

South Staffordshire College

General further education college

Inspection dates

22–25 November 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	Requires improvement	Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- There is too much variation between curriculum areas in how well learners aged 16 to 18 achieve their qualifications.
- Too few learners develop their skills in mathematics or English to achieve high grades when they retake a GCSE, pass their functional skills or make further progress at work.
- Too few learners aged 16 to 18 have the opportunity to develop their skills through relevant, well-planned work experience linked to their study programme.
- Teachers and managers do not use targets well enough with learners to ensure that they make rapid progress, understand what they have achieved and know how to improve their performance.
- Quality improvement actions have not ensured that teaching, learning and assessment are good across all subjects, curriculum areas and campuses.
- Assessors do not take sufficient account of apprentices' existing skills or prior learning in planning their training and assessment to ensure rapid progress.

The provider has the following strengths

- Adult learners benefit from good teaching and a flexible, accessible range of provision that successfully meets their diverse needs and improves their life chances.
- Learners with high needs benefit from individually tailored learning programmes with carefully planned support which prepare them well for their future life and work.
- Most learners develop new skills well and produce practical work of a high standard.
- Learners are safe and adopt safe practices at work, in college and when using the internet.
- Leaders work very collaboratively with employers and the local enterprise partnership (LEP) to ensure that the curriculum meets local and regional needs.

Full report

Information about the provider

- South Staffordshire College is a large further education college with five main campuses located in the south of Staffordshire and a number of outreach centres which provide community learning and skills courses. The college also caters for learners aged 14 to 16 attending courses on a part-time basis. The curriculum includes courses in all sector subject areas apart from humanities, and from foundation to higher education level.
- The percentage of learners from a minority ethnic background is low and in line with the local population. The percentage of pupils who leave school in Staffordshire with five or more GCSEs at A* to C, including English and mathematics, is similar to that nationally.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in those areas where learners do not achieve well enough or make the progress of which they are capable by:
 - ensuring that teachers use the outcomes of learners' initial assessment to set meaningful, individual targets and to plan their lessons and assignments so that learners are challenged to meet these targets
 - ensuring that learners know the progress they are making and how to improve where necessary to achieve their learning goals
- Strengthen teachers' confidence to develop learners' mathematics and English skills across all subjects by:
 - identifying those vocational teachers who already do this well and ensuring that they have regular opportunities to share their ideas and approaches with colleagues
 - supporting teachers in discrete provision to set work that enables learners to understand the relevance of exercises and topics to their vocational subjects and the world of work.
- Ensure that study programme managers and teachers in all curriculum areas work with employers and learners to plan and implement work-experience arrangements that link to the learners' study programmes and support their career ambitions.
- Improve the use of targets to guide and motivate learners to achieve their potential by:
 - ensuring that all teachers recognise how to set specific and measurable targets covering learners' development of skills, knowledge and understanding as well as achievement of qualification grades
 - ensuring that managers, teachers and learners regularly monitor how well learners achieve their targets and what they need to do to improve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders and managers recognise that learners' outcomes varied too much in 2015/16. They have introduced a number of new strategies to bring about rapid improvements in underperforming curriculum areas and in English and mathematics. Clear signs of improvement are evident in discrete English and mathematics lessons, where learners clearly enjoy their learning and improve their confidence in both subjects, particularly at the Lichfield campus. Leaders and managers have ambitious but realistic plans for further improvement while maintaining high standards in the better-performing areas of the college such as adult provision. Improvements are beginning to have a positive impact such as in the accuracy of judgements about learning in lesson observations and learning walks, but it is too early to be sure that progress is consistent across all types of provision or campuses.
- Self-assessment is inclusive and thorough, but does not accurately reflect the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on learners' outcomes. Judgements made in lesson observations and learning walks over the past year, although improving, have not focused sufficiently on learning and learners' progress. Too much of the teaching and training require improvement, particularly for learners on study programmes and for apprentices. Progress monitoring and target-setting are weak for a significant proportion of learners. Tutorials are not sufficiently effective in improving learners' progress, or their knowledge of important everyday topics.
- Performance management is improving teachers' professional practice in tandem with a well-thought-out and imaginative programme of continuing professional development. Senior leaders have been successful in removing staff who have been unable to improve their performance despite receiving planned support. Managers are beginning to include feedback from lesson observations and learning walks in appraisal reviews but this change is relatively recent and has yet to have a full impact on improving teaching.
- Leaders and managers have successfully developed and nurtured a wide range of strong partnerships with the LEP, the local chamber of commerce, the local authority and employers. These partnerships support managers very effectively in developing a curriculum that meets employers' needs and reduces skills gaps. They cater successfully for the skills priorities in each of the local areas served by the different college campuses, as well as across the wider region as a whole.
- Managers have introduced departmental reviews this year to focus on improving weaknesses, sharing best practice and supporting teams in those subject areas that are identified as having performed less successfully in 2015/16. These reviews are starting to focus more on the impact of teaching and assessment strategies on learning and learners' progress.

