and engineering subjects.
- Good-quality work placements and enrichment activities prepare students well for the world of work.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Middlesbrough College is the largest provider of further education and training in the Tees Valley. As well as offering further education courses in all 15 sector subject areas, the college delivers apprenticeships, employer training, higher education and full- and part-time programmes for 14- to 16-year-olds. In July 2016, the college acquired North East Chamber of Commerce Limited (NECC), a large provider of apprenticeships across the north east of England.
- Compared with the rest of the country, Middlesbrough is an area of high social deprivation. Unemployment at 10% is higher in Middlesbrough than in the rest of the north east, and almost double the rate for England. A lower proportion of the population is qualified at level 3 and above than in other regions of England and 12% of the population has no qualifications. In 2014/15, 47.4% of pupils in the borough achieved five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, compared with the national figure of 58.6%.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Senior leaders and managers need to quicken the pace of improvement so that achievement rates increase across all types of qualifications and in all subjects, and the quality of the provision becomes consistently good or better.
- Governors should be more curious and critical of the reports they receive from senior managers, so that they can better hold senior management to account for the pace of improvement at the college.
- Managers should support teachers to get better at planning lessons to meet the needs of all their students, particularly the more able, and to provide students with the detailed feedback that will challenge them to improve their grades and development of skills.
- Teachers need to be more consistent in their recording of students' targets, and they need to be more precise and developmental in the targets they set; managers need to evaluate systematically the quality of the targets being set.
- Senior leaders and managers' evaluation of the findings from self-assessment needs to be more self-critical and judgemental, so that they identify accurately what needs to improve, how and within what timescales.
- Managers need to accelerate the implementation of the new English and mathematics strategy so that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in these subjects improves and students' achievement rates increase.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders and managers have not brought about sufficiently consistent improvement in students' achievements or in their progress. More recently, management actions have started to have a more positive impact, particularly for apprentices and students on study programmes. Teaching, learning and assessment have not improved quickly or consistent

enough to improve continuing areas of poor performance.

- Managers are not sufficiently critical of the college's provision to enable them to identify the key areas for improvement. While the self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive, it is not always accurate. Managers' judgements have been overoptimistic, with the result that there has been a lack of rapid progress in rectifying key areas of underperformance, such as improvements in the number of students achieving high grades or increasing attendance levels in English and mathematics classes.
- Managers have put in place a strategy to improve English and mathematics across the college. However, it is too soon to see an impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and on the outcomes for students.
- Managers undertaking observations of teaching, learning and assessment focus too much on the process of teaching and not enough on the impact that teachers have on their students' progress. As a result, key actions arising from observations do not help teachers to improve sufficiently. Managers now recognise this and are currently changing the way they observe lessons and record the outcomes.
- Staff share good practice through their team meetings. However, this has yet to be translated into improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment consistently across all provision.
- Senior leaders and managers use market intelligence and their partnerships with employers exceptionally well to plan a curriculum that meets local and regional economic priorities. Managers respond quickly to changes in the local economy, such as the need to provide retraining for workers made redundant by the closure of the steel works. Managers have developed apprenticeships effectively in advanced manufacturing and polymers to fill identified skills gaps.
- The principal provided strong strategic leadership to secure significant investment to set up the college's STEM centre. This has contributed to the regeneration of the locality, and has grown provision in engineering, providing good progression routes directly into employment.
- Managers monitor rigorously the provision delivered by subcontractors, terminating the contracts of the poorest performing providers quickly, and supporting effectively the development of the better providers by opening up the college's professional development programme to the staff of subcontractors.
- Managers and staff at all levels of the college develop a highly inclusive culture that welcomes and celebrates the diversity of its students. For example, at a time of reduced funding, the college has maintained a high level of provision for students on English for speakers of other languages courses, to assist in the integration of the large number of asylum seekers settling in the community. Staff support students with high needs very well so that they can participate fully in college life.

