

New College Telford

Sixth form college

Inspection dates

6–8 December 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	Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Governors, leaders and managers have not improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment quickly or consistently enough.
- Too few learners make the progress of which they are capable, especially those studying academic subjects.
- Teachers and assessors do not make consistently good use of short-term targets to help learners make the progress of which they are capable.
- Too few learners who retake a GCSE in either mathematics or English achieve a grade C or better.
- Too few apprentices achieve their qualification within the planned time.

The provider has the following strengths

- Most learners achieve their qualifications and progress into further learning, higher education or employment.
- Staff work well with external agencies to ensure learners' safeguarding.
- Leaders have managed effectively the transition of apprenticeships to the college and aligned the curriculum well to local priorities.
- Learners on vocational programmes make good progress as a result of the good planning by teachers to extend prior learning and link their studies to the world of work.
- Learners' behaviour and attitudes to study and work are exemplary.

Full report

Information about the provider

- New College Telford is a sixth form college based in Wellington, situated on the outskirts of Telford in Shropshire. It offers courses in 12 of the 15 sector subject areas, including both academic and vocational options. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and studying at level 3.
- The college's catchment area includes 14 secondary schools, of which six have well-established sixth forms. Four wards local to the college are classed as having high levels of deprivation. Approximately 82% of learners are from a white background, and learners from mixed (4%) and Pakistani (5%) backgrounds form the largest groups from minority ethnic heritage. These proportions are in line with the local area. The proportion of young people who gain five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is lower than the national rate.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that governors make full use of the information they gain from management reports, learning walks and meetings with learners to challenge leaders and managers to increase the speed of improvement and focus their efforts where they will have the biggest impact.
- Ensure that managers rapidly establish effective ways to share the good practice in much vocational teaching so that learners in all subjects are challenged and supported to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Support teachers to make effective use of detailed developmental feedback and measurable short-term targets, linked to the results of initial and diagnostic assessments of learners' skills and abilities, and their progress in their chosen subjects, so that learners know exactly what they have to do to improve their work to achieve their learning aims.
- Improve the teaching of GCSE mathematics so that more learners are able to achieve a grade C or better in their examinations.
- Provide high-quality professional development, coaching or peer support for all teachers and assessors to develop their confidence in identifying opportunities in their lessons where they can support learners to improve their mathematical skills.
- Develop the tutorial programme and progress reviews so that tutors and assessors include more frequent discussion of British values so that learners and apprentices are better informed about how these affect them at work and in their daily lives.
- Reinforce learners' and apprentices' knowledge and understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism, so that they are more fully informed as to how they may protect themselves.
- Support assessors to ensure that employers are involved in progress reviews so that they recognise how to support their apprentices to make rapid progress through their qualification.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not taken enough effective action since the previous inspection to ensure that all learners achieve as well as they are able. Senior managers are aware of most of the weaknesses affecting the quality of provision, and improvements have resulted in most learners now completing their courses and gaining their qualifications. However, they have not yet ensured that teaching and learning are consistently good and that all learners make progress according to their potential.
- Too many learners have experienced several changes of teachers in a short period of time. Merger plans have been in discussion for several years and there have been three principals in four years, the latter two in interim roles. This has resulted in anxiety and uncertainty for staff, delaying some of the planned improvements and having a negative impact on learners' experience. Despite improvements, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is still too variable and arrangements to share and adopt good practice are not yet sufficiently well established.
- The range of provision at the college has developed towards a greater focus on vocational courses and apprenticeships. The majority of classroom-based learners study a combination of academic and vocational subjects. Leaders have chosen programmes carefully to meet the identified priorities in the local area, particularly in health and care and in hospitality and catering. The number of apprentices has increased substantially, in response to employers' needs and the demands of the local economy, while the number of classroom-based learners has steadily declined.
- Arrangements to assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in lessons are rigorous and the resulting information is used well in performance management. Self-assessment is accurate; leaders and managers know the college well. Where senior managers take rapid actions, improvements are clear to see, such as in the recent decision to bring the management of apprenticeships under college control.
- Performance management is effective, using information from lesson observations and the analysis of learners' outcomes. Where appropriate, teachers are supported through mentorship and supportive observations to improve. A number of teachers have been supported in leaving the college in cases where they are unable to demonstrate sustained improvement.
- Managers now place a high priority on improving the quality of support for mathematics and English provision. Actions to address the decline in GCSE examination results in 2015/16, including extra sessions and new teachers, are starting to show early signs of impact, especially in English. Teachers are now clear about what specific skills or understanding a learner needs to improve, but are less secure on how this will be done. Although all learners undertake an initial assessment in mathematics and English, there is no provision for those with a GCSE at grade C or above to improve their grades.
- Staff promote diversity well in the college, clearly valuing the contribution of all learners, listening to their views and acting on them. Managers and staff create an environment of mutual respect, where differences between people are discussed openly.

