

# Stratford-upon-Avon College

General further education college

## Inspection dates

19–22 September 2017

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>	16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>	Apprenticeships	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for learners	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			<b>Good</b>

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have not consistently given governors sufficient information to enable them to hold senior leaders to account effectively.
- Leaders' and managers' actions to improve the quality of teaching learning and assessment have not yet resulted in consistently good teaching or outcomes for learners.
- Learners do not have good enough study skills to enable them to work on their own independently.
- Despite most learners completing their courses, too many learners studying on level 3 courses do not make good or better progress.
- Teachers do not consistently plan learning and assessment well enough to meet learners' specific needs; too few teachers know how much learning has taken place within learning sessions.
- Teachers do not set learners sufficiently detailed improvement targets; they do not monitor the progress that learners make well enough to ensure that all achieve their potential.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Most learners and apprentices develop a good range of practical skills and skills for employment; as a result, they are well-prepared for future employment, training and education; learners studying on creative arts courses demonstrate very high levels of skills and professionalism.
- Adults' achievement rates are high; the adult distance-learning curriculum meets the need of the labour force very well, particularly in the health and social care sector.
- Learners benefit from good-quality work-experience and effective careers advice and guidance.
- Staff promote safeguarding and British values well; as a result, learners feel safe and have a comprehensive understanding of how to protect themselves from exploitation.
- Learners who require specialist support for their learning develop good practical skills and knowledge; they significantly improve their confidence and independence.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Stratford-upon-Avon College is a small general further education college located in a historic and relatively affluent area of Warwickshire. The number of pupils at schools in Warwickshire achieving five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the national average. The college operates primarily from a single campus in Stratford; it has also a small facility for catering provision at the Warwickshire College site in Rugby. Around 2,500 learners study at the college. Of these, approximately 1,000 are full-time learners aged 16 to 18 and 1,400 are adult learners; a few adult learners study on full-time courses, but most study on distance-learning courses; some 120 learners are apprentices. Over 600 learners aged 16 to 19 joined the college in 2017 without a GCSE at grade C or above in English and/or mathematics.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress that all learners make at level 3, by ensuring that teachers provide learners with detailed feedback about how to improve their work much more frequently throughout the course, and by ensuring that learners use the feedback to help them to continually improve their work.
- Ensure that senior leaders and managers undertake more frequent and thorough monitoring of the progress that learners make against their aspirational grades throughout their course. They must ensure that teachers and their managers put in place swift and effective interventions to support learners who are underperforming, and they must ensure that the most-able learners receive sufficient challenge.
- Ensure that senior leaders provide governors with sufficient information, particularly regarding the progress made by learners studying at level 3, to enable governors to hold them to account effectively.
- Ensure that governors focus more on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and that they challenge leaders and managers sufficiently to make the required improvements, so that:
  - the quality of provision is consistently good or better across all subject areas and provision types
  - all learners achieve their qualifications, making progress according to their potential.
- Improving teaching and learning, and the progress that learners make, by:
  - improving learners' study skills, so that learners can work independently and make better progress
  - planning learning and assessment effectively to meet learners' specific needs, ensuring that staff and learners know how much learning has taken place within learning sessions and that staff take the appropriate remedial actions to ensure that all learners can continually demonstrate a good understanding of the subject matter
  - setting learners detailed improvement targets frequently, so that they know what they need to do to improve continuously the quality of their work and to achieve their aspirational targets.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not tackled successfully all the key weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, and in particular the progress that all learners studying on level 3 courses make from their starting points. This remains a significant area for improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, the college has had significant financial difficulties. It has recently been subject to a series of interventions from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the Further Education Commissioner. These have resulted in significant changes in the senior leadership of the college, including the principal, who left the college in February 2017.
- In the last six months, governors, the new interim principal and managers have managed the financial weakness of the college appropriately. They have rapidly initiated the process of steering the college towards a merger with a nearby college to secure continued provision within the Stratford area, and to provide learners with a broader curriculum offer – particularly at level 1.
- A new senior management team and existing quality managers have worked with curriculum managers and teachers to maintain, and in some instances improve, the quality of learners' experience, despite the financial pressures and changes to the leadership team.
- Managers' process of evaluating the quality of the provision for learning is well established and takes good account of learners' and employers' views. However, the 2015/16 self-assessment report is too optimistic and does not give enough weight to the poor progress that the majority of learners who study on level 3 courses make from their starting points. Managers did not reflect this key weakness in the quality improvement plan or report it to governors with sufficient clarity. The new draft reports and quality improvement plan are more self-critical, but it is too early to gauge their impact on helping managers to improve the provision.
- Managers at all levels have termly meetings to review the performance of learners on all courses against key performance indicators. Underperforming courses receive intensive support and appropriate monitoring from managers. In the last year, improvements from these interventions were mixed. For example, achievement rates declined on health and social care level 1 and motor vehicle courses; they improved in theatre studies, catering at level 1, functional skills English and GCSE mathematics.
- Leaders' and managers' strong focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through observing learning sessions has not yet ensured that teaching, learning and assessment are good across all subject areas and provision types. Managers identify development needs well through the observation of the teaching and learning process. They provide effective support for staff who do not meet college expectations. However, managers know that they need to complete all staff appraisals comprehensively and systematically, to drive forward further improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Staff at all levels promote very well an inclusive and tolerant culture. Learners treat each