The governance of the provider

- Governors effectively use their wide-ranging and relevant skills and expertise combined with a good knowledge of the local community to challenge senior managers, to support them, and to strive to improve the quality of provision. However, their efforts have not yet ensured that the provision has improved enough to be consistently good across all subjects, curriculum areas or campuses.

- Governors have a realistic overview of the college's financial performance. They are very aware of how the college's provision has an impact on the sustainability of further education across the region. They strongly support the leadership team in seeking to ensure that all learners can access high-quality choices for their education and training.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff place a high emphasis on learners' safety and security, and as a result, learners feel safe and adopt safe practices. Managers check thoroughly the suitability of individuals to work with young people and vulnerable adults. Recruitment checks meet statutory requirements.
- The college safeguarding team take swift and effective action to address learners' safeguarding concerns. They have established positive working relationships with a network of agencies to refer learners at risk, including the police, local authority children's services and health professionals.
- Managers are making steady progress in implementing a range of measures to meet their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty. All staff, including governors and subcontractors, complete safeguarding and 'Prevent' training which ensures that they are clear about their individual responsibilities to keep learners safe. However, arrangements for ensuring that apprentices and employers understand how to protect themselves from extremist views and radicalisation are underdeveloped.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment do not lead to consistently good outcomes for learners across the different types of provision offered by the college. Although a number of aspects of teaching, learning and assessment are good, particularly for adults and learners with high needs and in practical lessons for young people, significant areas remain where further improvement is required: in the quality of theory teaching for learners on study programmes; in progress monitoring and target-setting for learners; in the effectiveness of tutorials; and in the development of learners' English and mathematics skills.
- In too much theory teaching for learners aged 16 to 19, teachers do not plan activities well enough to ensure that all learners make good progress and understand fully the topics being taught. Teachers do not consolidate key learning points arising from activities before moving on to the next part of the lesson so that learners are unclear how the tasks they have completed relate to the learning outcomes for the lesson.
- Managers have worked hard to implement new strategies to improve discrete English and mathematics lessons in recognition of the fact that too few learners pass their functional skills qualifications or achieve high grades in GCSE examinations. In a small number of lessons, learners make good progress in their use of language and have much improved confidence in their mathematics skills. Teachers use questioning very effectively to explore learners' understanding of key concepts and manage group work well, so that learners work well together and acquire knowledge from each other on how to solve tasks.
- In too many English and mathematics lessons, however, teachers' explanations of

important learning points are rushed and they make very little effort to contextualise learning to deepen understanding for learners who are all from broadly similar subject areas. Teachers do not prompt learners sufficiently to explain their answers, or check that all learners understand the answers given by their peers.

