

South Staffordshire College

General further education college

Inspection dates

15–18 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Governors, senior leaders, and managers have not yet rectified the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not improved. Too few learners benefit from good-quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers do not plan learning well enough to meet the different needs and abilities of learners, so that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- The curriculum for learners with high needs does not provide effective routes into work. Too few of these learners progress into employment.
- Too few learners on study programmes and adult programmes achieve functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of learners who complete an external work placement is too low. For the minority of learners who do complete work experience, this is not always meaningful or related to their vocational area.
- Managers' self-assessment of their courses does not identify the significant variance that exists in the achievement of different groups of learners.
- Attendance remains too low, particularly in English and mathematics.

The provider has the following strengths

- The new senior leadership team have quickly developed ambitious strategic objectives for the college.
- Part-time courses for adult learners form a flexible and responsive curriculum, providing the skills to enable learners return to the workforce. Apprenticeship programmes meet the needs of local businesses.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from good pastoral support. This helps them to overcome their personal barriers to learning and means a higher proportion remain on their course.
- Teachers and assessors have good industrial knowledge which means that learners and apprentices gain the skills and knowledge they need for work.
- The vast majority of learners on study and adult programmes who remain on their course and achieve their qualification progress to further study or employment.

Full report

Information about the provider

- South Staffordshire College is a medium-sized further education college. The college has four main campuses located in the south of Staffordshire and a number of outreach centres which provide community learning and skills courses. The curriculum includes courses in all sector areas apart from humanities, and from foundation level to higher education level. The college specialises in a land-based curriculum and includes a working farm, equestrian centre, and licensed zoo.
- The percentage of learners and apprentices from a minority ethnic background is low and in line with that of the local population. The percentage of pupils who leave school in Staffordshire with five or more GCSEs at grade 6 or above, including English and mathematics, is similar to that nationally.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Governors must hold the new senior leadership team thoroughly to account for the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment, ensuring that this leads to rapid and sustainable improvement in learners' and apprentices' progress and achievement.
- Leaders and managers should rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to address the inconsistencies across curriculum areas, subjects and teachers, by:
 - ensuring that managers use information about learners' progress, standards of work, and the outcomes of lesson observations to identify accurately what individual teachers and assessors need to do to improve their performance and the outcomes for learners
 - identifying those vocational teachers who are already doing this well and ensuring that they have regular opportunities to share their approaches with colleagues.
- Leaders should improve learners' attendance and increase the proportion of learners and apprentices who achieve their qualifications, closing gaps in achievement by different groups of learners, by:
 - ensuring that teachers take into consideration learners' starting points when planning individual targets, assignments and activities
 - ensuring that teachers provide helpful feedback and set challenging targets for their learners and apprentices, so that they can improve the quality of their work and make good progress.
- Managers should increase the proportion of learners who make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills, by:
 - improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in English and mathematics sessions
 - supporting teachers in vocational, English and mathematics courses to set work which enables learners to apply and develop their skills.

- Leaders and managers should ensure that the curriculum for learners with high needs supports learners' progression into employment through the provision of work-related programmes, including supported internships.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that more learners complete a relevant external work placement which prepares them for their progression into work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Management actions instigated by the previous senior leadership team have not yet had sufficient impact in tackling the majority of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, particularly in teaching, learning and assessment. Too many learners still do not make sufficient progress, particularly in the development of their English and mathematics skills. There is still too much variation in the progress that learners make in different curriculum areas, and there are too many classes where attendance is low.
- The new principal – in post since March 2018 – and the chair of governors and senior team of managers have quickly developed an ambitious set of strategic objectives for the college in the very short space of time they have been in post. Previous senior leaders spent a considerable amount of time on mergers talks with another college, which was a distraction. The merger did not take place. The new senior leadership team have refocused the college's role on creating opportunities for their learners to secure sustainable careers. The principal, in particular, has helped raise the morale of staff through clear communication of her plans to develop the curriculum, and her high visibility and accessibility to staff at the dispersed campuses across the region.
- Although managers have developed further their quality improvement arrangements since the previous inspection, these are not yet leading to sufficiently rapid improvements. As a result, learners do not experience a consistently good standard of teaching, learning and assessment across all curriculum areas.
- Senior leaders and managers do not identify gaps between different groups of learners. As a result, gaps remain between learners with a learning difficulty and those without, and between adult learners and learners aged 16 to 18 on full-time vocational programmes.
- Managers do not set sufficiently challenging targets for the vast majority of teaching staff at their annual appraisals. Managers' expectations of their staff's performance are not yet high enough. There remains too much variance in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers have until very recently relied too heavily on agency staff to teach lessons, with, at some periods, up to a quarter of the teaching workforce being temporary agency staff. Some of the poorest performing sector subject areas, such as engineering and construction, where there have been heavy concentrations of these staff, have shown little improvement since the previous inspection.
- Leaders, managers and staff make a valued contribution to the economic and skills development of the local region. The college is seen by stakeholders as being the specialist provider of land-based skills in agriculture, horticulture and animal care, and in the growing local market for construction trades and light manufacturing. Senior leaders' plans to expand the range of its apprenticeships are welcomed by employers, such as major housebuilders, who need more skilled workers to meet the rising demand for housing.