other and staff with high levels of respect. Teachers promote fundamental British values and celebrate diversity well in lessons; as a result, learners' understanding is comprehensive. Managers carefully monitor the achievement and retention of different groups of learners. However, they do not monitor other aspects of learners' experience, such as attendance or destinations, by different groups.

- Managers in performing arts, public services, and hospitality and catering have particularly good relationships with well-known local employers. They use these well to enhance learners' experience and to support their career pathways and opportunities. Managers of adult learning provision have good partnership arrangements with subcontractors; managers of apprenticeship provision have productive links with local employers. However, senior managers are aware of the need to strengthen strategic links with other sector employers, key stakeholders and the local enterprise partnership (LEP) to support and improve curriculum planning.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Since the previous inspection, senior managers have not consistently given governors detailed financial information, such as management accounts and a full analysis of risks. This has not allowed them to provide the required oversight and scrutiny of senior leaders' and managers' decisions. As a result, they became aware of financial difficulties too late.
- Additionally, the information that senior leaders gave governors on students' performance was too positive and failed to mention the poor progress made by learners studying on level 3 courses. Governors therefore did not have an accurate and reliable view of the key strengths and weaknesses of the quality of provision.
- Since taking action to change the senior leadership team, governors have received more detailed and accurate information about college finances and have been better informed about the performance of learners. They have also been fully involved in overseeing the proposed merger of the college, planned for December 2017.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The college has a comprehensive, recently updated safeguarding policy. All staff and learners receive mandatory training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They reinforce this training with many posters placed around the college with safeguarding information and a range of internal and external contacts. Managers are fully aware of the particular risks faced by local learners and address them well in training.
- Online safety is promoted well to both parents and learners. Learners have a very good understanding of what to do, and whom to contact, if they have any concerns.
- Managers record safeguarding incidences well and analyse them suitably. They take quick action to resolve issues. Managers have good links with external agencies and use them well to refer learners for specialist help and support and to share and promote good practice at the college.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across all subject areas and provision types. Consequently, too many do not make the expected progress and/or achieve their qualifications in the expected timescale, although the large majority of learners and apprentices complete their studies.
- Teachers do not use the detailed information collected about learners' starting points to plan learning well enough, or to adapt activities to meet learners' different abilities. In the large majority of lessons teachers set the same tasks at the same level and pace for all learners. As a result, the most-able learners do not receive sufficient challenge, and too often their peers do not complete the work set.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not check learning effectively or frequently enough to assess learners' progress accurately. Too often, they move on before confirming that all learners have understood the topic or developed their skills sufficiently.
- Although teachers provide learners with detailed and useful feedback, too few learners routinely refer to and use the recommendations to help them improve their work; as a result, learners do not consistently make progress as quickly as they could. Assessors do not supplement their assessment feedback to apprentices with additional training or coaching to extend learning further and to accelerate the progress that they make.
- The effectiveness of the monitoring and reviewing of learners' progress varies considerably across subject areas. Teachers and assessors do not complete reviews of learners' progress regularly enough to help learners to improve skills and to complete work on time. Targets set by teachers and assessors during reviews of learners' progress are often not time-constrained, and are too general to support learners effectively to develop specific skills to a good standard or to make timely progress.
- Most teachers are well qualified and highly skilled in their subject. They use their strong subject knowledge and industry experience well to develop learners' skills and knowledge to a standard which prepares them well for future employment. However, a few assessors do not have adequate skills or qualifications to enable them to provide apprentices with effective training and coaching, and to make the assessment process more effective in extending their skills and knowledge.
- Most teaching in practical lessons is very good; as a result, learners develop good or better technical skills. Teachers give learners clear, detailed explanations and encourage them well to relate theory to practice. They use good demonstration techniques, expect high standards from their learners and model best practice. For example, learners studying dance at level 3, many of whom have no previous ballet experience, develop very good ballet techniques, including correct posture, core strength and alignment; as a result, they were able to perform adage sequences with precision and confidence.
- Support for learners is good. Learners with identified special educational needs and disabilities benefit from well-planned additional learning support from learning support workers (LSWs). This helps them to quickly develop new skills, become more confident and independent, and to make at least the expected progress. Teachers and LSWs know learners well and develop strong, professional relationships with them; learners value highly their caring and helpful approach and say that this is a key factor in motivating them to complete their studies.

