

Birmingham Metropolitan College

General further education college

Inspection dates

14–17 February 2017

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	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement	Apprenticeships	Good
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Governors and senior managers have not tackled successfully three of the significant areas for improvement from the previous inspection.
- Managers' actions to improve the performance of teachers have not had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to learners. As a result, learners aged 16 to 18 do not make sufficient progress in A-level, AS-level and vocational qualifications at level 3.
- Despite recent changes, teachers do not develop learners' English and mathematics skills well enough on mathematics and English GCSE courses, and as a result learners do not make sufficient progress.
- Learners' attendance and punctuality are too low on study programmes, and this hampers their progress.
- A minority of learners and apprentices do not have a clear enough understanding of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

The provider has the following strengths

- Governors and senior managers have an ambitious strategy for the college; this is based on an accurate assessment of the college's strengths and weaknesses and has resulted in the stabilisation of the college's financial position.
- Apprentices make good progress, improve their knowledge and skills and a high proportion complete their qualifications within planned timescales. Highly knowledgeable assessors provide effective support and target-setting, and as a result the standard of work is impressive.
- Senior managers create a responsive and comprehensive curriculum which reflects the short- and long-term needs of the regional economy and provides learners with clear ways to progress in their studies and to secure employment.
- Learners develop good practical, personal and social skills and most learners build confidence.
- Learners with high needs develop their independence and benefit from support which enables them to progress successfully to achieve their targets.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Birmingham Metropolitan College is a large, general further education college with approximately 20,000 learners and four main campuses. The college serves local communities in Birmingham, the Black Country and Wyre Forest, offering courses for the whole of the community. The majority of learners on full-time programmes are aged 16 to 18. Most employers linked to the college are within the regions covered by the Black Country and Greater Birmingham and Solihull local enterprise partnerships (LEPs). There are significant relationships with large employers and, in partnership, the college has established on-site learning academies.
- Many learners are from the most economically deprived areas in the West Midlands. Unemployment in Birmingham is 9.6% and in Dudley is 6.8%. This is higher than the West Midlands rate of 5.7% and higher than the national rate of 5.1%. Around 50% of learners are from minority ethnic groups. In Birmingham and Dudley local authorities, secondary school pupils' achievement of five GCSEs at A* to C, including English and mathematics, is below the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress that learners are making at level 3 by simplifying the current system for monitoring learners' progress against aspirational targets. Senior leaders and managers must have a sharper and more reliable understanding of how well learners are progressing at more frequent intervals throughout their course and ensure that effective action is put in place to support learners who are underperforming.
- Improve teaching and learning, and the progress that learners make, by:
 - clearly communicating to staff the common expectations and standards regarding learners' behaviour and attitudes to learning
 - making learners' progress the focus for teaching, learning and assessment
 - clearly linking areas for improvement with targeted staff development and following up this work with an assessment of impact on learning and progress
 - building on the current assessment of learners' starting points and using this more consistently to ensure that learners are supported and challenged to meet their full potential
 - providing feedback which identifies more clearly the actions learners need to take to improve their work
 - identifying and sharing good practice both within and between faculties.
- Improve attendance by building on recent improvements, and setting clear expectations that are understood by staff and learners. Ensure that tutors and student support staff tackle poor attendance swiftly and that the appropriate balance of support and challenge means that long-term absence does not impact on the progress of the whole group. This has a particularly negative impact on the quality of collaborative group work.
- Improve progress in mathematics and English GCSE and the development of mathematical and English skills by:

- building on the strategies and initiatives that have been recently put in place, and using the English and mathematics champions and lead practitioners to model and disseminate good practice
- ensuring that the impact of recent changes is measured, reported accurately and used to refine further targeted actions.
- Check that all managers are accountable for the effectiveness of the many improvements that senior managers have introduced and that they take action to embed these rigorously and consistently within their areas of responsibility.
- Ensure that all learners and apprentices improve their understanding of the risks of extremism and radicalisation and know how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Ensure that governors continue to focus more on the quality of teaching and on learners' progress, and that they challenge leaders and managers sufficiently to make the required improvements in the performance of the college.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not addressed in full the key recommendations from the previous inspection. While governors and senior managers have dealt with a challenging financial position, they have not improved sufficiently the rate at which level 3 learners progress, the development of learners' knowledge and skills in English and mathematics, and the quality of teaching and learning on classroom-based courses. Learners still miss too many lessons and this hampers their progress.
- Senior managers have strengthened the process for reviewing the performance of staff since the previous inspection. Managers now consider a good range of information such as learners' progress and results, observations of lessons and the views of learners. Teachers develop their own action plans following performance reviews. Most teachers now draw on targeted staff development activities such as participation in cross-college learning groups, observations of colleagues and support from coaches and mentors. These activities are beginning to lead to improvements but they are not yet leading to consistently good teaching, learning and assessment across all campuses and subjects.
- Despite improvements, there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that all learners have a good experience and make good progress. Teachers' effectiveness in embedding the development of learners' English and mathematical skills into their lessons varies too much. Other than those working with learners with high needs, teachers do not use effectively the information about learners' prior attainment to plan their teaching and set challenging individual targets for learners, so that they may reach their potential.
- Governors, senior leaders and managers display a reflective and self-critical approach to the self-assessment process, and inspectors agree in broad terms with the findings in the most recent report. Managers use a good range of measures to assess the quality of courses in their areas of responsibility, including those taught by subcontractors. Where standards are not good enough, managers raise concerns, and where performance has not improved, those contracts have been terminated. Leaders have a broadly accurate and realistic view of the strengths and areas for improvement. They are taking actions to bring about the improvements needed, such as the introduction of the 'unmissable lesson' initiative, but these actions are not yet having the necessary impact on improving the quality of provision.
- Leaders and governors have developed a clear strategic ambition to develop technical and vocational training in line with the skills priorities of the LEPs and key employers. They have successfully stabilised the college's financial position through significant restructuring to make efficiency savings, which has helped to secure its capacity to meet these strategic goals. Managers plan the curriculum well to respond to short-term needs as well as longer-term strategies such as growth in professional services and advanced manufacturing. This planning has led to a good range of employment-related courses for Jobcentre Plus clients and adaptations to other courses to meet employers' needs for particular skills. Managers take into account the quality and financial viability of courses when identifying possible changes in the offer. However, they do not monitor, in sufficient detail, learners' destinations and so are unable to evaluate fully the effectiveness of courses.

- Leaders and managers have successfully improved apprenticeship programmes, so that many more learners now achieve within the planned time. Most of the current apprentices are on track to complete on time. Managers in this area are well prepared for the potential growth in numbers to meet the LEPs' priorities. Courses to prepare adults for sustainable employment are well planned and meet their needs well, such as English for employment and electrical engineering skills development. Local employers recruit heavily from these types of courses.

The governance of the provider

- Governors understand the college's strengths and areas for improvement. They use a variety of information to challenge leaders about the speed of improvement; in some cases they do not accept what they are told without further clarification or checks. They have increasingly shared their focus between financial stability and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and have recruited new board members with relevant experience. They are ambitious for learners and strive to bring about improvements. They recognise that there is more work to be done to improve the quality of provision. Induction arrangements for new governors have been revised and formalised. Governors now receive a well-structured and comprehensive introduction to the role and responsibilities, to the college's current developments, and to its strengths and areas for improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and have been updated to reflect the new 'Prevent' duty. Recruitment practices and the single central record meet requirements and provide increased confidence that learners are safe in the care of staff. Designated safeguarding officers work closely with the regional police counter-terrorism unit (CTU), the local authority designated officer (LADO) for each of the neighbouring authorities, the regional government 'Prevent' co-ordinator and health service drop-in centres. They draw well on their close links with these agencies to support learners at risk or in need of protection and to support staff development on safeguarding and child protection matters. Governors receive regular reports on safeguarding trends and concerns. Teachers introduce topics on radicalisation and extremism and British values at the start of the learners' programme, and most learners have a good understanding of tolerance, fairness and respect. However, a minority of learners and apprentices are not able to demonstrate a sufficiently detailed or confident understanding of the dangers of radicalisation or extremism.
- Managers demonstrate a collaborative approach, when working with local agencies, to ensuring the safety of students on and around the campuses.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection but is not consistently good in enabling learners to gain their qualifications and make progress according to their potential.