The governance of the provider

- Since the previous inspection, the key focus for senior leaders and governors has been the proposed merger with a neighbouring college and maintaining a stable financial position to ensure sustainability.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the college, but they have not yet been successful in challenging and enabling leaders to bring about all the improvements needed to ensure that all learners achieve their full potential.
- Governors receive detailed information on the performance of the college, including access to the detailed dashboard on indicators of performance. They are closely involved with validating the self-assessment report and improvement plan and undertake walks around the college to talk to learners. While these arrangements are useful in giving governors first-hand information about learners' experiences on courses, they are not being used sufficiently well to challenge leaders where these experiences are unsatisfactory.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers work well with external bodies to share information for the benefit of learners' welfare, including recently adopting a system to receive information on safeguarding concerns from the local authority. Recruitment arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- Learners report that they feel safe both at college and when they undertake work experience. However, managers do not enforce the wearing of identity badges at all times in a college with multiple entrances.
- Leaders and managers ensure that they comply with the 'Prevent' duty. Safety online is a high priority, with effective monitoring of internet use on college equipment. Learners have a good understanding of the importance of safe use of the internet but not all are fully aware of the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not improved sufficiently. While the proportion of learners achieving their qualifications has improved, many learners and apprentices do not make the progress expected of them. Managers, teachers and assessors are working well together to make improvements. They demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring that their learners and apprentices make progress according to their potential.
- Teachers of A-level subjects do not make enough use of their knowledge of learners' prior attainment to plan activities that meet the different needs and abilities of learners. This results in too many learners not being set work that is demanding enough during lessons and not making sufficient progress relative to their starting points. In contrast, in the majority of vocational subjects teachers effectively use learners' prior attainment and up-to-date industry examples to set activities that successfully challenge learners to make rapid progress. For example, in business studies, learners compose letters to potential employers explaining the benefits of technology and innovation to the commercial viability

of their organisation. Peers then assess the work for use of the correct business terminology.

- In order to improve the progress that learners make relative to their starting points, teachers have improved how they set target grades for learners in each of their subjects. Learners know what these targets are. Teachers monitor learners' progress frequently and identify those at risk of not achieving. However, a significant minority of teachers and assessors do not make effective use of short-term targets and actions to help learners achieve higher grades, or apprentices to improve their performance. They do not provide clear enough guidance to learners and apprentices on how to develop their subject knowledge, or improve skills such as essay- and report-writing.
- Managers' actions to improve teaching in English GCSE courses are beginning to have a noticeable effect. In the current year, learners are making better progress than last year. Around three quarters are currently on target to achieve a grade C. However, assessors are less confident about improving apprentices' written English skills. Teaching in GCSE mathematics has been less successful in developing the skills of learners. Early indications are that few learners are making the progress necessary to achieve a grade C. Teachers are more skilled and confident in promoting learners' literacy skills than in integrating mathematics into their own subject area. Assessors support apprentices effectively to develop mathematical skills relevant to their work setting.
- Teachers and support staff are approachable and helpful; many work successfully to help those learners who may be struggling with their courses. Managers have organised additional workshops, compulsory for some learners and optional for others, in which learners receive helpful support and encouragement to complete work and develop skills. These are very popular with learners and support their progress well. Supported learners value the development of their organisational skills and confidence as a result of the work of their additional specialist support staff.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners are punctual, their attendance at lessons and tutorials is high and they arrive at college well prepared to study. They are respectful, cooperative and very well behaved in lessons and social areas in the college. Learners take pride in their work and demonstrate very positive attitudes to study, including in their own time and even where lesson activities do not sufficiently challenge them. They confidently demonstrate good subject knowledge when they respond to teachers' questions or challenge one another in group discussions. Apprentices develop their personal and work-related skills well and contribute increasingly effectively to their employers' business.
- Many learners benefit from the well-planned tutorials and the new supported study sessions. Attendance at both is good. They can discuss their progress and targets for achievement at the end of the year in detail and most know what they need to do to continue to improve. They are well informed about the options available to them when they enrol at the college. Many learners are studying a combination of academic and vocational subjects which meets their needs well and which results in more learners staying on their course than in previous years.
- Learners develop relevant work-related skills through a broad range of measures, including through links with employers, work placements, volunteering, in-class activities