- Many teachers skilfully contextualise English and mathematics into their subject, making it relevant to learners; this enables them to develop appropriate, transferable skills for employment. For example, learners in a sports lesson at level 2 calculated their heart rate at various time points using a range of mathematical formulae. However, too few learners improve their existing skills sufficiently in the English and mathematics lessons, which are taught separately from the academic and vocational lessons, to achieve their GCSE qualifications.
- Teachers promote equality and British values well, and they celebrate diversity very well; learners consolidate and extend their understanding of the subject matters within a wide range of contexts. Learners show high levels of respect for difference, and towards their peers and staff at the college. Learners have a good awareness of the dangers of stereotyping people and how this can lead to minority groups becoming marginalised. They can confidently explain British values and give examples that are pertinent to their own lives and course.
- Parents, carers and employers are actively involved in the planning of learning; they are kept well informed of learners' attendance and progress. For example, parents and carers of learners who require specialist support for their learning contribute to compiling individual support plans; employers are very proactive in arranging additional opportunities for apprentices to develop skills needed for assessment in workplace settings.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Almost all learners take part in well-planned, high-quality and meaningful work-experience placements. These help them to develop a good awareness of the expectations of the workplace, and the importance of the wider skills that employers value. Where appropriate, all of the small group of learners who require specialist support for their learning now participate in good-quality and relevant work experience. They develop high levels of confidence and improved personal and social skills.
- One learner with mobility difficulties participated in highly relevant work experience at a renowned local theatre company based locally, as part of their level 3 musical theatre course; the learner participated in the play-making festival, working with young people aged nine to 16.
- Most learners also benefit from a wide range of work-related activities that enrich their learning, extend their skills and enhance their personal development. For example, learners studying on performing arts courses benefit from a variety of industry-related workshops provided by the renowned local theatre company. These workshops help learners to become more familiar with the industry and develop backstage skills such as rigging and lighting, and the front-stage skills such as voice projection; learners studying on hospitality courses confidently give cooking and baking demonstrations and workshops to visitors at local food festivals. As a result, they improve their ability to deal with people from a wide variety of backgrounds.
- Learners receive good initial information, advice and guidance, before they start college and at the beginning of their learning programme. Teachers conduct a careful and thorough assessment of learners' skills and knowledge at the start of their course, which includes checking previous educational attainment, the assessment of their English and

mathematics skills gaps and identifying existing talents. Teachers use a skills assessment effectively to determine learning preferences and to identify any previously undetected barriers to learning such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. As a result, learners enrol on courses that match their abilities and aspirations and most complete their studies.

- Learners benefit from useful, well-informed guidance and support from teachers, tutors and careers guidance officers. Many also learn about a wide range of career pathways and job opportunities as part of their qualification. Learners receive highly effective support in raising their awareness of the opportunities available to them, and in helping them to take their next steps into employment or higher education. Consequently, a significant proportion of learners progress into work or go to university.
- Learners have a good awareness and understanding of life in modern Britain. Managers and teachers ensure that they begin to learn about the importance of equality, diversity and fundamental British values in a well-devised induction programme. Teachers and assessors skilfully recap and place the subject matter in relevant contexts into lessons throughout the year.
- Teachers and assessors reinforce the importance of staying safe very well in college and at work. Learners comply with the requirements of health and safety appropriately in lessons and in the workplace. They understand the importance of key requirements such as the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and keeping work areas tidy. Apprentices and learners on study programmes understand very well how to protect themselves from risks associated with radicalisation, extremism, cyber bullying and internet grooming. They feel safe and know how to raise any concerns they may have about themselves or their peers. A very small number of adults studying on part-time and distance-learning courses do not have sufficient knowledge about these topics as they are not included in their learning programmes.
- Most learners develop a good range of practical skills, and the standard of their work is at least at the expected level for their qualification. Many learners studying on performing arts courses often exceed the expected standards in their technical performance work. Teachers place a strong emphasis on building the skills they need for employment; as a result, learners show a good understanding of these. However, most learners on study programmes at level 3 do not take useful notes in lessons, and a significant proportion of apprentices do not produce enough written work of a good standard.
- Learners are self-assured, well-behaved and very respectful, as a result of the supportive environment created by staff. They understand the importance of good conduct at college and in the workplace. Adult learners are enthusiastic in lessons, hard-working and well-organised with their learning. Media and performing arts learners are proud of their work, enjoy showcasing their talents and are excited by potential future employment opportunities. Learners who have special educational needs and disabilities gain confidence and greater independence. However, a small minority of apprentices are not well enough motivated to complete their work on time.
- Learners' attendance at lessons has improved but remains below the college target. In 2016/17, attendance rates were high on creative arts, and hospitality and catering courses, but low on English and mathematics courses.



## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- Most learners enjoy and complete their courses. However, the proportion of learners who are successful in achieving their qualification varies too much between different subjects and different types of qualifications. Achievement is high on performing arts, media and communication, hospital and catering, and sports and leisure courses; it is low on foundations for learning and life, health and social care, business and management courses.
- The proportion of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes who complete and achieve their qualifications has improved since the previous inspection; this is in line with similar providers. Most adults successfully achieve their qualifications.
- The largest proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 study at level 3; around 10% study on A-level courses. Given their qualifications on entry, college data suggests that learners aged 16 to 18 on AS-level courses now make good progress, and more than half of the large group studying on creative arts courses now make good or better progress. However, learners studying on A-level courses and the remaining level 3 vocational courses do not make sufficient progress in line with their potential. Teachers' use of formative assessment is not sufficiently rigorous and improvement interventions do not always improve further learners' subject knowledge and understanding. As a result, too few make good progress. High-grade pass rates, although improved, remain low.
- Too few learners successfully achieve their GCSE qualifications in English or mathematics. In 2016/17, although improved from the previous year, only around one in four of learners aged 16 to 18 achieved grades A\* to C in GCSE mathematics – although this is well above the low national rate. In contrast, learners' achievement of GCSE English at grades A\* to C declined slightly and is low. For the small group of adults, achievement of GCSE English and mathematics at grades A\* to C is also low.
- Achievement rates for learners aged 16 to 18 studying English functional skills at all levels improved significantly in 2016/17, and are well above the low national rate at levels 1 and 2. However, achievement rates for learners studying mathematics functional skills declined at levels 1 and 2 and are low. Achievement rates for the small group of adults studying functional skills are also low.
- Although the large majority of apprentices achieve their qualification, around 40% do not complete their qualifications within the allocated time. The achievement across different subject areas varies too much. Around 75% of apprentices achieve their qualifications in hospitality and catering, but only 25% achieve their qualifications in engineering. Around a third of apprentices currently in learning are required to study functional skills in English, mathematics and information communications technology; of these, too few are making sufficient progress towards achieving their functional skills qualifications and completing the apprenticeship framework.
- Achievement gaps between different groups of learners, such as males and females, are narrowing over time. However, learners who have a declared disability and/or learning difficulty – particularly, dyslexia or mental health issues – do not achieve as well as their peers; learners aged 16 to 18 who were previously in receipt of free school meals and children looked after or leaving care do not achieve their qualifications at the same rate as their peers.



- The standard of written work produced by many learners is high. For example, learners studying on the level 3 acting course evaluate their rehearsal performance on the work of Berkoff and produced highly self-critical improvement targets; adults studying on the access to higher education courses use graphics well to improve the clarity of complicated written assignment work; adults studying on distance-learning courses produce work which is well-researched, detailed and professionally presented. However, the standard of written work produced by a minority of learners is poor. Learners studying on level 1 functional skills courses do not take enough pride in their work, which is often untidy and disorganised. Learners on level 3 courses do not take notes in lessons well enough to enable them to use them for revision; notes are often incomplete and difficult to read.
- Learners and apprentices develop a good range of skills for employment; many develop a wide range of new skills that prepare them well for their next step. For example, adult learners for whom English is not their first language develop very good speaking and listening skills; advanced apprentices studying hospitality and catering demonstrate strong butchery skills when cutting and preparing a wide range of cuts of meat. However, learners studying music technology have underdeveloped research and evaluative skills; they have an insufficient understanding of how to access a wide range of information to help inform their work or how to critique their own work or the work of their peers.
- Most learners and apprentices who successfully achieve their qualifications at the college progress into employment, apprenticeships and higher or further education. For example, one learner who requires specialist support for their learning has progressed into an apprenticeship at the college working in the business support department; many learners have gained employment with a wide range of local and national employers. All of the small group of adults studying on the access to higher education course progressed on to university. The number of apprentices that progress into employment or higher-level study is high. However, the proportion of learners who progress to the next level of learning at levels 1 and 2 within the college is low.
- Most of the small group of learners who require specialist support for their learning achieve their qualification. The large majority make the expected or better progress in line with their peers. Most develop their skills and independence very well. For example, one learner studying on a level 3 catering course, who was previously in receipt of support from a learning support assistant in practical sessions, is now able to work unassisted in the kitchen preparing meals for the college brasserie.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### Requires improvement

