

The Manchester College

General further education college

Inspection dates

7–10 March 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	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement	Apprenticeships	Inadequate
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too many learners on study programmes do not make rapid enough progress in gaining the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve their full potential.
- The quality of apprenticeship provision is inadequate. Apprentices make slow progress, and too many fail to complete their programme.
- Too often, teachers take insufficient account of learners' individual starting points when planning learning. Consequently, learners do not make the progress that they should.
- Too much feedback that learners receive about their work is not helpful. It does not identify what learners need to do to improve.
- Attendance is too low.
- Too many teachers do not develop learners' English and mathematical skills well enough.
- Teachers do not set high enough standards for learners on study programmes to develop the personal and social skills that they need at college and for work.
- While leaders have a clear strategy to improve quality and outcomes for learners, this has not had sufficient impact on improving the quality of apprenticeships, study programmes, and specialist courses for learners with high needs.
- Leaders and managers do not identify accurately enough the improvements that they need to make in teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, improvements do not happen quickly enough.

The provider has the following strengths

- The proportion of learners on study programmes and in adult learning who achieve their qualifications improved in 2015/16. It is now above the rate for similar providers.
- Adult learners make good progress in developing the skills and knowledge that they need to progress in their learning and to gain employment.
- Learners participate in relevant activities to improve their understanding of the world of work.
- Managers ensure that learners are safe from all risks and feel safe.
- Learners benefit from very good pastoral and additional support. As a result, a high proportion stay until the end of their course.
- Managers provide good opportunities for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in and benefit from learning.
- Senior leaders have a good knowledge of local skills needs. They work well with local employers and strategic groups to provide training in the subjects and locations needed.
- Governors have relevant expertise to oversee the planning and management of large-scale projects.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Manchester College is a very large general further education college with eight centres across the city of Manchester. The college provides a wide range of post-16 education, including 16 to 19 study programmes, adult learning provision and provision for learners with high needs.
- The college is part of the Learning Training and Employment (LTE) Group. A separate unit within the group provides apprenticeships through the same Skills Funding Agency contract as the college. At the time of the inspection, approximately 4,750 learners were enrolled on study programmes, 4,900 learners were on adult learning programmes and there were around 1,450 apprentices.
- Manchester is the fourth most deprived local authority in England as measured by the government's 2015 indices of multiple deprivation. The unemployment rate in the city is 7.2% compared with 5.1% across the North West region. The proportion of pupils in Manchester who gain five or more A* to C grades at GCSE at school, including English and mathematics, is below the national rate.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the speed of learners' progress on study programmes and on specialist courses for learners with high needs by:
 - taking full account of learners' starting points when planning learning
 - setting challenging and aspirational targets and long-term goals for learners to encourage them to make rapid progress
 - using activities in lessons that challenge learners and enable them to make good progress towards achieving their potential
 - monitoring closely the progress that learners make towards their targets and intervening quickly when they fall behind.
- Quickly improve the quality of the apprenticeship programme and ensure that a much higher proportion of apprentices complete their programme by:
 - planning training much more effectively so that it takes account of apprentices' starting points and focuses on the development of new skills
 - ensuring that apprentices in all vocational areas participate in and benefit from high-quality off-the-job training
 - monitoring the progress of apprentices more closely and accurately so that managers and trainers can take action quickly to support apprentices who are falling behind.
- Ensure that teachers and trainers across all provision types provide feedback that ensures that learners and apprentices understand what they need to do to improve and make good progress.
- Put a much stronger emphasis on developing the basic personal and social skills that learners on study programmes will need for work, including arriving for lessons prepared for study.