The governance of the provider

- Governors understand the college well, and receive good-quality information from senior leaders. However, they have been slow to provide sufficient challenge to senior leaders to ensure that they implement improvements quickly enough.
- The recent appointment of new governors with further education experience has strengthened the governing body. This has started to have a positive impact on improving achievement rates in a number of curriculum areas. However, other aspects are still slow to improve, such as the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in English and mathematics.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Students and staff understand the relevance of safeguarding to their lives and work because senior leaders and managers develop transparent policies and strong procedures. Students know that college staff are dedicated to keeping them safe. Student and staff understanding of safeguarding, reinforced by frequent training, leads to the rapid identification of concerns which are quickly resolved.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and accessing social media. They demonstrate a good awareness of how to work safely in practical workshops in college and on employers' premises.
- Senior leaders and managers work very effectively with external agencies, using their expertise and advice to ensure the safety of students. Managers carry out detailed and rigorous recruitment checks on staff and keep thorough and current records.
- Designated safeguarding officers ensure that all staff have introductory safeguarding training and refresher training at least every two years.
- All staff, including those of subcontractors, have received training about the 'Prevent' duty. Student engagement officers have made the majority of students aware of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism through group tutorials. Managers and teachers promote British values well through integrating them into the college's own 'community values'. Students' understanding of these values and their relevance to their lives improves as they move into their second year at the college.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The impact of teaching, learning and assessment on students' progress varies too much. As a result, a significant minority of students on study programmes do not make the progress on their courses or achieve the grades that they are capable of given their starting points. Teachers' planning, particularly on 16 to 19 study programmes, too often focuses on activities that groups of students undertake without considering sufficiently whether individual students will acquire the skills and knowledge that they are capable of learning.
- Learning activities do not stretch and challenge all students, in particular the most able. A significant minority of teachers do not ask sufficiently detailed or probing questions to encourage students to develop skills, such as critical evaluation, that would enable more to achieve higher grades.
- Teachers' use of the cross-college student monitoring and review system requires improvement. On a small minority of courses, staff do not complete any records of reviews for students to reflect on. Where staff record feedback, the level of detail varies considerably from evaluative and helpful to the perfunctory. The majority of targets set for students are not sufficiently challenging and they very rarely provide clear guidance as to how students can improve their work or achieve higher grades.
- Teachers on the majority of vocational courses do not systematically plan for activities to enable students to develop their mathematical skills. In a minority of lessons, particularly where the use of mathematics is integral to the development of practical skills, teachers do this well. For example, first-year carpentry students who struggled to find mathematics relevant at school now understand the importance of its practical application. They set out materials accurately and can describe how to apply Pythagoras's theorem to check

that frame components are square.

- The college has recruited a high number of new teachers in recent years, the majority of whom had little or no previous teaching experience. These new teachers receive good support to improve their skills and practice through a structured professional development programme, formal qualifications and teaching and learning mentors. However, these initiatives have yet to overcome generic weaknesses such as planning activities that are sufficiently challenging or focused on learning.
- Teachers and assessors use their extensive vocational experience well to make good links between theory and practice. Students and apprentices improve their work-related skills and are better prepared for their next steps into employment or further learning as a result.
- Teachers in the majority of vocational lessons reinforce effectively students' use of English during learning activities. They encourage students to recognise the importance of English to support their wider learning and career aspirations.
- Work experience is well planned and structured for the majority of students on study programmes. Employers provide apprentices with good opportunities to develop and improve their skills and achieve their learning goals.
- High-quality resources and equipment support teaching and learning across all curriculum areas. Sports facilities are outstanding, and are highly effective in promoting niche activities, such as archery, through the many different specialist sports academies and for wider community use.
- At the start of their courses, students on study and adult learning programmes have a thorough and effective introduction to the college and their programmes. As a result, they quickly settle into life at college, and understand how to take advantage of the excellent range of learning and student support that the college provides.
- The identification and provision of additional and learning support is prompt and involves close collaboration with a range of external partners to provide effective care and support for vulnerable students, for example, children looked after. As a result, they progress as well as other students in the college.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Managers have created an inclusive and positive culture at the college, where students feel supported and valued. As a result, the great majority behave well, and are ready to learn. In a small number of cases when students use inappropriate language or disrupt learning, staff challenge them swiftly and effectively.
- Skilled and committed personal tutors work successfully to support the many students who face challenging barriers to keep them engaged in education and training. The college provides a comprehensive network of services that students can access easily, such as counselling, sexual health advice and support with finances.
- Managers have been effective in working with employers to increase the number of students on work placements, with the result that the great majority develop good employability skills and have a better understanding of the expectations of employers.
- In addition to work experience and work placements, managers have recently introduced the 'advantage programme'. This provides students with additional support to prepare them for the world of work or to consider how they might set up their own businesses.

Student participation in local charities and community projects develops good planning and organisational skills.