The governance of the provider

- Governors and senior leaders do not pay sufficient attention to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. There remains too much focus on headline performance measures in their meetings and too little on what is going on in the classroom and the workshop. As a result, they have an overgenerous assessment of the outcomes for current learners and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, the majority of which still requires improvement to be good.
- The members of the governing body have a good mix of skills, experience and local contacts. They use these well to support the new principal in implementing her plans to expand the college's reach and relevance within the local community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers place high emphasis on the safety of learners and apprentices. The safeguarding team have developed a useful online application through which staff can report safeguarding concerns and incidents. It enables staff to analyse the range of different concerns and their prevalence in different campuses and curriculum areas, prompting interventions to deal with specific concerns, such as mental health and domestic abuse.
- The safeguarding team have developed effective links with a range of partner organisations designed to keep learners safe and promote their well-being while they are at the college. For example, staff work closely with the county council's virtual school to ensure that young people who are looked after receive effective support when they enrol at the college, and to monitor their progress sensitively while they are there.
- Staff and governors have completed mandatory safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. The majority of learners and apprentices recognise the risk posed by radicalisation and extremism while in college and know how to report any concerns. Managers and teachers should promote further learners' and apprentices' understanding of the risk posed by radicalisation and extremism when at work and within their local communities.
- Until very recently, reports on safeguarding, and in particular the number and nature of incidents and concerns, were reported to governors and the senior leadership team too infrequently. The new principal has now rectified this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers and managers have introduced a number of improvement strategies since the previous inspection to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, these have not yet led to consistently good teaching, learning and assessment across all the provision types and subjects. This is particularly the case for study programme learners in engineering, construction, and land-based programmes, and for adult learners in animal management, animal care, and construction programmes.