and by practising their presentation skills to meet the requirements of future employers or higher-education institutions. The large majority of first-year learners will have completed their planned, external work placement by the end of their first term; the rest are expected to do so after the holiday. Those learners who have already been out on placement can explain how it helped them to develop skills for work and made them more confident in dealing with people. Learners who have not yet completed their placements are less clear how they will evaluate this experience and build on it in lessons or tutorials.

- Learners feel safe and know how to raise a concern if they feel threatened. They are aware of the controls that are placed on college information and communication technology (IT) systems and how this helps to protect them. Most learners have at least a basic awareness of the potential dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism and the nature of those dangers in the local area. Apprentices demonstrate good empathy and understanding of cultural diversity in relation to their workplaces. Learners' recall of discussions about British values is rudimentary and few can talk confidently about how this subject impacts on their daily lives or potential career path. A small minority of learners do not always wear their college identity badges until staff challenge them to do so.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Too few learners studying academic qualifications, BTEC extended diplomas and subsidiary diplomas and diplomas in IT, law or sports science make the progress required to achieve the grades of which they are capable.
- Too few learners who retake a GCSE in either mathematics or English achieve a grade C or better. Achievement has declined sharply for the last three years; in English this is now below the low rate for similar providers. In mathematics, the achievement rate remains just above that for similar providers despite a similarly consistent decline. Achievement rates in level 1 mathematics functional skills have declined and are low.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieved their full qualification within the planned time was very low in 2014/15 and declined even further in 2015/16 when almost all the provision was subcontracted out of the college. Managers took the decision to bring this provision into the college at the beginning of 2016. Since that time, far more of the apprentices have remained in learning than was the case in each of the previous two years. Apprentices currently on programmes are making at least the progress needed to achieve their qualification within the planned time. They develop good technical and personal skills to support them at work.
- Most learners who study A-level subjects or level 3 vocational subjects achieve their qualification at rates that are at least as high as in similar providers. This is a marked improvement since the previous inspection. Learners studying A-level health and social care, A-level IT and the subsidiary diploma in sports studies and in applied science make good progress relative to their starting points.
- Learners produce work that meets the requirements of their qualification. Almost all learners continue into the second year of their course and most of those who complete their courses progress to their chosen destination
- The majority of learners who are retaking a GCSE in English in order to achieve at least a