- Students benefit from very good levels of information advice and guidance from pre-entry right through to their application to employment and higher education. Staff work effectively with feeder schools to ensure that prospective students are aware of the wide range of career pathways available to them. Personal tutors maintain a strong focus with their students on planning their next steps. As a result, progression rates and positive destinations are high.
- Students receive an effective induction in how to stay safe at the college and to be aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Second-year students have a good level of awareness of the 'Prevent' duty, and know how to raise any wider safeguarding concerns.
- Students develop a good understanding of British values through the practical application of the college's own set of community values. Teachers impress on their students a culture of respect and tolerance through the constant reinforcement of classroom ground rules. An active network of class representatives and high levels of participation in elections to the student council introduce the majority of students to the democratic tradition.
- Attendance has improved over the past three years. However, in English and mathematics classes, attendance is too low, with the result that achievement rates in these subjects are not improving fast enough, and students do not master these essential skills.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Despite some improvements in student achievement over the past 12 months, a significant minority still do not make the progress expected of them based on their attainment when they enter the college. There is a lack of sustained improvement in achievement rates across the range of qualifications and subject areas.
- Achievement rates on study programmes, which make up two thirds of the college's funded provision, declined over the three years up to 2014/15, and were low. In 2015/16, the college's own data shows that this trend has reversed, and achievement rates are now level with those of similar providers. However, some of this improvement has come from very high achievement rates on single unit qualifications for younger students on traineeship programmes. Some of the major qualification types, such as certificates and functional skills, have seen no sustained increases in achievement rates.
- Students on academic programmes at the college's sixth form do not make the progress expected of them based on their prior attainment, a position that worsened in the three years up to 2014/15. Despite some encouraging progress in 2015/16, particularly for students on AS-level courses, not enough students achieve the grades they are capable of in a range of key subjects, such as English language, mathematics and biology.
- For the larger number of 16- to 19-year-old students on level 3 vocational programmes, there was some improvement in their expected progress based on their starting points, but progress was not sustained consistently across all subject areas and qualification types. For vocational students on diploma programmes at levels 1 and 2, achievement rates declined and are just below those typically seen in further education colleges.
- Achievement rates for 16- to 19-year-old students taking English and mathematics functional skills qualifications require improvement, as does the proportion of students who achieve high grades at GCSE. Functional skills achievement rates in 2015/16 are marginally above where they were in the previous year, but remain low. The proportion of

students achieving high grades in English and mathematics GCSEs have declined further from their already low base in previous years.

- Achievement rates for adult learners in 2015/16 continue a steady trend of improvement of the previous three years and are better than those of similar providers. A particularly effective skills development programme enabled redundant steel workers to achieve qualifications quickly. This helped them return to the labour market. A successful access-to-higher-education programme enables a high proportion of its learners to achieve their goal of going to university.
- An increasing proportion of apprentices achieve their overall qualifications within the expected timescales. After a decline in achievement rates in 2013/14, managers have successfully intervened to ensure that apprentices now make timely progress.
- Learners with high needs achieve positive outcomes, with the majority moving successfully into independent living, supported employment or volunteering.
- Full-time 14- to 16-year-old pupils, the great majority of whom are on free school meals or have special educational needs and disabilities, make expected progress in English and mathematics. All pupils who completed key stage 4 progressed onto vocational courses within the college.
- Progression between levels of education and training is good. The great majority of students on vocational courses progress from the first to the second year of their programmes. The majority of A-level students secure a university place.
- College managers track the destinations of students effectively. The very great majority of students achieved a positive destination in 2014/15. Managers use destination information well to plan the curriculum and increase students' opportunities to secure employment.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- There are 4,310 full-time students enrolled on a broad range of study programmes. Nearly a third of students are on engineering and construction courses and large numbers study health and social care, sport and recreation, and visual and performing arts. The majority of students are on level 3 programmes, including 409 students studying A levels. Study programmes represent two-thirds of the college's funded provision.
- Managers' plans to improve study programmes have not yet had a consistently positive impact. The new English and mathematics strategy is clear and comprehensive but does not yet result in the routine reinforcement of mathematics in vocational lessons. Consequently, students do not always understand the relevance of applied mathematics to the development of their technical skills.
- A significant minority of lessons, particularly in English and mathematics, are not consistently effective in enabling all students to make sufficient progress, so a few students become bored and disengage.
- Teachers do not take into account each student's starting point when they plan lessons, with students doing the same work regardless of ability. As a result, students who are more able are not challenged sufficiently and the less able do not get the support to help them make progress.