- Improve the level of attendance on study programmes and adult learning programmes, by:
 - identifying courses and curriculum areas where attendance is persistently too low, and taking action quickly to improve attendance on these courses
 - making it much clearer to learners that repeated absence from lessons is not acceptable
 - providing good support for learners who are persistently absent to improve their attendance and to ensure that they do not fall behind with their work.
- Improve the ability of teachers and trainers to develop learners' and apprentices' English and mathematics skills, and ensure that that they use this effectively to enable learners and apprentices to make good progress in improving these skills.
- Ensure that the college's strategy focuses closely on identifying and rectifying weaknesses that impact on the progress of current learners as well as focusing on longer-term strategic goals.
- Improve quality assurance and improvement arrangements so that they identify much more accurately and precisely the specific features of teaching, learning and assessment that require improvement, and take swift action to improve weaker aspects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The responsibility for leadership and quality assurance of all provision rests with the LTE Group, which is led by a chief executive officer and overseen by a board of governors. Within the LTE Group, The Manchester College provides study programmes, adult learning courses and provision for learners with high needs, and is led by the college principal. The apprenticeship programme is led and managed in a separate unit within the group. The apprenticeship programme and the college's adult learning provision are delivered through the same Skills Funding Agency contract.
- Senior leaders have a strong ambition and a clearly defined strategy to identify and meet the skills needs of local employers and to make a significant contribution to the economic and social welfare of the city. They have a good knowledge of the local labour market, employment trends and proposed developments in the city. Leaders work closely with employers and strategic groups in Manchester such as the city council, the local enterprise partnership and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to provide training and education in the subjects and locations needed. They ensure that learners have access to a wide range of relevant learning resources, including information learning technology, as a result of careful planning and improvements to the college's resources.
- College leaders have achieved many of the objectives in the college's 2013–18 strategic plan, including focusing adult provision on meeting labour market needs, working with many of the most vulnerable communities in the city, and strengthening relationships with schools and other colleges. However, implementation of the college's strategy has had insufficient impact on improving the quality of provision for apprentices, which is inadequate, or provision for learners on study programmes and learners with high needs, which requires improvement. Weaknesses identified at the previous inspection in the provision of work experience placements, the level of attendance and the achievement of high grades have not been tackled fully.
- Managers and staff in many curriculum areas, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), computing and health care, work well with employers when planning and delivering courses. As a result, teaching and learning in these areas prepare learners well for employment. In a few curriculum areas, initiatives to engage with employers are less well developed or very recent, which means that learners in these areas are less well prepared for employment.
- Leadership of the apprenticeship programme is weak and has failed to maintain the improvements to apprenticeships identified at the previous inspection. The restructure of the management of apprenticeship provision over the last three years has not served learners well.
- Arrangements for improving the quality of provision have insufficient impact. College managers identify most areas for improvement accurately through a wide range of quality assurance and evaluation processes and through collecting the views of learners. However, these processes do not result in sufficient improvement in weaker areas of the provision. Although senior managers and governors use a range of indicators to evaluate the college's performance, these indicators do not enable them to monitor closely enough the impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the

progress that learners make. Appraisals of teachers' performance do not focus well enough on improving teachers' skills.

- Managers' evaluation of the quality of apprenticeships and of subcontracted provision is weak. It fails to identify the reasons for poor performance, and provides an overly-positive picture of the provision. Senior leaders have strengthened recently their oversight of the quality of subcontracted provision and have removed much of the weak provision.
- Managers do not take enough account of the destinations of their learners when planning and evaluating programmes. College leaders gather a wide range of information about what many of their learners do after completing their programmes. This provides them with useful information about the impact of provision on these learners' destinations. However, they have insufficient information about the destinations of learners who complete level 2 courses but do not progress to the next level and of learners who complete the first year of an A-level programme but do not progress to the second year. Managers in a few curriculum areas, including computing and hairdressing and beauty therapy, use information about learners' destinations well to focus their curriculum on developing the precise skills that learners need to gain employment and to evaluate the effectiveness of courses in preparing learners for their next steps.
- College leaders ensure that learners benefit from a wide range of effective support. They have a good understanding of the communities where learners live and the challenges that many learners face. They use this understanding well to provide the support that learners need. This enables learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to take part in education, and ensures that learners from minority groups achieve at least as well as and often better than other learners. Leaders work very closely with other agencies in the area to identify learners who are at risk of leaving education. They successfully provide many very vulnerable learners with the opportunity to improve their lives through education.

The governance of the provider

- Governors are drawn from some of the largest employers in Manchester and a range of organisations that work to improve the lives of the city's residents. They bring to their role important and useful insights into the needs of the city. Governors have relevant expertise to oversee the planning and management of large-scale projects that are necessary in such a complex, large organisation. They make very good use of co-opted members to bring specific expertise to projects.
- Governors have a good understanding of the college's strengths. However, they do not focus sufficiently on challenging senior leaders to identify, report and take action to improve weaknesses across many areas of the provision, including on study programmes and apprenticeships.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers carry out the necessary checks on employees before employment starts. They work closely with external agencies to ensure that safeguards are in place for vulnerable learners who want to attend the college.
- Managers act quickly to tackle any safeguarding concerns. They consider carefully what

they can learn from safeguarding incidents so they can improve their safeguarding arrangements further through, for example, relevant training.