- Teachers do not plan lessons well enough to take into account learners' different levels of ability and prior learning to ensure that they make their expected levels of progress in the vast majority of sessions. The pace of lessons is often too slow, and activities do not challenge learners. As a result, too many learners, in particular the most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the checking of learners' understanding and knowledge in theory classes. Teachers are not able to confirm the extent of learning taking place. Teachers do not ensure that activities consolidate previous learning well enough. Consequently, too many learners are unable to recall learning from previously taught lessons and make slower-than-expected progress. A minority of teachers do not provide learners and apprentices with useful feedback on their work to help them know how to improve or achieve higher grades.
- In English and mathematics lessons teachers do not set learners appropriately challenging tasks. Learners follow the same activities irrespective of their abilities, potential and prior learning. Attendance in English and mathematics lessons is too low. Too many learners make slow progress or do not achieve their functional skills qualifications or gain high grades in their GCSE qualifications. However, apprentices make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills.
- Managers have implemented an appropriate range of strategies and actions to improve learners' outcomes in English and mathematics, but it is too early to see the impact of these actions. Managers have provided teachers with more focused continuing professional development. As a result, a small minority of vocational teachers are better able to integrate English and mathematics into vocational lessons. For example, adults on floristry programmes preparing flower arrangements for events use mathematical skills to calculate costings and work out profit.
- Many teachers do not correct punctuation or spelling errors in learners' written work, and so learners repeat mistakes and make slower progress in developing their written skills in English.
- The majority of teaching, learning and assessment for learners on adult community learning and courses designed to provide progression pathways for adults is good. As a result of effective teaching on community programmes, access to higher education and sector-based academy programmes, the majority of learners make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Teachers and assessors have good subject knowledge and industry experience, which they use well to motivate and coach learners and apprentices. As a result, most learners and apprentices develop good practical skills to industry standards. For example, learners on level 3 photography use industry-standard software to design and produce documents to a high standard. Adult learners on floristry programmes demonstrate precision in weaving when creating floral displays
- Learners and apprentices benefit from good support. Teachers and assessors quickly identify when learners and apprentices need pastoral support, or are at risk of falling behind. Staff provide a range of support, including the use of dedicated mentors at each campus. Learners and apprentices benefit from effective use of learning support assistants in lessons. Learners value the range of support they receive, which helps them to stay on their course. Retention in the current year is high.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Managers' and teachers' actions to tackle the poor attendance of learners aged 16 to 18 and adult learners on study programmes have not led to the required improvement. Attendance remains too low. As a result, learners make slower progress than expected and this hinders their ability to achieve aspirational targets. Attendance in English and mathematics is very low. Learners with complex needs in receipt of high-needs funding generally attend well.
- The proportion of learners who complete an external work placement is too low. For the minority of learners who do complete work experience, this is not always meaningful or related to their vocational area. Consequently, learners are not able to articulate the skills they gain from their placements and understand how the placement will help to prepare them for their next steps. Learners do not always receive appropriate guidance on the relevance of placements from their teachers prior to undertaking work experience. Learners do not identify the benefits of completing placements and the skills they will learn.
- The majority of apprentices' and learners' awareness of British values is too basic to enable them to have sufficient understanding of how these values affect them in their daily lives and in their work situations. However, apprentices – particularly in care, veterinary nursing, and horticulture – are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, a number wrote to their Member of Parliament about poor pay, long hours and the challenges of working in the care sector.
- Many learners complete additional short qualifications which add little value to their progress and achievement because they are not challenging enough. However, learners on agriculture and horticulture courses complete additional and relevant qualifications in the use of chainsaws, in spraying and in tractor driving, which enhance their career options.
- Teachers integrate English and mathematics skills well in a small minority of practical lessons, for example in costing out a floral display for an event, booking clients for treatments in salons, and taking payments in retail outlets.
- Learners and apprentices feel safe in the college and workplace. They know how to stay safe online and to whom to report any safeguarding concerns. They demonstrate and adhere to safe working practices in practical lessons, in workshops and in the workplace, and wear the appropriate protective clothing.
- Learners' and apprentices' behaviour in college and in their workplace is good. Many learners and apprentices develop well their self-confidence and personal skills. For example, learners in carpentry and joinery working on an external brief were able to explain how working with the client had improved their communication skills. Learners in receipt of high-needs funding are supported to manage their own behaviour well, and they have good access to relaxation and reflection spaces.
- Most learners and apprentices gain relevant employment skills through additional work-related qualifications and enrichment activities. Teachers and assessors plan initiatives and projects with external partners, including national competitions. For example, learners in health and social care have worked with a local hospice to improve their skills in supporting people experiencing bereavement. Learners in performing arts take part in

Screamfest, working alongside professional actors.

- Learners and apprentices benefit from good pastoral support. Teachers and staff quickly identify learners and apprentices who are at risk of leaving. Where apprentices are in receipt of additional learning support, the support provided ensures that learners remain on and pass their programme. Learners who require specialist support benefit from well-trained staff, including those learners with visual impairments, who have access to staff trained in the use of Braille.
- Most learners and apprentices benefit from good, impartial, careers education, advice and guidance. This is particularly the case for adult learners, who are able to make informed choices about their future careers and further training. Learners aged 16 to 18 and adults on full-time vocational programmes are not always sure how to achieve their career goals, particularly when their next step leads to an apprenticeship.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Leaders' and managers' actions taken since the previous inspection have not yet fully remedied the inconsistencies in outcomes for learners and apprentices across provision types and subjects. Strategies to increase the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications in a number of subjects have been successful, for example in retail, business, administration, health, public services and care, but this is not yet consistent across all curriculum areas and subjects.
- The majority of learners studying on childcare, health and social care, arts and media, hairdressing and beauty therapy courses make good progress and achieve well. However, the proportion of learners who achieve their qualification in engineering and manufacturing, agriculture, horticulture, and animal care remains low. The proportion of study programme learners who achieved their vocational qualifications in 2016/17, has increased but remains below the previous year's national rate in a minority of curriculum areas.
- Adult learners on full-time vocational programmes study alongside learners aged 16 to 18. The proportion of adult learners who achieve their qualifications on vocational programmes is lower than for their peers. Actions taken by leaders and managers have increased the number of adult learners who achieve their qualifications, but these were below the national rate in 2016/17.
- Although actions taken to improve achievement rates for English and mathematics qualifications have led to improvements, the proportion of learners who achieve grade 6 or above for English and mathematics GCSE remains too low. The proportion of adult learners who achieve grade 6 or above in English rose in 2016/17, and this is now above the national rate.
- The proportion of learners who achieve functional skills English and mathematics qualifications was low in 2016/17 across all levels.
- The vast majority of learners do not make the progress of which they are capable. The proportion of learners who achieve high grades was low in 2016/17. In the current year, too many learners and apprentices are not making the progress expected of them. This is particularly the case for the most able learners.
- In 2016/17 the proportion of apprentices who achieved their qualification within their