- Target-setting and progress monitoring are weak for learners on study programmes, those learners with high needs on vocational courses, apprentices and school pupils attending college-based courses because they do not enable learners to make appropriate progress. They are good for adult learners who know what progress they are making and what they need to do to improve their performance. A significant proportion of learners have only recently had targets set for them by teachers and those that are set are too general and not sufficiently specific or time-bound to support good progress. Discussions with learners to monitor their progress are often not recorded formally or contain only very vague comments about their performance to date. Learners are unsure about their individual strengths and weaknesses, or their current targets to improve.
- In the large majority of practical lessons for college-based learners and training sessions for apprentices, teachers and trainers use their skills and recent industry knowledge well to motivate learners, who respond enthusiastically, work well together, enjoy their learning and produce work of a good standard.
- Adult learners benefit from good teaching which fosters their enthusiasm for enquiry and learning. Teachers combine well-planned lessons with very effective use of well-designed learning resources to ensure that learners develop a wide range of practical, personal and employability skills.
- Learning support assistants provide good support for young learners needing extra help with their studies. They understand learners' support needs well and encourage them successfully to work independently. Where necessary, they use their own initiative very effectively to help all learners in the class to improve aspects of their work, such as their spelling. Adult learners receive good support to remove barriers they have to learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Staff have worked well to improve learners' attendance at lessons but it is not yet at the college target and is low in a few subjects or curriculum areas. Learners with high needs, most adults and learners on vocational study programmes attend lessons well. Learners' attendance on English and mathematics programmes has improved but remains low; attendance for the small cohort of learners aged 14 to 16 who infill onto study programmes is also low.
- Learners do not develop work-related skills in English and mathematics well enough. Learners aged 14 to 16 develop good speaking and listening skills, enabling them to participate well in discussions with their peers and adults. Learners with high needs gain a greater confidence when learning to talk with others and finding their way around the college site. Adults learn and apply a good knowledge of everyday use of numbers. However, too many learners on study programmes are not able to identify what they can now do better as a result of attending lessons in these subjects.
- Learners' and apprentices' behaviour on all college sites and in the workplace is good. Learners aged 14 to 16 show radically improved conduct as a result of attending college.

However, during the inspection, inspectors saw several instances where learners on 16 to 19 programmes were distracted by their mobile phones and not focusing sufficiently on their lessons.

- Many learners and apprentices develop their self-confidence and personal skills well as a result of attending courses at the college and in the workplace. For example, learners aged 14 to 16 develop excellent levels of independence and resilience, and learners on 16 to 19 study programmes in media production confidently give presentations to their peers on the use of persuasive language when promoting a product.
- Most learners benefit from good, impartial careers guidance to enable them to make informed choices about their future work and study options. This enables them to know what options are open to them and to make well-informed choices. Mock interviews with employers, governors and senior staff provide learners with constructive verbal and written feedback to help their progression.
- Many learners on 16 to 19 study programmes and adults have a good understanding of British values and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism; they know how to stay safe online. Many learners took part in a cross-college debate with local political candidates and then voted on whether to stay in or leave the European Union. Adults on the beginners' German language course discuss the differences between the British and German approach to remembering the men and women lost during the first and second world wars. However, many apprentices and learners aged 14 to 16 do not see the relevance of this learning to their daily lives. Learners aged 14 to 16 do not have a good understanding of e-safety.
- Most learners develop new skills well and produce work at the expected level. For example, adults studying floristry develop good skills in botanical drawing; they have a good knowledge of colour theory which they apply well to the selection of flowers and plants for a range of events such as funerals. Learners with high needs develop the appropriate skills to enable them to engage in purposeful learning activities. Learners on 16 to 19 study programmes in media, performing arts and land-based courses produce high standards of practical work.
- Many learners enhance their employability and social skills well through a wide-ranging cross-college enrichment programme. Staff work hard to plan and ensure that learners attend well-publicised events and workshops that promote health, well-being, safety and employability. For example, as a result of a workshop on the implications of sexting, a few learners disclosed to staff that they had shared private images of themselves online.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- There is too much variation between curriculum areas in how well learners aged 16 to 18 achieve their qualifications and in how many apprentices complete their qualification within the planned time. For example, young learners in childcare, agriculture, hairdressing, catering and performing arts achieve well; but in curriculum areas affecting over a quarter of learners, achievement rates declined in 2015/16 to below the previous year's national rate. In general, apprentices aged 19 and over and young apprentices on intermediate programmes achieve well. However, too few of the smaller number of advanced apprentices aged 16 to 18 achieve within their planned time.