- Study programmes account for more than half of the college's provision. Learners are enrolled on to study programmes across 12 subject sector areas; most study at level 3, with the largest group of learners studying on vocational visual arts, performing arts and media courses. Around 170 learners study on A-level courses.
- Managers have high expectations of learners; they have begun to introduce a range of measures to improve the provision. Although it is too early to assess the full impact of the measures, the progress made by learners studying on AS-level courses has improved. Managers use the 'intensive care' and 'support and challenge' processes well to improve

areas of weakness; these have resulted in better teaching and much-improved opportunities for work experience, particularly for learners studying on health and social care and hospitality courses.

- Managers consult extensively with industry experts to help design study programmes that provide learners with the skills they need for future employment. Although most learners remain on their courses, too many do not make the progress of which they are capable. Learners studying on creative courses at level 3 achieve a large proportion of high-grade pass rates; however, too few learners on other courses achieve high-grade pass rates.
- Many teachers on academic and vocational courses skilfully build opportunities for English and mathematics development into their lessons, making the subjects relevant to learners; as a result, they make good progress in developing their skills. For example, in a sociology lesson at level 3, learners played 'hangman' to reinforce and accurately spell difficult technical words, and they compiled a glossary of key terms.
- Learners studying hospitality and catering at levels 1 and 2 use technical vocabulary well in context. Sociology learners use simple arithmetic techniques to work out differences in earning capacity between factory workers and their managers. However, teachers on functional skills and GCSE English and mathematics courses do not use information about learners' starting points well enough to plan learning activities that are sufficiently challenging for all. As a result, all learners work at the pace of the least able; and teachers do not challenge the most-able learners to produce work of the standard of which they are capable.
- Learners studying on level 3 creative arts, and hospitality and catering courses, are highly motivated, adopt professional working practices, produce work of a high standard and make good progress. They develop practical and technical skills very well, as a result of the constructive feedback that they receive from their teachers and peers. Learners apply their new skills creatively and with increasing levels of expertise. For example, in an acting lesson at level 3, mature and reflective learners used their knowledge of how to create tension through the manipulation of text and subtlety in characterisation skilfully, to inform their performance. In many lessons, teachers assess and evaluate the quality of learning well; they use a wide range of appropriate methods and resources including probing questioning to ensure that all learners make good or better progress.
- In the majority of theory and academic lessons, learners do not make rapid progress. Teachers do not check learning well enough or provide learners with sufficient feedback to support their learning and progress; teachers do not check learners' understanding before moving onto the next phase of the lesson; they do not fully explain the learning objectives to learners or consolidate and evaluate how much learning has taken place at the end of the lesson.
- In many lessons, learners do not develop their study skills sufficiently well to ensure that they meet the requirements of their qualification and make the progress of which they are capable. For instance, learners studying on music technology courses have underdeveloped research and evaluative skills, and this limits their ability to produce high-quality written work. Their new teacher has correctly identified through assessment the actions required to rectify the problem, but these have not yet been implemented. Although teachers encourage learners to develop their written skills in lessons by taking notes, many of the learners have difficulty in identifying the key information that needs to be recorded to help them with revision or consolidation; consequently, their notes have

limited value in supporting their learning.

- Teachers do not routinely set learners sufficiently challenging targets; as a result, learners do not focus well enough on the specific actions and challenging timescales that are required to make swift and sustained improvements in their work. In the few instances where learners are set specific targets, there are no clear timeframes for completion.
- Learners on both vocational and academic courses make very good progress in developing their skills for employment through the well-established and well-managed work-experience process. For example, learners improve in confidence when making presentations to employers, and refine their telephone interview and audition techniques.
- Managers ensure that work experience is timed well to give learners the opportunity to apply the new skills that they have gained in the workplace to their course work. Employers value the work that staff do to support them in providing meaningful work-experience opportunities for learners who may need extra support to be successful. The catering and hospitality staff have been particularly successful in preparing employers to support learners studying at level 1 for their work placement in the hospitality and catering sector. Many learners receive offers of part-time and full-time employment in their specialist sectors after completing their work placement.
- Learners have a good understanding of the career paths that are available to them on completion of their course; they have benefited from extensive impartial careers guidance and support from specialist and tutorial staff. As a result, they make informed choices about their next steps. In tutorials, learners receive helpful advice in how to complete an application form, compile a curriculum vitae and prepare for an interview. On completion of their course, a high proportion of learners progress to further study, higher education, apprenticeships and paid employment.
- Learners on courses such as creative arts, catering and hospitality and public services benefit from the strong partnerships that staff have with local partners and employers. For example, during the inspection, learners studying on performing arts took part in a highly physical and demanding movement workshop, led by members of a very highly regarded local theatre company.
- Learners have a good understanding of safeguarding, online safety and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism; they follow safe working practices in studios and workshops. Learners feel safe in college and know how to report any concerns that they may have. They treat each other with high levels of respect and maintain good working relationships with their teachers.