- Managers have a very good understanding of the risks that learners face from radicalisation and extremism. They have established a very effective partnership with the police to safeguard learners from these risks. Their links with partner organisations ensure that they are well aware of changes in the community that may affect safeguarding. For example, they are aware of issues relating to local gang culture, which enables them to be vigilant when working with learners from the affected communities. Learners feel safe and know what to do if they have a concern.
- Staff have been trained well to understand the risks that their learners face from radicalisation and extremism and have a well-considered programme of training for learners on how to stay safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- When planning learning, teachers and trainers often take insufficient account of what learners already know and can do. In too many instances, they do not set ambitious enough targets to challenge learners to achieve at the level of which they are capable, and they do not monitor well enough learners' progress towards achieving their targets.
- On study programmes and apprenticeships, teacher and trainers often set work that is either too easy or too hard. As a result, too many learners and apprentices make slow progress. They do not challenge the most able learners to achieve their full potential. On courses for learners with high needs, the work that teachers set is often too complex and, as a result, many learners struggle to keep up. Trainers do not develop apprentices' skills beyond the minimum requirements for achieving qualifications. This means that many apprentices do not develop the skills and understanding that they need to be successful in their careers. Teachers on the adult learning programme use interesting and stimulating activities that challenge learners well and enable them to make good progress.
- Teachers do not check learners' progress rigorously enough during lessons to ensure that learners develop their understanding of new concepts, acquire new skills and improve their existing skills. In many lessons, teachers do not use questions well enough to check understanding; a minority of learners often answer questions posed by the teacher while others stay silent. Learners often begin work on a new task before the teacher has checked that they have completed the previous task successfully.
- Too many teachers and trainers do not develop learners' English and mathematical skills well enough. Too often, the guidance that teachers give to learners to improve the accuracy of their written English is not effective. Consequently, learners often repeat the same errors. Teachers provide good support for adult learners for whom English is not their first language to develop their oral and written English skills and their mathematical skills.
- Most teachers assess learners' coursework frequently and accurately. This means that learners are clear about which parts of their qualification they have completed successfully. However, too much of the feedback that learners receive following assessment of their work does not help them to understand what they need to do to improve their work or to achieve at a higher grade. In a minority of subjects, such as

public services and performing arts, learners receive helpful feedback and this enables them to improve quickly.

- Teachers and trainers use their industrial knowledge and experience well to plan and use effective learning activities in practical sessions. This enables learners in these sessions to understand new concepts, use terminology appropriately, and develop industry-standard skills for their chosen career path. For example, motor vehicle learners demonstrate that they understand the concepts of electrical technology when repairing vehicles, and construction learners calculate accurately the humidity levels in buildings. Learners work confidently and competently in workshops, salons and kitchens.
- On adult learning provision, teachers have high expectations for their learners. As a result, learners quickly develop their confidence and self-esteem. Learners on the ESOL programme, the access to higher education programme and on courses in performing arts, music, hairdressing and beauty therapy benefit from good teaching, learning and assessment and make good progress. Teachers on the ESOL programme successfully develop the skills and knowledge that learners need at work and in their everyday lives.
- Teachers use a wide range of relevant and interesting resources, including the college's virtual learning environment, to support their teaching and to motivate learners. Teachers provide good-quality resources in the virtual learning environment, which many learners use well to carry out activities that enable them to catch up when they miss lessons. Managers provide insufficient resources on courses designed for learners with high needs.
- Learners benefit from very good pastoral support and additional learning support. Teachers assess learners' additional support needs at the start of their programme and ensure that learners receive effective specialist support quickly. Teachers and support staff provide extensive support for vulnerable learners and those whom they identify as being at risk of leaving their course for a variety of reasons. This ensures that a high proportion of learners stay on their course to the end and the majority achieve their qualifications.
- Teachers help learners to understand values such as democracy well through tutorials, and learners are respectful of the wide range of learners' backgrounds and beliefs. Teachers encourage adult learners to celebrate the diversity of the college particularly well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Attendance is too low, particularly on study programmes. Attendance in English and mathematics lessons is lower than in other lessons. On average, around a fifth of learners are absent from each lesson on study programmes, and in a few cases it is much lower. Too many learners have persistently low attendance. The low level of attendance hinders learning and limits the progress that many learners make. Managers recognise that attendance is too low. They have recruited additional staff such as 'student experience officers' to work with learners to improve their attendance. Managers and staff provide significant support to learners who are at risk of leaving their course or not achieving due to their poor attendance. However, these actions have not yet had any discernible impact on improving attendance rates.
- Teachers do not set high enough standards for learners on study programmes to develop the personal and social skills that they need at college and for work. Learners often arrive

late and, too often, teachers do not challenge lateness. This disrupts the learning of the rest of the group and does not reinforce with learners the standards that employers expect. In too many instances, learners wear coats or hats in lessons and use their mobile phones during lessons.