- Too few learners who retake a GCSE in either mathematics or English achieve a grade C or above. Too few learners working towards a functional skills qualification in mathematics or English are successful, and in English this represents a marked decline between 2014/15 and 2015/16.
- The proportion of learners who achieve a level 3 diploma qualification has risen for the last three years to match the national rate in 2014/15. However, learners in curriculum areas representing over a third of the enrolments do not make the progress of which they are capable in relation to their starting points.
- More adult learners remained until the end of their programmes and achieved their qualification in 2015/16, matching the national rates in the previous year and reversing a three-year decline. Almost all learners who started in September are still on their programme, representing an improvement on this time last year.
- Learners with high needs who follow vocational programmes achieve well, and often make better progress than their peers.
- Most learners who complete a study programme successfully progress to their next steps in further or higher education, into an apprenticeship or employment. A good proportion of part-time learners aged 14 to 16 progress to full-time courses in the college.
- Learners on vocational courses develop the practical skills they need to progress into relevant employment or further studies. For example, those on animal care courses gain good practical skills and an understanding of the precautions they need to take when dealing with a wide variety of small animals; learners in performing arts and media courses gain valuable skills in using technology, working with a team to produce professional results and in dealing with clients who commission their work; they develop resilience in accepting criticism.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The college offers study programmes for just over 2,500 learners across all five of its campuses. The largest subject areas are land-based studies, health and social care, arts and media, construction, and engineering.
- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching across different subjects and different campuses. In too many theory lessons, teachers do not plan activities well enough to ensure that all learners make good progress and understand fully the topics being taught. Such lessons do not consistently maintain learners' interest and attention, so that too many become bored and easily distracted. Teachers do not manage question and answer activities well enough, with the result that more-confident learners answer all the questions while their peers do not participate in learning.
- Arrangements for learners' planned work-related activity have improved from a low base in the previous year but require further development. Not all teachers recognise the requirement to plan work experience that is relevant to the learners' study programmes or career aspirations. Those learners who have had an external work placement recognise its benefits in preparing them for work, boosting their confidence in dealing with the public and applying their skills effectively in high-pressure commercial environments. For

example, learners in performing arts appreciate the importance of professionalism, time-keeping and teamwork; some 60 construction learners have continued working with the company which provided their work placement in which they helped to convert some of the college's learning areas. However, learners in travel and tourism and motor vehicle engineering have not undertaken a work placement. Learners in hairdressing engage in work experience in the college's town-centre salon but few have yet experienced the pressures of working in external commercial salons.

- Too little teaching in mathematics and English helps and challenges learners to make progress in developing those skills which they need to achieve their qualification or which they can apply effectively in future job roles. Too many vocational teachers do not develop learners' relevant English and mathematics skills effectively in theory lessons. Handouts and presentations frequently contain spelling errors. Teachers are not sufficiently aware of the mistakes learners make in their written work in lessons. As a result they miss the opportunity to practise spellings and the correct use of grammar with the whole group. Topics chosen in discrete lessons frequently have little relevance to the learners' interests or aspirations. Teachers do not consistently check how well quieter or less-confident learners understand lesson topics. As a result, learners show signs of boredom, do not listen to instructions, and there is low-level disruption, for example through learners chatting or playing with mobile phones, which is not sufficiently challenged by teachers.
- Too few learners see the value of tutorials in their study programme; teachers often use some of the time to allow learners to complete other coursework. College managers have established a common structure for tutorials so that they cover set topics and progress monitoring. They have broadened the scope of the tutorial programme to include planned coverage of topics related to health and welfare and the potential risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. These revisions have led to some improvements in attendance, retention and progression but have not yet fully made an impact.
- In many vocational lessons learners participate enthusiastically, working together well to produce high-quality group projects, rising to the challenge of meeting commercial standards. In these instances, teachers strongly promote peer and collaborative learning. Teachers are skilled in planning practical lessons to demonstrate commercial practices such as cutting and dicing ingredients safely in a cookery lesson to produce a main course dish. A group of media production learners produced a professional-quality video, which not only involved a high degree of technical competence but also developed the scriptwriting and acting skills of those learners who appeared in it.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- The college currently provides courses for 2,188 adult learners, 482 on full-time and 1,706 on part-time programmes, including 1,269 on adult and community programmes and 178 on distance-learning programmes. The majority of learners follow programmes at entry level, level 1 and level 2 across the full range of subject areas. Some 236 are on level 3 programmes, including access to higher education. Mathematics and English courses account for 487 learners.
- College staff work very well with partners to develop flexible and accessible programmes that meet regional priorities and the needs of the community. For instance, in partnership

with two hospices, staff have developed distance-learning courses to meet the training and development needs of staff and volunteers in areas such as end-of-life care and infection control. In conjunction with the NHS, staff provide art courses for learners recovering from strokes or from mental health treatment.