- Teachers' written feedback on the work of students on vocational programmes is weak and does not effectively tell students what they need to do to improve. Spelling, punctuation and grammar errors too often go uncorrected. On academic programmes, teachers provide students with detailed developmental feedback to enable them to improve their work, including improving their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Teachers' recording of student progress varies too much across the college. Even where teachers set targets, these do not offer specific guidance, and only very rarely guide and challenge students in how they can improve.
- Managers and teachers plan study programmes effectively to ensure that all students engage in vocational programmes, work experience, English, and mathematics. Teachers design a wide range of enrichment activities to meet the needs of different students. For example, hairdressing students participate in Zumba classes. A-level students participate in outdoor adventure activities that support their progression to higher education.
- Vocational teachers consistently reinforce the importance of English for study and future employment. This helps students to see its relevance to the development of their technical skills. For example, in a level 3 sports coaching lesson students develop the specific technical vocabulary that enables them to communicate clearly in their field.
- Well-qualified staff with high levels of industrial experience share their expertise with students, with the result that students are able to link theory and practice, and develop good practical skills. For example, a teacher still working in the industry supported level 1 catering students to produce a well-presented stir-fry during their first lesson.
- In the majority of lessons, students' conduct is good. They respect each other and listen attentively. Students arrive promptly to lessons ready to learn and with the correct equipment.
- Individualised, flexible work experience meets the needs of students well through placements in a wide variety of settings such as local hospitals, trade centres and engineering workshops. This prepares students to progress to the world of work.
- Safeguarding is effective. Students feel safe and they are able to articulate safe working practices and demonstrate this during practical sessions. For example, engineering students had a thorough induction into working at heights and understood the importance of this when going out on placements. Students understand British values and can clearly express the importance of mutual tolerance to their lives in and outside college.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- The college offers a comprehensive range of provision for 1,729 adult learners at two sites. The vast majority of learners enrol on part-time accredited courses. Qualifications include access to higher education, A levels and English for speakers of other languages. The college also provides training for learners referred by Jobcentre Plus.
- Teachers prepare learners well for progression onto further levels of study, particularly on access courses. Learners quickly begin to use and apply a range of study skills such as how to research and take notes.
- In the majority of sessions, teachers plan effectively to ensure that learners use speaking, listening and writing skills. On vocational courses, such as health and social care, they acquire good levels of knowledge in subjects such as food safety. As a result, their chances of employability increase.

- Learners make good progress from their courses on to higher levels of study. The vast majority of learners from access courses progress on to higher education. Learners are well motivated and enjoy their courses. Their attendance is good and they value their learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of learners. They inspire confidence in their learners by strongly promoting a 'can do' attitude.
- Learners demonstrate good learning by quickly starting to use vocabulary associated with their respective subjects. For example, in one class, after completing basic research on psychological theories, learners were able to quickly identify key authors associated with particular psychological theories and use the vocabulary associated with their subjects correctly. On another course, learners very quickly started to use technical terms associated with music such as 'bit depth' and 'sample rate'.
- Learners who do not speak English as a first language make good use of functional skills English classes to develop their knowledge and understanding of vocabulary. They practise their pronunciation and ask questions to clarify their understanding of the meaning of words.
- Teachers have a good understanding of adult learning and of the specific barriers that adult learners face. A minority of teachers on the access programme are former access students at the college. As a result, they provide effective role models for learners.
- Teachers talk to learners at a very early stage about progression and professional practice, for example in health and social care. They give learners a clear sense of direction and raise their aspirations to succeed in their studies.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance is good. The college has invested in a range of resources to support adult learners. For example, a dedicated adult progression service provides specific support, information and guidance to adults. Learners are also able to have confidential discussions with support staff in a counselling room.
- Teachers do not pay close enough attention to detail when marking learners' work. They often overlook basic spelling and grammatical errors and fail to provide guidance on how learners can improve the quality of writing to meet academic standards.
- Teachers do not always use questioning techniques well enough to challenge learners or to ensure that all learners participate during question and answer sessions. In weaker sessions, teachers allow the more confident learners to answer most questions. Consequently, the progress of the quieter learners goes unchecked.