- Apprentices do not receive sufficient guidance to help them to make informed decisions about their careers and, consequently, they are unclear what their options are. Staff do not provide clear guidance to employers about the training requirements of an apprenticeship. As a result, too many apprentices do not receive off-the-job training.
- Managers provide good advice and guidance for learners joining study programmes and for adult learners. This means that most learners choose the right course for their career aspirations. Well-qualified specialist careers advisors and careers coaches provide good careers guidance that helps learners to make decisions about their next steps when they complete their course.
- The college recruits a high proportion of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, often with a history of underachievement at school. The majority of these learners successfully develop their confidence and self-esteem while at college as a result of the effective individual support that they receive.
- Learners feel safe and work safely in college workshops and in the workplace. They know how to report any concerns that they have about their safety. Learners understand how to stay safe when using the internet and social media. Managers ensure that learners are safe through effective assessment of risks, including the risks of radicalisation and extremism. They work very effectively with a wide range of external agencies to provide support to those learners who are at risk.
- Behaviour is good in most lessons and around the college. Most learners show respect for each other and for their teachers, and enjoy their learning. In a few lessons, learners talk amongst themselves during points in the lesson when they should be listening or working quietly, which disrupts other learners.
- Teachers ensure that most learners participate in a range of relevant activities to prepare them for work. This includes interview practice, working in college salons and workshops, and working on innovative project briefs for employers. The varied enrichment programme enables learners to gain the wider skills that they will need as they move to the next stage in their lives. Adult learners develop the self-confidence that they need for work and in their personal lives. Learners with high needs benefit from good-quality work experience, including internships, which helps them to develop the skills and knowledge that they need for work. Although managers have taken action to increase the number of learners on study programmes who carry out external work experience placements, particularly on level 3 programmes, the proportion of learners who benefit from placements is still too low.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Too many learners on study programmes make insufficiently rapid progress in acquiring the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve well. Inspectors agreed with the provider's self-assessment that outcomes for learners on study programmes require improvement. Learners on level 3 programmes make insufficient progress from their starting points. As a result, too few learners, including the most able, reach the level of attainment of which

they are capable. Learners make good progress in many practical lessons in improving the skills that they will need when working in their chosen vocational areas.

- Apprentices at all levels and of all ages make slow progress and too many fail to complete their programme successfully within the planned timescales. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications has remained stubbornly low for a number of years. Actions that managers have taken to improve the rate of achievement have had insufficient impact.
- The proportion of learners on study programmes and adult learning programmes who complete their course and achieve their qualifications improved in 2015/16. Actions that managers have taken to improve retention, including good pastoral and additional learning support, have resulted in a significant improvement in the proportion of learners who remain on their courses until the end. The achievement rate on full level 2 and level 3 study programme qualifications is now above the rate for similar providers.
- Adult learners make good progress in developing the skills and knowledge that they need for work and to progress in their learning. A high proportion of learners are adults for whom English is not a first language. These learners make good progress in improving the language and work-related skills that they need for work and in their personal lives.
- The majority of learners on functional skills English and mathematics courses make good progress and achieve well. Achievement of functional skills qualifications among learners on study programmes is particularly high. However, too few adults on level 2 functional English courses achieve their qualifications. The proportion of learners on both study programmes and adult learning programmes who achieve grade A* to C on GCSE English and mathematics courses is very low and well below the rate for similar providers.
- A significantly higher proportion of learners from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds achieve their qualifications compared with other learners. However, the achievement rate among White male learners, who make up a small proportion of the overall cohort, while improving, remains too low. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, who make up a large proportion of all learners, do not progress or achieve as well as their peers.
- Learners with high needs on study programmes and supported internships make progress in line with their peers, and a high proportion achieve their qualifications. However, the progress of learners on programmes specifically designed for those with high needs, who make up around a quarter of all learners in receipt of high-need funding, is too slow.
- Many learners on level 1 and level 2 study programmes progress successfully at the end of their course on to the next level. However, of the learners who do not progress internally, too few gain employment or progress to other positive destinations at the end of their programme. Too many learners who complete AS-level courses do not progress on to A-level programmes or on to other relevant level 3 courses.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Approximately 4,750 learners are on study programmes from entry level to level 3. Just

under a half of learners are on level 3 programmes. The vast majority of learners follow vocational courses in a wide range of subjects. The college also provides an A-level programme for approximately 250 learners.