- In most lessons teachers structure and deliver learning very well. As a result, learners are enthusiastic and committed to learning, producing work of a high standard. Teachers use interesting learning activities at a variety of levels that keep learners fully engaged and focused on making good progress. For instance, learners on a beginners German course use mobile phone applications (apps) to practise their vocabulary and pronunciation. However, in a small minority of lessons teachers set work that is not sufficiently challenging for the most able learners and do not identify in written feedback how work completed to a high standard can be further improved. This leads to learners' slower progress.
- Most teachers assess and record learning, progress and achievement well. In lessons teachers set clear learning objectives and regularly check learning and progress well using carefully directed probing questions. Learners are clear about what they are learning and the progress they are making. Learners on adult and community programmes set meaningful personal goals in their individual learning plans and accurately chart their progress against them.
- Learners, particularly those on GCSE English and access to higher education, improve the quality of their work, particularly their spelling, grammar and punctuation, because of teachers' detailed and supportive marking of their work.
- Teachers, tutors and mentors provide support for adult learners that is highly effective in removing barriers to learning, particularly for learners in access to higher education who are returning to education after a long break. The support that staff provide enables learners to become more independent and improves their opportunities to succeed and progress to their next steps.
- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills. In family learning and adult mathematics, parents develop the confidence and knowledge they need to support the development of their children and help them with their homework, while improving their own basic skills. Learners in art-for-life classes develop the confidence they need to interact in social situations which they find difficult; they show much improved concentration and ability to manage stress. Learners in beginners Spanish develop their speaking skills very well.
- In vocational lessons learners develop the skills and knowledge they need to work professionally. Teachers use examples from their own industrial experience to motivate learners and develop their professional practice. Learners develop a good understanding of budgeting and use mathematics skills well in context, for example to work out costings of materials they use in floristry.
- Learners have a good understanding of equality, diversity and British values and how to stay safe and report concerns. Attendance is low in a small minority of adult and community lessons.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The college provides apprenticeships in animal science, business administration,

construction, health and social care, land-based industries, engineering, manufacturing, and retail and commercial services. There are approximately 1,100 apprentices, with over half on intermediate-level provision. The college subcontracted 35 advanced apprenticeships in ICT and 24 in digital marketing in 2015/16. There are no starts in digital marketing apprenticeships in 2016/17.

- Staff do not evaluate effectively enough apprentices' existing skills or previous learning during initial assessment. As a result, assessors often set apprentices work they have previously done or can already do, or they do not sufficiently challenge apprentices to build on previous learning and develop higher-level skills.
- Teachers do not always make the best use of the off-the-job taught lessons to challenge and motivate apprentices to make rapid progress. They do not manage well enough the use of questioning to challenge and enthuse apprentices. Apprentices' recall of presented information is too low in these sessions, reflecting that insufficient learning is taking place.
- Apprentices adopt safe working practices at work and in college, they are respectful of each other and know who to speak to if concerned about their safety or well-being. However, teachers and assessors do not sufficiently develop apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity, safeguarding or British values, for example by exploiting topics currently in the news. Recent improvements to apprentices' online training and work books include these topics, and there are standard notices displayed in college campuses. However, apprentices do not yet have sufficient awareness of what it means for them and how they might protect themselves or their peers from potential radicalisation or extremism.
- Managers have introduced an appropriate range of measures to improve the quality of teaching and learning and the tracking of apprentices' progress. Assessors and managers identify more promptly learners at risk of falling behind and support them well to catch up through a range of extra assessment and review visits. Specific and targeted actions taken to make improvements in engineering and in veterinary nursing are beginning to have a positive impact on apprentices' experience in these areas.
- Many teachers very effectively link in lessons and individual coaching, theoretical and practical work, apprentices' own research and their experience at work. They use skilful questioning and draw on their own vocational expertise to enable apprentices to develop skills and knowledge that meet industry standards. For example, in veterinary nursing good questions and well-planned teaching enabled apprentices to develop knowledge relating to congenital defects in animals. Teachers use questioning particularly well during assessment and progress reviews to extend learners' technical understanding and to consolidate their learning. Virtually all apprentices successfully achieve English, mathematics and information and communication technology functional skills qualifications but they do not routinely apply and extend these skills sufficiently well in the workplace.
- Apprentices develop good work-related skills. They make good progress in the development of self-confidence, workplace initiative, team-working, and organisational and interpersonal skills. These skills are highly valued by both learners and employers and support the apprentices' progression into permanent roles. Attendance at work and at off-the-job training is good. Apprentices are well behaved and collaborate effectively with colleagues and peers. They contribute significantly to employers' businesses.
- Most on- and off-the-job learning is planned well. As a result apprentices develop the