Apprenticeships

Good

- The college offers apprenticeships to young people and adults across a range of subjects, including health and social care, engineering, construction, hair and beauty, hospitality and catering and business management and administration. The college has recently acquired North East Chamber of Commerce Training (NECC) to add to the breadth and reach of the provision. There are 564 apprentices on programme with the college and 826 apprentices with NECC.
- Assessors work effectively with high-quality employers to plan learning opportunities in the workplace. Apprentices benefit from flexible assessment opportunities in the workplace that enable them to develop skills and make good progress.
- Apprentices benefit from well-planned off-the-job training that they and employers value. Assessors support apprentices effectively in the workplace and in college, and are flexible

in their support to meet the demands of apprentices' job roles.

- Apprentices develop a range of new skills that they are able to use in the workplace and often beyond the remit of their job role. They grow in confidence, particularly in customer-facing roles.
- Apprentices know how well they are progressing and the large majority use the online portfolio confidently to submit evidence, record their training and plan for their assessment visits.
- Apprentices undertake training in the 'Prevent' duty and are aware of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. They know what to do if they have any concerns.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of equality and diversity. Assessors and tutors reinforce equality and diversity effectively in reviews and off-the-job training sessions. For example, apprentices in software installation understand the needs of both internal and external customers when installing new software or when assisting on IT helpdesks.
- Apprentices benefit from good careers information, advice and guidance. They receive helpful information regarding their programme and their options before and on completion. The great majority of apprentices gain full-time employment and a high proportion progress to the next level of apprenticeship.
- Assessors integrate effectively the development of practical English and mathematical skills into taught sessions and during reviews. Apprentices develop skills required for their job roles including technical specific vocabulary, effective report writing, using ratio and angles, colouring terminology in hairdressing, and producing profit and loss accounts.
- A small minority of teachers in college-based sessions do not use questioning techniques effectively enough. This allows the more vocal and confident apprentices to dominate group assessment activities. As a result, the less confident apprentices do not engage sufficiently and do not demonstrate their learning and progress.
- In the majority of online portfolios, targets set for apprentices lack clarity. Assessors too often set targets based on awarding body criteria and do not make them specific to each apprentice and their job.
- Assessors' feedback in a minority of apprentices' portfolios is not sufficiently helpful. The feedback highlights apprentices' achievement of units rather than their skill development or how to improve further.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college has 121 students receiving high-needs funding from six local authorities; 55 of these are on discrete learning development programmes, including employability and personal development, and 66 students are taking mainstream vocational courses.
- Managers use high-needs funding effectively and provide students with personalised and supportive learning programmes that enable them to build on their prior attainment and further develop their independence and employability skills, both at college and within their community.
- On completion of their programmes, the large majority of students progress onto higher levels of study in the college, further study elsewhere or into employment. There are examples of catering students progressing onto apprenticeships with local restaurants, and students studying level 3 media studies progressing onto university.
- Teachers' assessment of students' starting points is good. Managers work with a range of

external agencies, healthcare professionals, parents and carers to plan appropriate and individualised programmes. The large majority of teachers use this information effectively to plan learning that is both inclusive and challenging, and to set long- and short-term targets, which teachers review regularly with students. For example, teachers in an employability class provided students with specific, personal targets to support them in improving their communication skills.

- Staff are dedicated, well trained and knowledgeable about specific, and sometimes complex, learning difficulties and disabilities. Students value the high levels of support they receive and, as a result, develop their confidence and independence, and make good progress. For example, students with speech and language problems benefit from regular access to a speech therapist, and students with autism and Asperger syndrome are able to access a range of vocational courses including engineering, motor vehicle, and health and social care.
- Students benefit from good information, advice and guidance. They receive individual advice through regular tutorials about the progress they are making and most are aware of their long-term goals and aspirations. Most are able to make informed choices about their next steps.
- The development of employability skills is good. Students participate in a range of internal and external work experience that helps to develop social interaction and increased independence. For example, students run their own café in the community, where they make a small profit selling home-baked food and hot drinks. Students also work in the college clothes store, where they sell a range of second-hand clothing.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are positive and they are well prepared and punctual. They demonstrate high levels of respect for their peers and the vast majority conduct themselves well both during and outside of lessons.
- Safeguarding is effective. All students have a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures and they are able to provide informed explanations on what to do if they have any concerns, both inside and outside of college.
- In the large majority of lessons, teaching and learning are effective and students make good progress from their starting points. These lessons are interesting and well planned and students work both independently and in collaboration with their peers to develop a range of skills. In a practical mathematics lesson, students worked together to measure each other's heights, record information and estimate the heights of their peers.
- Students benefit from regular opportunities to develop their English and mathematical skills. In English classes, students develop their understanding of various word types and simple punctuation marks, while others develop their speaking and listening skills through a range of communication activities.
- In a small minority of classes, teachers do not plan well enough to meet the needs of the less-able students and do not check on learning and progress consistently. In a few lessons, teachers have unrealistic expectations of their students. Some tasks are too complex and written information is not at the appropriate level. As a result, some students struggle to complete the tasks, which impedes the progress they make during the lesson.

Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds

Good

- There are currently 33 14- to 16-year-old pupils attending the Middlesbrough College Academy. The academy has a dedicated member of the senior leadership team who has a

leadership role for this provision and a designated area for the sole use of 14- to 16-year-old pupils.

- The curriculum fully meets the statutory key stage 4 requirements and pupils study an appropriate combination of core subjects together with a choice of vocational options and enrichment activities. These successfully prepare all pupils for progression on to further study or training.
- Teachers have a good balance of experience and expertise in the 14 to 16 curriculum and vocational areas. They swiftly re-engage reluctant pupils into learning and effectively foster a sense of well-being. Teachers give high levels of care and support and create a positive learning environment in which pupils can thrive.
- Pupils enjoy learning and are able to clearly articulate their future aspirations and the positive impact of attending the academy on their self-esteem and their skills development.
- Managers' effective allocation of pupil premium funding has contributed to a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving their target grades in mathematics. Positive uses of the funding include earlier intervention and a dedicated welfare officer.
- The vast majority of pupils behave and conduct themselves well. They are keen to learn and so arrive prepared to study. Managers implement rigorously the behaviour policy to maintain high standards of behaviour and to support the effective development of employability skills. For example, if a pupil arrives late for lessons they have to stay longer at the end of the day.
- Teachers select skilfully topics that build on pupils' enthusiasm and meet their needs and interests. As a result, teachers motivate and engage pupils to explore and deepen their understanding of key topics. For example, through writing about gangs in England, pupils effectively explore English language usage through a piece of extended writing.
- Teachers successfully use a range of assessment strategies to involve all pupils in the lesson and check that learning is taking place. Robust verbal feedback helps reinforce and consolidate pupils' understanding well. For example, pupils benefit from detailed individual guidance on their papier mâché sculptures in art and design, and visibly improve the standard of their practical work over the course of the lesson.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe while in college, and managers fully meet the requirements to provide a dedicated common room and classrooms.
- Pupils are able to articulate well their understanding of online grooming, radicalisation and British values. Pupils develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding in assembly and at tutorials.
- All teachers have high expectations of their pupils, who make good progress from their low starting points across the majority of subjects. All pupils achieve at least one recognised qualification during their time in college, whereas they made none of the expected national progress between key stage 2 and 3 while at school. The majority make at least expected progress across the core subjects of English literature, mathematics and science while the majority make above expected progress in English language.
- Pupils benefit from individual careers guidance, which helps them to make choices on their programme of study and become clearer about their future aspirations. As a result, all pupils in 2014/15 and 2015/16 were well prepared to successfully progress into further education or training.
- Teachers do not always use assessment information to plan their teaching and to take full

account of different levels of pupils' skills and understanding. Too many pupils undertake the same activities, regardless of their ability. As a result, teachers do not always challenge the more able pupils to reach their full potential.

- All teachers' written feedback effectively reinforces pupils' strengths and informs them what they do well. However, the majority of teachers do not give sufficiently detailed feedback to let pupils know what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130570
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	13,184
Principal/CEO	Mrs Zoe Lewis
Telephone number	01642 333333
Website	www.mbro.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 or above				
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18 694	19+ 141	16–18 954	19+ 556	16–18 2,660	19+ 323	16–18 2	19+ 22
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18 253	19+ 322	16–18 248	19+ 359	16–18 2	19+ 110		
Number of traineeships	16–19 4		19+ 36		Total 40			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	33							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	121							
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"> ■ The Unicorn Centre ■ Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation ■ AB Education Consultants Ltd ■ Intelling Ltd 							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, curriculum and quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Dr Charles Searle, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Malcolm Fraser	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Hartmann	Ofsted Inspector
Simone Collpitts	Ofsted Inspector
Joyce Guthrie	Ofsted Inspector
Marie Fairhurst	Ofsted Inspector
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