- In many subjects, teachers do not have high enough aspirations for learners. They do not challenge learners to achieve their full potential. As a result, many learners progress too slowly and do not attain the level of achievement of which they are capable. Planning of learning does not take sufficient account of learners' prior achievement, and lessons often provide insufficient challenge to enable learners to make good progress. The targets that teachers set with learners are often not specific enough and do not make clear to learners what they need to do to achieve well. Teachers do not routinely provide additional activities for learners who complete tasks early.
- Teachers do not check the progress that learners make rigorously enough in too many subjects. The questions that teachers ask learners in lessons to check understanding are often too superficial and do not probe deeply enough. Teachers assess work frequently and accurately, but provide insufficient challenge and support for learners who fall behind or do not submit work by agreed deadlines. Feedback that teachers provide to learners on their assessed work does not help learners to understand precisely how they can improve their work.
- Learners do not develop their English and mathematics skills well enough. In lessons on their vocational courses, learners have insufficient opportunity to apply the skills that they gain in their English and mathematics lessons. Teachers do not provide sufficient guidance to learners on how to improve the accuracy of their written work, and many learners make the same errors repeatedly.
- Teachers do not challenge learners well enough to improve their work ethic. Many learners are late to lessons and often arrive unprepared for learning. Poor punctuality in many lessons is often not challenged. Attendance in many lessons is too low, which impedes many learners' progress.
- Teachers develop learners' practical skills well. Learners are aware of the progress that they are making in developing these skills and know what they need to do to improve their practical skills further. Learners in computing, art and design, and media studies carry out creative projects that enable them to apply their practical skills in realistic work contexts. In plastering and site joinery, learners confidently demonstrate the skills that they need in the workplace.
- Learners benefit from a wide range of additional activities to develop their understanding of the workplace and their work-related skills. They participate enthusiastically in volunteering, compete successfully in competitions, organise charity events, visit employers and attend presentations from a wide range of guest speakers. In computing, managers work collaboratively with employers to design and deliver courses that meet the needs of the industry and provide learners with relevant skills and knowledge. However, too few learners on level 1 and level 2 programmes, including those who do not intend to progress to the next level, benefit from external work experience placements.
- Pastoral support and additional learning support are effective. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, who make up a large proportion of the cohort, and learners identified as being at risk of dropping out of their programme receive very good pastoral support from their tutors and specialist staff. As a result, a high proportion of these learners complete their courses. Learners who need additional help benefit from good

specialist support that enables them to achieve in line with their peers.

- Staff use their vocational knowledge and experience well to make effective links to professional practice. This motivates learners and successfully reinforces their learning.
- Learners demonstrate good behaviour in most lessons and they show respect both for each other and for their teachers. They are positive about their studies and take pride in their achievements.
- Managers and staff have a strong focus on learners' safety and welfare. All learners wear identity cards, health and safety are checked rigorously in practical environments, and details of support services are clearly displayed on corridors and in social areas on each campus. Learners report that they feel safe in and around college.
- Senior leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to improving study programmes. They have revised the content of study programmes to provide a much clearer focus on meeting local and regional employment needs. They work closely with employers to ensure that provision is responsive to needs of the employment sectors where learners aspire to work.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- The college has approximately 4,900 learners on adult learning programmes. Most learners study part time. Courses are available from pre-entry level to level 4 in ESOL, English and mathematics, access to higher education, and a range of vocational subjects. Over a third of learners are on programmes designed to meet the needs of adults who speak English as an additional language.
- Most teachers have high expectations of learners, and motivate learners successfully to make good progress and achieve well. They have good subject knowledge and use this well to enable learners to gain quickly the skills and knowledge that they need. Learners who need extra help benefit from good additional learning support from their teachers and other staff. This has a significant impact on enabling these learners to make good progress.
- The provision is very responsive to the needs of adults from a wide range of backgrounds, and teachers successfully encourage learners to celebrate the diversity of the college's population. Teachers empower learners to become knowledgeable, skilled and independent in their lives in the local community and in the workplace. Most learners have a good awareness of the importance of democracy and the rule of law in modern Britain. Learners and teachers are respectful to each other, and behaviour in lessons is very good.
- Partnership working is very good. Leaders and managers liaise successfully with a wide range of external organisations, including the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Manchester Cathedral, local employers, including Central Manchester hospitals, the Prince's Trust and a wide range of local community organisations. These external partnerships provide additional opportunities for learners to develop and apply their vocational skills in real working environments.
- Most learners enjoy their learning and take pride in their work. For example, learners on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses are proud of their hair designs, which they photograph and show to their families and friends. Learners on childcare programmes use their knowledge very effectively to support their own children's development.
- Learners benefit from good learning resources. These include well-resourced practical