## Adult learning programmes

**Good**

- Adults account for around 25% of college provision; they attend college courses or undertake distance-learning courses with the college, or through subcontracted provision managed by the college. The large majority of adults study on distance-learning courses in health and social care; a small group study on full-time courses, mainly advanced vocational courses, A levels and the access to higher education. Part-time adult provision includes English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and English and mathematics, both GCSEs and functional skills.
- Learners are enthusiastic, apply themselves well to their studies and take responsibility

for their own learning. As a result, they make good progress. For example, in ESOL lessons, most learners loan fiction books, study them outside of the lesson and then summarise the story lines to their peers in later lessons. On distance-learning courses, learners quickly learn to research topics independently and maximise their studies alongside the demands of their jobs and family life.

- Teachers use a wide range of activities in lessons, which stimulates learning and supports the good progress and high achievements that learners make.
- For example, in ESOL lessons, learners work well in pairs and participate in whole-group discussions and role play; they benefit from well-prepared teacher presentations and work independently using good-quality worksheets and textbooks. Teachers on access to higher education courses plan activities successfully and prepare learners well for their transition to university; they develop the good independent learning and information technology (IT) skills required for this progression.
- Teachers use very effectively the assessment of learners' skills and knowledge at the start of their course to ensure that learners attend the most appropriate course, and to plan learning which meets the needs of each individual. On distance-learning courses, the assessment of learners' starting points in English and mathematics is used effectively to ensure that they benefit well from the course.
- The distance-learning provision is very well planned to support the development of employees' skills within the health and social care sector. The wide range of courses, for example in autism, dementia and mental health, enables learners employed in health and social care to update their skills to meet the changing demands within the industry. The future strategic approach for adult learning is well defined within the curriculum plan for the proposed merged college.
- Teachers on distance-learning courses use high-quality learning materials to enable learners to work independently and to achieve successfully qualifications relevant to their job roles. For example, an employee in a residential home who works with a client with autism gained a greater understanding of the client's needs. The learner now feels confident to complete reports using terms and concepts used by fellow healthcare professionals, which gives the reports greater credence with management and other stakeholders.
- Teachers adopt particularly thorough and regular assessment practice on distance-learning courses, which leads to learners developing good skills. Assessors are very prompt in returning work to learners following assessment. Teachers' feedback contains helpful guidance, which learners use well to improve their work. However, teachers' assessment of learners' GCSE mathematics work does not lead to useful targets; as a result, learners do not monitor their own progress over time.
- Teachers provide learners with good support in the development of their English skills in all subjects. They routinely correct spelling and grammar in distance-learning assignments, giving learners helpful guidance on how to improve in their written feedback. Mathematics teachers are skilled at helping learners improve their English, including wider grammar. For example, in a mathematics functional skills lesson, learners understood the difference between 'of' and 'off', following the teacher's explanation that a quarter 'of' a 100 was 25, while a quarter 'off' a 100 was 75.
- Teachers promote diversity well in lessons. As a result, learners develop a good

understanding and tolerance of the different people with whom they live and work. For example, in the health studies access course, learners devised informative pamphlets for workers in care homes, relating well to the equality of opportunity, the celebration of diversity and to the aspects of dignity to which all residents are entitled.

- Managers' partnership arrangements with the subcontractors delivering the distance-learning provision are very effective; excellent communications exist between the college and the subcontractors' staff. Regular and rigorous quality assurance arrangements are agreed between the partners; as a result, practice is of a consistently high standard and learners achieve very well.
- Teachers' checking of learning in a minority of lessons is insufficient; as a result, this slows the progress of learning. All teachers do not routinely check whether learners have fully understood the topic before moving onto the next. For example, in one lesson, the teacher carefully and accurately explained the use of different verb tenses. However, the teacher did not check the learners' understanding sufficiently before expecting them to use these tenses in sentences, which most were unable to do. Consequently, the teacher had to repeat the explanation again, which slowed learners' progress.
- In a minority of ESOL lessons, teachers place too little emphasis on the development of learners' pronunciation. While they correct their mispronunciation at an individual level, other learners are not given enough opportunity to practise and develop further their speaking skills.
- Managers' and teachers' promotion of e-safety and the dangers associated with radicalisation on a minority of courses is insufficient. Adults on part-time courses and those distance-learning programmes which the college provides directly – without a subcontractor – have too little understanding of the dangers arising from the misuse of the internet or the threats associated with extremism. Adults studying on full-time courses have only a basic understanding.