vocational skills that are valued by employers. For example, a programme in construction was co-designed with an employer to ensure that the content met the practical needs of the workplace. Learners develop industry-standard skills and make a real contribution to the workplace. However, in a minority of workplaces, weaker coordination of workplace and off-the-job learning leads to apprentices repeating skills learned at work when they attend college courses. A small number of employers are not aware of apprentices' progress towards completion of their framework.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college has significantly increased the numbers of learners in receipt of high-needs funding in the current year. Some 45 learners with complex needs attend a purpose-built centre on the main Rodbaston campus. A further 15 learners join entry-level, discrete programmes at Rodbaston and Torc alongside other learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In addition, 45 learners are provided with a range of support as they follow vocational study programmes at levels 1 to 3 across all college campuses.
- Managers place a high priority on learners developing their independence as much as they are able in order to prepare them effectively for their future life and work. Staff have high expectations of learners on discrete courses and provide an interesting and varied curriculum including horticulture, animal management and photography, as well as essential everyday living skills.
- Learners benefit from a carefully planned, thorough assessment and transition process before they enrol. This helps them settle in quickly and make good progress. Staff effectively build a comprehensive profile of the learners' physical, emotional, behavioural and educational needs through close liaison with parents, carers, medical practitioners and a range of other agencies. Teachers design individual learning programmes which meet learners' greatest needs and build on their existing skills.
- Learners receive good, specialist support which further helps them overcome their barriers to independence. A learner with a visual impairment now moves around their college campus and is gaining competence and confidence to move around the town centre with weekly specialist travel training. Learners on the autistic spectrum with challenging behaviours have carefully planned support from experienced teachers and support assistants. They make good progress, moderating their extreme responses and developing social skills.
- Learners on discrete courses make good progress in improving their English and mathematics skills throughout their learning programmes as well as in discrete lessons. Learners are challenged to practise their oral communication skills at the start of the day as they routinely take a 10-minute stroll around the campus, commenting on the sights and their plans for the day. Learners measure planting depths and compare differing heights to which bulbs will grow on their allotment plots. Learners on supported learning programmes work well as a team measuring templates and use simple number work as they create three-dimensional advent calendars.
- Learners on discrete courses develop good practical skills. They improve their coordination, physical fitness and concentration as they learn how to clean aviaries, maintain the gardens, dance in time to music or clean the kitchen. They also improve their abilities to work with others and take turns.

- Learners receive very well-planned information and advice on discrete programmes. Learners who intend to leave at the end of the year receive individual weekly planning and coaching sessions throughout the year. They receive good support to identify their existing strengths and weaknesses and their preferences; where appropriate, they undertake relevant, carefully chosen work experience. Those identified with weak money management skills benefit from working at the college stall at a local market selling wooden objects produced by learners in practical skills lessons.
- Staff monitor and record carefully learners' progress on discrete courses so that they can set promptly new, challenging targets for their next steps. Learners gain confidence and take pride in their work as their gradual but important steps towards independence are captured and recorded through symbols, pictures and photographs. Learners' achievements are celebrated through group reward points, which further develops empathy and a community ethos.
- The monitoring and recording of learning and achievements on cross-college vocational courses are not thorough enough, so learners do not always make the progress they are capable of. Although most support assistants know their learners well, they do not routinely use the electronic tracking system to record progress and developmental needs to help learners know what they need to do to improve and gain greater independence and success in their future life and work.

Provider details

Unique reference number	135658
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	5,642
Principal/CEO	Graham Morley DL
Telephone number	01543 462200
Website	www.southstaffs.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	622	611	704	1,114	1,182	236	–	5
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	242	369	135	366	4	27		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	105							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Aspire, Achieve, Advance LLP NCC Skills							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, 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

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