workshops, information and learning technology, and a wide range of electronic books. Learners make particularly good use of these resources to develop and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding.

- On ESOL courses, learners develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills very well. This enables them to be more confident in their personal and professional lives and to be more effective oral and written communicators. A reading programme provides very good encouragement for learners to practise and enjoy reading a wide range of texts.
- The college's programme for adults who speak English as an additional language is well planned and designed. Learners follow courses in ESOL, mathematics, information and communication technology, and preparation for work. The programme prepares learners successfully for entering or re-entering the world of work. Teachers accurately identify the language skills that learners have when they start the programme and place learners on courses at the appropriate level. However, the provision is insufficiently flexible to enable learners who make more rapid progress than expected to move on to a higher-level course during the year.
- Many lessons on access to higher education courses are stimulating and challenge learners well. Learners are enthusiastic and highly motivated, and they make good progress. Most learners produce work of a high standard and successfully develop the study skills that they will need when they move on to higher education. A high proportion of learners progress to higher education courses.
- Adult learners have good access to a wide range of additional activities. These include visits to job fairs, universities and shopping centres as well as opportunities to participate in religious and cultural events such as Eid and the Chinese New Year. Teachers use these enrichment activities well to develop learners' personal and employability skills and to support their progression into higher education and employment.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not plan learning well enough to challenge all learners, particularly those with higher-level knowledge and skills. In these lessons the pace of learning is too slow. Starter activities take too long to complete and reduce the time that learners have to learn new topics or to deepen and extend their knowledge.
- A minority of teachers do not check learners' progress well enough in lessons. They do not encourage all learners in lessons to answer their questions and, as a result, the more vocal learners dominate discussions. This means that teachers are unable to check that all learners have understood the content of the lesson.
- Although assessment is frequent, too often teachers' written feedback is not specific enough. It does not help learners to understand what they need to do to improve their work and make more rapid progress. The targets that teachers set for learners are often too broad and do not focus sufficiently or precisely enough on what learners need to do to achieve their goals and aspirations. In a few instances, teachers pay insufficient attention to improving the accuracy of learners' written work. They do not help learners to understand how to improve spelling, punctuation and grammatical accuracy in their work.

Apprenticeships

Inadequate

- Around 1,450 apprentices are currently on programmes provided by the apprenticeship unit. Most apprentices are on intermediate- and advanced-level programmes; 107 are on

higher-level programmes.