- Although the large majority of learners and apprentices pass their qualifications, too many learners do not make the progress of which they are capable. The most able learners find work too easy because teachers do not routinely plan learning and assessment that take account of their prior knowledge and skills. For example, in a sports lesson, the most able learners found a presentation activity too easy because more-challenging tasks were not included; consequently, learners could not fulfil their potential.
- Teachers' expectations of learners are too low and do not sufficiently promote or reinforce the demands of employers, such as full attendance, punctuality and dress code. Teachers set too many unchallenging tasks where learners work at the same level and become bored and do not concentrate sufficiently. In these cases, learners make slow progress and fail to demonstrate the culture of respect that teachers are trying to create. In too many adult classes, although not disruptive, learners lose their concentration and progress slowly as a result of teaching activity that is too fast for some to be able to stay on task, while too slow for others, so they become bored.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers develop well-planned and vocationally relevant tasks, and provide inspirational teaching which engrosses learners and enables them to develop skills and knowledge inside and outside of the classroom. Where this happens, learners act on the high-quality feedback provided by teachers and peers that helps them to increase their understanding of the subject. In an A-level media lesson, learners thought deeply and debated recommendations to improve the visual impact of their videos, therefore benefiting from the inspired ideas of the group. In a science lesson, learners explored the functions of the heart and used their own digital devices to share pictures and check their work with each other. The teacher skilfully questioned learners to explore their understanding, and set work for the group to do online and to extend their learning after the lesson.
- In the large majority of practical sessions, teachers and assessors use their up-to-date experience and knowledge to support learners and apprentices to improve their practical skills well. For example, sports learners develop high-quality football skills as a result of their coach's professional playing experience, enabling them to compete in semi-professional competitions. Pharmacy apprentices benefit from their assessors' experience of advanced technology and practice, helping them to develop the analytical skills to identify successfully appropriate medication in busy hospital pharmacies.
- In too many cases, teachers do not provide sufficiently detailed written feedback to enable learners to improve their performance. Although managers have developed tools that enable teachers and assessors to monitor closely learners' progress against planned actions, too many learners fail to achieve their expected learning goals. Learners studying A-level and vocational courses are unable to identify clearly what they need to do to improve their work, as the feedback they receive does not explain how they might achieve higher grades. However, verbal feedback is more effective. For example, learners, including those with high needs and apprentices, develop their work-related skills and behaviours well because of the constructive verbal feedback they receive. For example, a learner with high needs developed much-improved social skills, such as in the etiquette of queueing, and had the confidence to help another learner to do the same.
- At subject level, teachers make frequent assessments of learners' progress but there is a lack of consistency in the type and rigour of assessment, so they do not have a sufficiently precise view of the progress that learners are actually making. Senior managers collate

termly information on learners' progress compared to targets, but this is not sufficiently frequent to enable senior managers to instigate prompt and timely actions to intervene to support learners where they are at risk of falling behind the targets agreed.