planned timescale was low. The overall and timely achievement rates have remained the same over the last three years.

- Managers do not accurately identify the achievement gaps that exist for different groups of learners through their self-assessment of courses. Achievement gaps that existed for learners with a learning disability on study programmes and adult courses, and for apprentices, have not reduced. These learners do not achieve as well as their peers.
- Learners in receipt of high-needs funding on programmes designed to meet their needs and those accessing vocational programmes alongside their peers achieve less well than their peers on study programmes. Learners in receipt of high-needs funding with complex needs achieve better than their peers.
- Managers and teachers have implemented effective tracking systems to identify learners and apprentices who are at risk. The proportion of learners who stay on their programme has increased in the current year. Teachers and staff put appropriate interventions in place for learners and, as a result, a higher proportion are remaining on their course in the current year.
- The large majority of learners on study and adult programmes who remain on their course and achieve their qualification progress onto further study or employment. Most apprentices retain their employment at the end of their programme. A minority of apprentices use the skills and knowledge they have gained through their apprenticeship to gain promotion within the workplace or with a new employer.
- The large majority of learners develop the technical and vocational skills they need for work. For example, adult learners studying floristry produced a centrepiece for a funeral within a commercial timescale. However, in a small number of courses, such as animal care, engineering and manufacturing, learners do not gain the skills they need for work.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- There are 2,139 learners aged 16 to 18 across all four of the college campuses. Courses offered range from entry level to level 4. The largest subject areas are agriculture, horticulture, animal care, and engineering.
- Leaders' and managers' actions have not ensured that the quality of learners' experience on all study programmes is consistently good. There remains too much variance in teaching, learning and assessment across subjects and levels. In the current year, the majority of learners remain on their programme. Learners on childcare, music, and public services, for example, make good progress. However, learners on engineering and land-based programmes make slow progress and do not achieve at the level of which they are capable.
- Most teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of learners. Teachers do not plan sessions to consolidate prior learning and extend further learning to ensure that learners make their expected levels of progress. Teachers' use of questioning to broaden learning focuses on learners' recall of skills they have just learned within that session. Learners are not able to transfer their learning or share their knowledge and experiences with others in the group.