- Leaders and managers have failed to reverse the decline in standards of teaching and learning on the apprenticeships programme since the previous inspection. Too many apprentices do not develop new skills quickly enough or make the progress of which they are capable due to poor planning of their learning. Too many trainers and assessors place a disproportionate focus on assessing apprentices' skills against awarding organisations' standards rather than developing apprentices' skills. In too many instances, apprentices who have been working in the same job role for many years merely receive accreditation for existing skills and do not acquire any new ones.
- Leaders and managers do not ensure that the requirements of an apprenticeship are met. They have failed to ensure that all apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. While the majority of apprentices attend off-the-job training at college, too many apprentices, particularly in childcare, health and social care, business administration, customer service and warehousing, do not receive this training. This has a significant negative impact on their progress.
- Managers do not have a sufficiently rigorous system for determining apprentices' starting points when they begin their programme. Superficial initial assessments of apprentices' skills focus disproportionately on the tasks that apprentices currently complete in their workplace rather than the skills that they need to progress in their careers. As a result, these assessments do not help trainers to plan a programme of learning to improve apprentices' existing skills and to help them to develop new knowledge and skills that will make them more effective in their careers.
- Leaders' and managers' oversight of the progress that apprentices make is ineffective. They have failed to put in place an accurate and rigorous process to monitor the progress that apprentices make on their programmes. Consequently, they do not have an accurate understanding of apprentices' progress and are not proactive in improving the low rate of achievement.
- Too many apprentices are unclear about the progress that they are making on their programme. They do not understand which aspects of their work they need to improve. On the technical certificate component of the programme, trainers do not set target grades for apprentices to aspire to achieve. Trainers' monitoring of apprentices' progress towards achieving their technical certificates is very weak.
- In too many instances, trainers do not support apprentices well enough to improve their English and mathematics skills or check how well apprentices develop these skills. Consequently, apprentices make little progress in improving their English and mathematics skills. Trainers do not identify consistently errors in apprentices' assessed written work, and do not provide sufficient advice to help apprentices to improve the accuracy of their writing.
- Apprentices receive insufficient careers advice and guidance. As a result, too many apprentices are unaware of the opportunities available to them when they complete their programme.
- Most apprentices develop a good understanding of professional standards in their workplace through informative inductions from employers and in taught lessons for those apprentices who receive off-the-job training. They behave professionally in their organisation, comply with industrial expectations, and feel safe at work.

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

- There are currently 223 learners enrolled at the college who are in receipt of high needs funding. Around a quarter are on provision that is designed specifically for learners with high needs, a quarter are on supported internships, and around a half are enrolled on vocational programmes, working alongside their peers. Learners are on programmes from pre-entry level to level 1.
- Teachers do not make sufficient use of information about prior achievement to establish learners' starting points or to design programmes that meet learners' individual needs. The targets that teachers set, based on learners' education, health and care plans, are not specific enough and do not help learners to understand what they need to do to progress well. As a result, many learners make insufficient progress towards achieving their potential. Teachers do not monitor well enough learners' progress on their programmes.
- Too much teaching and learning on provision that is designed specifically for learners with high needs does not help learners to make good progress. In too many lessons, teachers do not set work at the right level for the learners, especially in mathematics, English and communication lessons. This limits the progress that learners make in developing these skills.
- The funding that the college receives to support learners with high needs is not used well enough to support learners on courses that are designed specifically to meet their high needs. In a few instances, insufficient resources are provided to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality learning experiences. Too many learners, particularly those at pre-entry level and lower entry level, receive insufficient specialist support to develop their independence.
- Most learners benefit from high-quality practical work experience or other work-related activities. Employers value the work that learners carry out while on placements, and learners often make significant contributions in the workplace. Learners make good use of use their experience of work to develop their independence and work-related skills.
- Learners with high needs who study on vocational courses alongside other learners receive high-quality individualised support that is linked clearly to their education, health and care plans. This support enables learners to progress and achieve in line with their peers. In a few cases, learners with high needs produce the highest standard of work in their class.
- The supported internship programme is well established and successful. It provides good opportunities for learners with high needs to develop and practise a wide range of skills that they need for work. The programme is structured carefully to enable learners to develop their skills at the beginning of each day and then apply these skills in the workplace later in the day. Learners then return to their classrooms at the end of the day to reflect on their experiences and their learning. Learners are based in busy public settings such as the town hall and a large hospital, and have good opportunities to develop successfully their skills in independent travel and personal safety, and their social skills. Learners have the opportunity to carry out three different internships during the year, and this enables them to make informed choices about their careers. A high proportion of learners on internships gain paid employment or voluntary work on completion of their programme.

- Learners demonstrate high standards of behaviour. They are respectful and often kind towards each other and their teachers.

Provider details

Unique reference number	135524
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	16,100
Principal/CEO	Lisa O'Loughlin/John Thornhill
Telephone number	03333 222444
Website	www.tmc.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	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	1,024	2,157	1,578	1,273	2,164	1,410	5	57
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	225	507	68	527	11	96		
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	223							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Complete Training and Assessment Limited Expanse Group Limited The Training Brokers Limited							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal quality and standards as nominee. Inspectors took account of the college'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 college.

Inspection team

Steve Hailstone, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Tucker	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Cocker	Her Majesty's Inspector
Suzanne Wainwright	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bev Cross	Ofsted Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Gillett	Ofsted Inspector
Jill Gray	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Ingle	Ofsted Inspector
Stella Owen	Ofsted Inspector
Kathy Passant	Ofsted Inspector
Dilys Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Wardle	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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