- Managers and teachers provide well-planned additional support for learners who need extra help with their work. As a result, these learners make good progress and achieve their qualifications at a higher rate than their peers. They benefit from a wide range of effective, additional workshops and one-to-one support through well-resourced, dedicated centres at each main college campus. Specialist staff effectively remove the barriers that their learners have to participating in learning. Learners with high needs receive appropriate challenge, make good progress and progress to higher-level learning or employment.
- The quality of teaching of English and mathematics is not good enough. Teachers of English and mathematics GCSE do not routinely help learners to consolidate their learning successfully and then apply the freshly learned skills and knowledge to new challenges. However, apprentices and learners studying functional skills in English and mathematics develop the appropriate knowledge and skills required by employers. For example, engineering apprentices develop advanced mathematical skills to analyse data and are able to recognise how hydraulic systems perform, ready for installation into new vehicles.
- Teachers provide in-depth learning sessions relating to fundamental British values. As a result, learners can comment on current cultural and social issues in relation to living in modern Britain. Teachers promote diversity well and encourage learners to discuss cultural differences. During inspection, on the Matthew Boulton campus and in a debate with an external speaker, learners displayed high levels of understanding of the importance of tolerance, understanding and respect. However, a small minority of learners and apprentices have not received sufficient training on the potential threats from extremism and radicalisation, and so are not yet able to talk confidently about these topics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Learners' attendance at lessons, while improved from the previous year, is still not high enough. Teachers set learners targets for improving their attendance, but in too many cases they do not help them to overcome their barriers to high rates of attendance. Too many learners do not arrive punctually for lessons and ready to learn. For example, a minority of learners do not take their coats and bags off and get their folders and pens ready until well after the lesson has started.
- Learners' behaviour and conduct in a minority of lessons are not good enough. Too often they talk over each other or over the teacher. This disrupts their own learning and that of other learners. Teachers do not challenge this behaviour often enough, or set high enough expectations for learners' conduct in lessons.
- Learners have a good awareness and understanding of the importance in society of fundamental British values, but they do not exhibit or demonstrate these values consistently in lessons and tutorials. For example, when tutors discuss mutual respect and tolerance in tutorials about relationships, learners talk over each other and the tutors.
- Learners in subjects including health and social care and sport benefit from external work-

experience placements, during which they can develop further their practical skills and skills for work. They extend their subject knowledge and make valuable contributions to their employer's business. For example, learners in sport organise and run football tournaments for groups of local schools. However, learners in subjects such as construction and information and communication technology do not have these opportunities, and consequently their skills for work are less well developed

- Where learners do not have the opportunity to participate in external work-experience placements, teachers successfully use a variety of methods to help them develop their understanding of the world of work. For example, learners in construction visit a range of local construction sites, and managers from local construction companies visit the college frequently to give talks about different aspects of the industry, such as managing health and safety on complex construction sites. Learners in photography work with the college marketing team to produce promotional photographs to promote the college's apprenticeship activities.
- Learners, particularly those for whom the college receives high-needs funding and apprentices, develop their confidence well. Apprentices in particular produce written and practical work to a high standard, exceeding the requirements of their course.
- Learners and apprentices receive good-quality careers advice and guidance from their teachers, assessors and specialist careers staff. This helps them plan their next steps in learning to support them to achieve their career goals. Learners aged 16 to 18 receive particularly effective support for their applications to university.
- Learners feel safe at college. Managers work effectively to ensure that the campuses are safe places to learn; those at the city-centre campus have worked particularly well with neighbouring organisations to ensure the safety of learners. Learners understand well how to keep themselves safe in their daily lives and online. Apprentices learn to work safely, particularly in high-risk industries such as heavy engineering and construction.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The largest proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 study at level 3. The proportion of these learners who complete and achieve their qualifications is below the national average and within this figure the performance of learners in AS-level qualifications is particularly low.
- Given their qualifications on entry, learners aged 16 to 18 do not make sufficient progress in A-level, AS-level or vocational qualifications at level 3. Although recent internal assessment shows improved progress for learners on these courses, the historical pattern is poor, internal assessment is not sufficiently rigorous, and current progress in the classroom is not consistently good.
- Despite recent changes, learners of all ages make insufficient progress in mathematics and English GCSE and the development of mathematical and English skills across courses is not consistently good.
- The proportion of adult learners who stay on their courses and achieve their qualifications has declined and is too low. This is partly due to a change in provision and the ending of a number of short courses on which the completion and pass rates were very high. The proportion of learners at levels 2 and 3 who achieve their qualification is low, although it is good at entry level and level 1.