## Apprenticeships

## Requires improvement

- Just over 10% of the colleges' learners are apprentices. Apprentices study on intermediate and advanced apprenticeship programmes for hospitality and catering (around half of the group), motor vehicle, electro-technical, health and social care, engineering, business administration, customer service, teaching assistants, team-leading, and higher apprenticeships in health and social care. The majority of apprentices already have the required qualifications in English and mathematics before they join their programmes. The college works with over 100 small- and medium-sized employers in the local area.
- Around 25% of apprentices make slow progress and continue to study well past their planned end dates, which is often as a result of intermediate apprentices not achieving their functional skills qualification in English and/or mathematics. In addition, the majority of advanced apprentices studying on electro-technical programmes do not complete the end-point assessment of their qualification (AM2) and do not achieve their framework; this limits their ability to perform high-end skills, command higher wages and progress to higher levels of work or become self-employed.
- Tutors do not prepare apprentices sufficiently for their next steps in learning. During the

inspection, inspectors saw very little evidence of apprentices' written work to support their claim of competence in their job roles. The little work that some very able advanced apprentices produce is not of a sufficiently high quality. For example, an assessor accepted a mediocre report on a well-researched project based on the accessibility of local tourist venues from highly able apprentices; the assessor did not challenge the apprentices to produce a higher level of written work. Overall written feedback is minimal and not of consistently good quality to help apprentices to improve their performance.

- Tutors do not encourage apprentices to develop higher-level skills in English and mathematics; instead they focus too much on preparing a small minority of apprentices to pass the functional skills examinations, and give little opportunity to broadening their skills and deepening their understanding of the subject. For example, an advanced apprentice, who was ready to be promoted to a 'chef-de-partie' role, did not feel fully prepared for the additional tasks of costing and planning, although they had passed their functional skills qualification in mathematics.
- Assessors work with the mindset of validating and accrediting the skills of the apprentices rather than developing these skills beyond existing levels. While reviewing the progress of apprentices, assessors focus heavily on checking the completion of units of qualification. They do not encourage apprentices to explain what new knowledge they have gained through off-the-job training or how they have applied it to their workplaces to benefit their employer. Assessors do not ask sufficiently probing questions to encourage apprentices to perform at higher levels, as they are not sufficiently qualified or skilled in coaching and mentoring.
- The learning programmes meet the principles and requirements of apprenticeship provision. Qualification achievement rates are above the low national averages for intermediate-level apprentices, but low for advanced apprentices. The rates of achievement of qualifications have gradually improved over the past two years.
- Links with employers, particularly in the growing and competitive hospitality sector locally, are strong. Employers receive very clear guidance on what the apprenticeship entails, and the role they need to play at all stages of the training of their apprentices. As a result, most employers are highly supportive, with the best of these fully engaged in the planning of training and assessment with college tutors.
- Managers' preparation for the introduction of apprenticeship standards in hospitality programmes is thorough; employers are actively involved in the design of the apprenticeship and form an effective partnership with the learning provider. For example, the college is offering an NVQ qualification in response to the identified needs of the hospitality employers.
- The majority of apprentices make a positive contribution to employers' businesses and are considered as valuable members of the team. Tutors promote professional standards well in all subject areas, and most apprentices develop confidence and a good work ethic. After completion of their framework, most apprentices progress into permanent employment, although a very small group progress to an advanced apprenticeship. Managers do not monitor the progression of apprentices in their job roles and promotions; they are unable to quantify what difference the apprenticeship training has made to apprentices' careers.
- Staff are very experienced subject specialists and skilled professionals; they have a good understanding of the current industry practice. They use their expertise and vocational

skills well to provide practical training that helps apprentices develop technical skills. As a result, apprentices become confident and are prepared well for work, and in some cases for the next level of training.

- The standard of apprentices' practical work in most sectors is good. For example, business administration apprentices set up useful spreadsheets and template letters to control business costs and market the services to customers. Classroom assistant apprentices fully understand the value of outdoor activities for children and conduct a detailed risk assessment of these activities to protect children from harm. Higher-level apprentices fulfil and carry out necessary management functions in the highly regulated health and social care sector, to protect residents in care homes. A small minority of apprentices, studying hospitality and catering, produce higher standards of practical work than expected.
- Apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of a range of safeguarding topics. They focus well on health and safety during their work; apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity is good.
- Many apprentices benefit from additional training from their employer. To motivate hospitality apprentices further, employers provide opportunities for them to attend 'master classes' to extend their skills and knowledge. For example, a small group of hospitality apprentices attend a master class in butchery and learn to 'take down a beast' by cutting and preparing a wide range of cuts of meat. At the 'provenience' master class, apprentices learn how and where to secure fresh food locally; they enhance their understanding of environmental issues and how to increase their profit margins.