grade C demonstrated good progress towards this target in the first two formal assessments this year. Achievement rates for the few learners taking English functional skills at level 1 have improved after a decline in 2014/15 to just below the low rate of similar providers. Half of the very few learners taking mathematics functional skills at level 2 in 2015/16 were successful, which is above the rate for similar providers.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The college provides study programmes for 745 young people, with learners enrolled on level 1, level 2 and level 3 programmes. The large majority of learners are enrolled on level 3 courses.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment on study programmes is not consistently good. Too many learners do not make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in academic subjects. Teachers in these subjects do not plan well enough to meet the most-able learners' needs. In too many lessons, teachers do not challenge learners to develop their ideas when responding to initial questions in order to consolidate their learning. However, in vocational subjects, teachers plan teaching and learning effectively to support individual learners, which results in them making better progress.
- Teachers' feedback on learners' written work is not sufficiently helpful to ensure improvements. Where it is most helpful, such as in business and art, teachers provide detailed advice, for example on how to improve technical accuracy in English. However, in a minority of cases where it is distinctly unhelpful, teachers' feedback consists simply of advice to revise a whole topic again. Managers have begun to monitor the quality of teachers' assessment and feedback to improve the consistency, but it is too early to judge the impact of this new process.
- High-quality facilities create a good and productive learning environment for all courses, with interactive whiteboard technology in every classroom. Teachers in vocational subjects produce helpful learning materials, which support learners well. However, the large majority of teachers do not make the most effective use of this technology to support and enhance learning. For example, in one lesson, learners were required to copy notes from a slide presentation by hand.
- College systems for monitoring learners' progress are effective in enabling managers to monitor learners at risk of failing their course. However, these systems are not yet sufficiently well used to support teachers in planning learning to meet individual learners' needs so that learners can make the progress of which they are capable.
- Staff provide effective information, advice and guidance that enable learners to choose and stay on individualised study programmes relevant to their future career aspirations.
- Learners benefit from a clear drive by managers to ensure that they are well prepared for life outside the college and a good proportion now take part in external work experience. Managers have introduced a new system of designating block placement weeks and have worked with learners to help secure placements. Learners without a placement remain in college to undertake work-related activities.
- Learners are able to select from a range of enrichment opportunities to enable them to

broaden their experience, develop confidence and improve their work-related skills. For example, learners studying A-level theatre studies recently attended a Royal Shakespeare Company production in Stratford-upon-Avon. Others take part in successful fundraising activities for local and national charities.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The college has 276 apprentices enrolled on a large number of different frameworks and at different levels, mainly in health and social care, hospitality and catering, and business administration and management programmes.
- Qualification achievements have been low over the past two years, largely because too many apprentices were not placed on appropriate programmes. Since moving the provision into the college, staff provide much better and well-informed advice and guidance to prospective apprentices, with the result that far fewer apprentices withdraw from their programme early. Managers' actions to support assessors and monitor apprentices' progress are beginning to have a positive impact on improving current apprentices' progress.
- Assessors have not ensured that all employers participate in progress reviews and other activities that would support apprentices to achieve. A small minority of assessors do not always keep employers informed about the specific progress their apprentices are making or tell employers what they could do to speed up this progress.
- Apprentices have good opportunities to broaden their understanding of the cultural diversity of their colleagues and customers, and are sensitive to different needs. They have a broad understanding of safeguarding and they feel safe at work. They are less confident in discussing the potential dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism.
- Assessors and employers promote apprentices' better understanding of mathematical concepts well, largely through activities that require numerical calculations within their work. Apprentices learn to communicate well with colleagues and customers orally, but not all assessors give apprentices sufficient opportunity to develop good written English skills.
- The quality and impact of assessors' regular and frequent employer visits require improvement because they vary too much. In a day-care centre, for example, the assessor and apprentice were fully prepared for the appointment and the assessment was conducted in a purposeful, focused and challenging manner that made the apprentice very aware of the progress made and the precise actions needed to improve. The employer contributed fully to this discussion and knew how to help the apprentice achieve. In contrast, during a review of an apprentice's progress in a care home, where the employer did not attend, the assessor did not ask the apprentice enough questions, prompted the apprentice to the required answers too readily, and did not set sufficiently clear and precise actions for improvement.
- Many apprentices and employers find the new progress monitoring system useful, but a small minority find it difficult to use. As a result, these apprentices and their employers are not sufficiently aware of how much progress apprentices are making or what actions they need to take to improve.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills in their chosen fields, supported by assessors

who are well qualified and experienced in specialist professional areas. For example, a higher-level apprentice in a care setting was able to organise and monitor the quality of meal arrangements for residents, and an apprentice in a nursery developed creative games for young children. Many apprentices progress at work and are given additional responsibilities. An apprentice who started her training earlier this year has already been promoted to a coordinator role in her company.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130801
Type of provider	Sixth form college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,166
Principal/CEO	Interim principal – Martin Smith
Telephone number	01952 641892
Website	www.nct.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)	34	5	86	–	625	27	2	14
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	26	172	10	92	–	75		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	19		–		19			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	none							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal (quality and performance), 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

Nick Gadfield, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Megan Whittaker	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Townsley	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Tipping	Ofsted Inspector
Nicholas Sanders	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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