- The overall proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 that have achieved their qualifications has improved because of the performance of learners at entry level, level 1 and level 2. Within these levels, there has been a big improvement in basic skills in mathematics and English.
- Apprentices make good progress, improve their knowledge and skills and a high proportion complete their qualifications within planned timescales. Highly knowledgeable assessors provide effective support and target-setting, and as a result, the standard of work is impressive.
- The proportion of learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities who achieve their qualifications has increased greatly and is higher than the college rate for all learners.
- Managers monitor closely the progress of learners in care or those who have recently left care, and the proportion of such learners who have achieved their qualification has improved, although it is still below the college rate for all learners.
- Overall, there are no significant differences between the performance of male and female learners. However, this disguises the better performance of females on programmes for learners aged 16 to 18 and the converse picture for male learners in the adult learning provision.
- Senior managers are aware of poorer performance of Black African males compared with the whole cohort of adult learners. It relates to the achievements of learners on a particular course, and this is now being targeted for improvement.
- Managers monitor carefully the internal progression of learners between levels from one year to the next. The majority of learners on entry-level courses progress to level 1. However, only a minority of learners progress from level 2 to level 3. Managers have clearly defined, appropriate strategies for increasing this number but it is currently too early to see the impact.
- Managers monitor the destinations of full-time learners well, and, combined with a large reduction in the percentage of unknown destinations, there has been a large reduction in the proportion of learners who are not in education or training. For full-time learners aged 16 to 18 at level 3, the majority of learners go to higher education with a minority going to employment, including apprenticeships. Regional universities are the most popular, with most learners attracted to nursing, design studies and law.
- Progression for learners with high needs is positive, with the large majority of learners progressing to the next level of study.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Study programmes account for approximately 6,600 full-time learners on both vocational and academic courses, from entry level to level 3 across most subjects. Study programmes constitute the largest of the four types of provision inspected in terms of full-time learners.
- Managers recognise that attendance in many curriculum areas requires improvement and

have introduced a number of initiatives to achieve this. While there has been some positive impact, attendance remains too low.

- Learners without GCSEs at grades A* to C in English and/or mathematics follow relevant courses. However, it is only in a small minority of lessons that learners benefit from structured planning and well-crafted questioning that support the progress of all learners. In too many instances, teaching and learning in English and mathematics lessons fail to interest or motivate learners, and too many learners make insufficient progress in improving their skills and achieving their qualifications.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment on study programmes is too inconsistent and consequently the majority of learners do not make the progress of which they are capable. For example, in too many subjects, teachers do not use their knowledge of learners' starting points to craft the learning activities so that learners can consistently achieve the higher levels.
- Teachers do not prepare sufficiently challenging lessons. Too often, learners cover the same work regardless of their starting points and abilities. Teachers do not use questions sufficiently well to check learning reliably and extend learners' knowledge or understanding. As a consequence, most learners do not make the progress of which they are capable, especially those with higher target grades.
- A minority of lessons are challenging and encourage learners to work hard and aim high. For example, in a history lesson, enthusiastic teaching excited learners, who were motivated and able to link a series of historical events with their impact on the collapse of the USSR. As a consequence, learners are able to develop more sophisticated arguments and draw on a wider range of examples.
- Learners develop good practical skills in many subjects. For example, in a level 1 textiles lesson learners confidently used free-motion stitching to reproduce work in the likeness of an acclaimed artist, and used acquired skills well to maintain the sewing machines. In these sessions learners make the right level of progress and take pride in their work.
- Senior managers ensure that the principles of the Department for Education 16 to 19 study programme are being met. All learners required to study English and mathematics qualifications are appropriately enrolled, many learners benefit from valuable work experience and those on vocational courses develop skills that prepare them for employment. Learners have a wide range of additional courses and opportunities which they can choose to strengthen their curriculum vitae.
- Managers and staff provide good advice and guidance to help learners to choose an appropriate study programme that is relevant to their career or future study aspirations. Learners receive good careers advice during their course and this enables strong progression from entry level to level 1 and the majority of level 3 learners to progress onto higher education or employment.
- Learners feel safe. The large majority of learners behave with courtesy and respect for each other. They value the college's support and can speak confidently and with understanding about keeping themselves safe online. They are aware of the broad dangers of radicalisation and extremism but some learners are less confident when asked to explore the issues more fully.
- Some exciting enrichment opportunities exist across the college that prepare learners for the world of work, although these do vary in the nature and quantity of opportunity