### Provision for learners with high needs

**Good**

- Around 22 learners who require specialist support for their learning are enrolled at the college. They study across a range of study programmes from levels 1 to 3. The learners are funded by five local authorities.
- Managers use the funding for learners who require specialist support for their learning well. As a result, learners gain new skills, build their confidence, make good progress and successfully achieve their qualifications. A further 30 learners have education, health and care plans (EHCPs) but are not in receipt of additional funding; staff use the information from these plans well to identify and meet individual support needs. However, not all teachers use the information effectively in planning learning and assessment to meet learners' needs in lessons.
- Tutors and support staff, including learning coaches, support learners very effectively in their transition in to and out of the college. Staff work closely with local schools, parents, carers and other organisations to provide learners with regular visits to the campus prior to the start of their course; as a result, learners are well prepared for their course.
- For example, pupils from a local specialist school attend the college for two hours a week over a two-year period to ensure that they are ready for their next step.
- Where appropriate, all learners have very good work-experience placements that are linked closely to their vocational courses and long-term employment goals. Staff engage learners well in the detailed planning arrangements. In 2016/17, one learner studying on a level 3 media course had a placement with 'Tots TV' and was involved in filming a



children's programme.

- Staff carry out comprehensive risk assessments for each learner. As a result, learners who require specialist support for their learning feel safe in college and demonstrate safe working practices in all learning settings. Learners have a good understanding of health and safety in practical workshops. For example, learners studying on hospitality courses demonstrate correct knife skills, safe movement around the work areas, and safe transportation of hot liquids, when working in the kitchen. Where appropriate, staff use additional individual behaviour plans well, to help learners to understand and manage their own behaviour effectively, to become more independent and to keep safe.
- Learners develop their confidence, social skills and independent learning skills very effectively; they are well prepared for their next steps. In the majority of sessions, teachers have high expectations of learners; as a result, they are motivated to achieve their qualification, and to progress to higher-level courses or into work. As part of the college offer to extend further the skills and experiences of learners, one learner with mobility difficulties attends a ballet course and is supported well by staff; as a result he displays more confidence in his movements and has improved his core body strength.
- Learners studying on performing arts, and hospitality courses, make very good progress in practical sessions. Teachers use the information provided in the individual support plan summary (ISPS) documents very well to make appropriate adjustments to their teaching and learning plans; they adapt activities well to ensure that they challenge appropriately and meet the specific needs of learners who require specialist support for their learning. Learners' written work is of a good standard; teachers provide learners with detailed feedback on their progress; they effectively promote self-assessment and peer-to-peer assessment, which helps learners to develop their critical thinking skills very well. For example, learners studying on performing arts courses critique each other's performances and presentations with honesty and precision, preparing them well for life in the theatre.
- In a minority of sessions, teachers do not use the detailed information in the ISPS well enough to plan effective learning activities in lessons or to support the clearly identified needs of learners. In a minority of sessions, teachers do not have an ISPS and are unaware of the adjustments or additional resources required to support the learners who require specialist support for their learning. Almost all teachers ensure that learners' work is produced on their preferred coloured paper. However, a few teachers do not sufficiently adjust their learning strategies to ensure that learners are supported effectively. Teachers manage additional learning support staff well in lessons.
- Teachers with specific responsibility for the teaching of learners who require specialist support for their learning are well trained and qualified. However, the training of other staff who support learners who require specialist support for their learning is insufficiently developed. Staff are provided with information sheets which provide them with guidance on how to work effectively with learners who require specialist support for their learning. However, managers have identified the need for more detailed and specific training to ensure that all staff are well prepared, understand fully and adopt a wide range of teaching and support strategies to meet individuals' needs. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has prioritised this training for the autumn term.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130837
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,321
Principal/CEO	Andrew Cropley
Telephone number	01789 266245
Website	<a href="http://www.stratford.ac.uk">www.stratford.ac.uk</a>

## 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+
	67	24	249	11	746	46	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	45	20	18	37	–	4		
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	22							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	The Skill Network Learning Curve							

## Information about this inspection

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

## Inspection team

Denise Olander, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
William Baidoe-Ansah	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harmesh Manghra	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jacqui Deane	Ofsted Inspector
Sylvia Farrier	Ofsted Inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Learner View**

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to [www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Employer View**

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to [www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2017