across sites and courses. In level 3 public services, learners have visited the Imperial War Museum London and attended an evening dinner that raised awareness of the formal dinners they will attend if serving in the military.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Approximately 7,350 adults are enrolled on a range of vocational, preparation for employment and pre-entry/entry-level community-learning courses at the college's main sites and in locally based venues. The large majority of learners are on part-time employability programmes and courses to improve their mathematics and English. Other courses cover a range of academic subjects as well as vocational areas including customer service, art and design, business and accounting, construction trades, health and social care, and access to higher education.
- The range of provision is appropriate to the needs of the local economy as it aligns well to local priority occupations. This includes provision which meets the demands for learning English for employment and for living in the community. Although the structure of courses provides clear opportunities for learners to progress to higher levels of study and into employment, managers do not yet have clear information on learners' destinations and so are unable to evaluate fully the impact of the provision in respect of its key purpose.
- The quality of teaching and learning for adults is not consistently good across all strands of adult programmes. In the majority of lessons, learners are asked to complete the same tasks irrespective of their starting points. Teachers do not challenge the most-able learners, and so they lose concentration as the pace of lessons is too slow for them. Learners do not fulfil their potential.
- In the majority of the provision, teachers do not inform learners clearly enough of the progress of which they are capable in relation to their ability and starting points. Teachers place too much emphasis on whether learners complete tasks rather than on assessing the skills and knowledge that learners have acquired as a result of completing them.
- In a minority of the provision, teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners develop good practical skills in some lessons, such as bricklaying and floristry. Learners understand the relevance of what they are studying, as teachers use meaningful and practical activities in their lessons. In electrical engineering, learners develop their mathematical skills, for example, when they accurately use formulae to calculate cable sizes and fuse ratings. In vocational lessons, such as law and accountancy, learners develop their knowledge of technical vocabulary well and they apply it correctly to different work-related contexts.
- Learners on the majority of courses acquire a range of skills that help them in employment or in their personal lives and have benefits to their local communities. For example, learners on a community-based course develop an extensive range of project-management skills to create a wildlife school.
- Learners benefit from good support provided by teachers and specialist staff during and outside of lessons. Learners with mental health issues and anxiety problems report how teachers and support staff have helped them to remain on course, to feel better about themselves and to aspire to applying to university. However, learners are not always made aware of additional support available at each of the main centres.

- Highly effective links with Jobcentre Plus provide good opportunities for learners to re-engage with learning. Senior managers respond well to the needs of learners and local employers by providing courses which guarantee learners an interview once they have completed successfully. Learners find this highly motivating.
- Learners discuss cultural issues and differences in a small minority of lessons, increasing their awareness of cultural diversity. Learners feel safe in college and are aware of how to raise concerns. However, not all learners have a good enough understanding of the dangers of extremism.

Apprenticeships

Good

- The college delivers apprenticeships for a wide range of sectors, predominantly in: engineering, warehousing and storage; business administration and accounting; health and social care; pharmacy; and dental care. Smaller numbers follow apprenticeships in construction, IT, motor vehicle and early years. There are currently 1,227 apprentices, 676 of these at intermediate level, 474 at advanced level and 77 in higher apprenticeships. Of the total, 371 apprenticeships are delivered by subcontracted providers. Some 75 apprentices are following the recently introduced Trailblazer apprenticeships, predominantly in engineering.
- The proportion of apprentices who start, complete and achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales has improved and is now in line with national averages. Progress made by current apprentices suggests a continuation of an improving trend.
- Managers develop apprenticeship programmes which meet the needs of employers and are helping to reduce identified local skills shortages in key sector areas. Managers and staff have been successful in ensuring that apprentices acquire high levels of skill and knowledge. The number completing within planned timescales is increasing in the majority of sectors. However, poor performance by a minority of subcontractors and lack of frequent training and workplace assessment in a minority of sectors, for example construction, are hindering this improvement. Managers acknowledge this and have removed the underperforming subcontractor.
- Assessors and teachers are highly knowledgeable and experienced. They use their knowledge and experience well to plan effective on-the-job training and assessment. Assessors maintain their own skills and knowledge through undertaking appropriate training in their respective sectors. In many practical lessons, teachers relate discussions well to the apprentices' own prior experience at work. However, in a minority of cases the quality of the off-the-job lessons requires further improvement. In these cases, trainers set the completion of tasks as objectives, and as a result apprentices are not always clear on what skills or employment behaviours are being developed or assessed.
- Employers and college staff have high expectations for their apprentices. Apprentices develop their skill levels well beyond the requirements set in occupational standards. Supervisors in the workplace are industry and sector experts who demand the highest standards for their clients and products. The large majority of employers are actively involved in, and understand the requirements of, the apprenticeship programme. Employers further support apprentices with their selection of optional units based on the type of business and the career interests of the apprentice.

- Assessment is reliable and accurate. Apprentices receive clear verbal and written guidance on how they may improve their work further. Assessor visits to the workplace are frequent, well planned and well managed. Apprentices often take notes of these discussions, which provide helpful coaching tips and a clear record that they can refer to between assessor visits. Assessors mark written work carefully and pay close attention to improving grammar and report structure.
- The large majority of apprentices develop high levels of skills quickly and make good progress. For example, engineers develop good hand- and machine-tool skills and produce high-quality repairs and installations. Trainers and assessors challenge apprentices to develop good study skills, and apprentices create well-ordered notes that support revision later on.
- Most apprentices remain in employment on completing their training and are soon promoted. Well-regarded trainers and assessors use their highly effective partnerships with employers to ensure that they meet the needs of apprentices well. They work well with employers to provide very effective personal and pastoral support to apprentices. Apprentices move into more responsible roles quickly, and this increasingly leads to their progression into higher education and professional status.
- Apprentices develop their confidence and resilience in the workplace well and make a valuable contribution to their employer's business. Apprentices take pride in their work and discuss their practical work with confidence and enthusiasm. Apprentices develop well in their job role and are good team-workers. Many are moved on to more complex work or promoted as soon as they are capable. For example, first-year engineers work on assembly lines manufacturing cars and heavy plant vehicles; a care apprentice has recently been promoted to a senior carer role; a business administration apprentice supports the employer's sales team at trade fairs, trading with international wholesalers; and business and pharmacy apprentices are responsible for small budgets, ordering supplies and stock control.
- Apprentices prepare well for their progress review meetings. Assessors set well-focused targets, and this helps apprentices to make good progress. Apprentices are successfully encouraged to set their own progress targets, based on some insightful reflective practices, particularly on the new Trailblazer apprenticeships. In the majority of sectors, apprentices evaluate their knowledge and skills closely and accurately, and identify which skills need further coaching and practice.
- Apprentices' achievement, development and application of English, mathematics and IT skills are good. Apprentices have benefited considerably from the flexible and individualised provision. Apprentices see the relevance of these skills in their everyday work. Apprentices use specialist software confidently and use the college online resources well to develop independent learning skills, valuable for their career development. Apprentices improve their spoken and written English and can communicate well. Pharmacy apprentices develop a good understanding of technical product language that make discussions with ward staff more meaningful. In engineering, apprentices take further mathematics units that prepare them well for higher education.
- Apprentices develop a good understanding of equality and diversity. In sectors where good customer service is paramount, apprentices have a good understanding of working with a wide range of clients. As a result, apprentices develop good customer care skills and make strong contributions to business and the wider society. Apprentices develop

high levels of self-confidence and the vast majority develop the good interpersonal skills needed for working in their sector. The vast majority of apprentices demonstrate good standards of behaviour and work well and respectfully with their peers and teachers. In engineering, apprentices become industry ambassadors, participating in school visits and exhibitions. Most apprentices follow trainers' and assessors' direction well when learning. As a result, the college and training centres are safe and harmonious places in which to learn.

- Apprentices feel safe and are safe. Health and safety are a high priority in all sectors. Too few apprentices have sufficient understanding of keeping themselves and others safe from extremism or radicalisation. A comprehensive induction and handbook provides help and guidance at the start of the programme, but further discussion is often too basic or infrequent.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college has 55 learners with high needs, of whom 20 are on discrete foundation studies programmes, while 35 are on a wide range of vocational and academic courses across the college.
- Initial assessment of learners' skills and needs is good; staff use information from parents, carers, previous schools and health professionals to manage the transition from school to college effectively.
- Partnerships with local schools are good; learners attend taster days to prepare them for college and to enable the right choice of programme to meet their needs and aspirations.
- All learners have a comprehensive learning assessment and an educational, health and care plan, which identifies strategies to enable learners to participate more fully. Support staff use this information well to develop ways to support learners on programmes. However, vocational teachers do not use this information consistently well when planning teaching and learning to support and develop learners' skills.
- Managers have high expectations of learners and use the allocated additional funding effectively to provide individualised learning programmes, so that learners develop their personal and social skills well.
- Teachers and support staff provide informative and supportive verbal feedback to help learners improve their skills and confidence. As a result learners make good progress. Teachers provide learners on the discrete programmes with detailed individual learning plans which incorporate effectively personal and social skills with key learning targets.
- Learners receive effective guidance on their next steps and the great majority move on to courses at the next level and to other vocational programmes. In a foundation learning session, a careers advisor enabled learners to explore their next steps during a presentation tailored to their needs. Last year learners progressed onto further courses within the college, to courses in other colleges, employment and university.
- Learners are supported well by qualified and experienced staff. Teachers and support staff in the discrete provision plan lessons that motivate and engage learners and provide a challenge at all levels. Learners develop their communication and teamwork skills well, build confidence and improve their independent living skills. One learner who, to begin with, had limited social interaction with teachers and other learners on the course has

gradually progressed and now understands the need to queue for his lunch rather than go to the front.

- Teachers do not consistently integrate English and mathematical skills successfully into vocational activities. Therefore, learners are not consistently able to apply their learning to workplace situations, and to reinforce or see the relevance of their learning.
- Learners on the discrete provision work on a range of skills to develop their understanding of the world of work. Learners have the opportunity to work in the catering departments on two campuses, which enables them to develop relevant work skills. One learner was able to operate the till with some support and encouragement. However, opportunities for learners with high needs to engage in external work experience are too few; managers acknowledge that some further development is needed.
- Attendance is good. Staff monitor absences well. Learners feel safe in college and are confident in the staff if they feel at risk.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130466
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	21,897
Principal/CEO	Andrew Cleaves
Telephone number	0121 446 4545
Website	www.bmetc.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 1,800	19+ 3,486	16–18 1,996	19+ 1,862	16–18 2,813	19+ 735	16–18 1	19+ 82
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18 310	19+ 591	16–18 261	19+ 386	16–18 1	19+ 49		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	1		8		9			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	55							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Care First Limited Care First Training Carillion Eagles JBC Prospects (Gleason) Succeed Skills Centre The Tess Group							

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

Martin Ward, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nick Gadfield	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ian Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Gay	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Thompson	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector
Ruth Szolkowska	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Clary	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Deane	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Pemble	Her Majesty's Inspector

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