- In too many sessions teachers do not plan effectively to meet the needs of individual learners. Teachers do not consider how different individuals and groups learn, according to their starting points and abilities. In a minority of practical sessions, teachers do not plan learning activities well. For example, in reptile handling and management learners spend too much time waiting to take their turn. In a minority of sessions, the most able learners are prompted and guided throughout their extension activities. As a result, learners make slow progress.
- Much teaching, learning and assessment of English and mathematics is weak. In many vocational sessions teachers do not plan how they will develop learners' English and mathematics skills in preparation for their future career aspirations. In a small minority of sessions teachers integrate English and mathematics well. For example, teachers in music and performing arts sessions develop learners' spelling of technical terms relevant to the sector – such as, 'libretto'. Learners who have already achieved their grade 6 or above in GCSE English and mathematics do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills further.
- Where work placements are a mandatory part of the programme, teachers take care to carefully match the placement to learners' intended career intentions. Learners improve their skills relevant to their intended destinations. Teachers have widened the range of employment-related activities for learners on study programmes. However, where placements are not a mandatory part of their course, the number of learners completing relevant external placements remains too low. Work placements for a minority of current learners have yet to be planned.
- Teachers use well their good industrial and sector knowledge, skills and experience to motivate learners and make learning relevant to learners' future careers. Learners have a good awareness of industry standards and develop their practical skills well.
- Teachers use employer- and sector-led enrichment activities and competitions well to extend learners' skills. Teachers and curriculum managers use competitions well to reward and encourage learners. For example, learners studying on programmes in horse care and management who demonstrate good riding and employability skills join the riding academy, and construction learners compete in skills competitions.
- Learners feel safe in lessons. Learners have a basic awareness of radicalisation and extremism and how to report concerns while in college. Learners are not able to identify the potential risks to themselves in life outside of college. In practical sessions for agriculture and animal care teachers reinforce health and safety well. Teachers ensure that learners wear the appropriate protective equipment, particularly in agriculture and animal care.
- Teachers develop learners' basic awareness of British values through the tutorial programme. In most subjects, teachers do not plan how they will develop learners' further understanding of British values and how this relates to life outside of college and within their communities.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- There are around 2,180 adult learners. Of these, 546 are on full-time vocational courses and 1,630 on short, part-time courses. Some 756 learners are on adult and community programmes and 495 are on distance learning programmes. The majority of learners are on courses at entry level, level 1, level 2 and level 3 across the full range of subject areas, with approximately 100 learners undertaking level 3 programmes, including access to higher education.
- Leaders and managers do not monitor programmes well enough to identify and address the significant differences in learners' achievement of qualifications. The vast majority of full-time adult learners attend vocational programmes with learners aged 16 to 18. Adult learners on these vocational programmes do not achieve as well those learners aged 16 to 18.
- Adults' attendance on vocational programmes is too low. This contributes to adult learners not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not plan well enough to ensure that all learners are fully engaged or take time to work individually with learners to challenge them further. The pace of learning is too slow in a minority of sessions. Teachers do not plan sufficiently to ensure that learners progress at the rate of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of the presentation or standards of learners' written English. A significant minority of teachers do not correct learners' mistakes or encourage learners to proofread their work. Learners on full-time programmes make fundamental spelling errors in key, recurring words. As a result, learners do not develop the English skills and standards required to be successful in their next level of study.
- Leaders and managers have designed a very flexible and responsive curriculum for adult learners. The curriculum meets a wide range of interests, needs and aspirations while also addressing the local and regional employment skills gaps very effectively. Managers have developed particularly strong partnerships with Job Centre Plus, employers and community organisations in areas of significantly high deprivation. They successfully reach adults who have been out of learning for a considerable time to improve their prospects of employment and build confidence to engage in learning, often for the first time.
- Teachers are well qualified and vocationally experienced. They have high expectations of learners' practical skills development and coursework completion. The majority of learners on community and part-time programmes are motivated and enthusiastic and develop very positive attitudes to learning.
- The majority of teaching, learning and assessment is effective on community and part-time programmes for adult learners. Learners learn how to evaluate their own progress and can direct their own learning more independently. Most learners significantly increase their confidence and self-belief and become successful independent learners.
- Most teachers provide effective mentoring on distance-learning, part-time and community programmes. Teachers increase learners' knowledge and expertise and, as a result, learners develop their confidence and produce good standards of work.

- Community learning teachers identify accurately learners' starting points, existing skills and aspirations, so that learning meets their individual needs effectively. Teachers fully involve learners in monitoring their progress and skills development against the course and their personal learning outcomes. Learners gain confidence to make decisions and choices.
- Learners value the safe, supportive learning environment – particularly in the community provision. This enables them to learn more effectively and to participate more actively in their local communities.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Some 864 apprentices are currently in learning. These are in land-based, health and social care, early years, construction, business administration, engineering, and service industries. The majority of learners are on level 2 and level 3 programmes. A small number of learners are on higher apprenticeship programmes. Around 50 apprentices are on apprenticeship standards in the areas of electro-technical, sports turf, health and social care, land-based subjects, and engineering. The majority of learners have the required level of qualifications in English and mathematics for entry on to their apprenticeships. Around 10% of the provision is delivered for levy-paying employers.
- Teachers and assessors do not plan teaching, learning and assessment sufficiently well in the vast majority of sessions. Apprentices are able to complete practical tasks safely and competently, but their recall and application of new knowledge and theory in tasks is basic. Assessors plan learning outcomes that focus too much on the completion of tasks and not enough on the development of new skills and knowledge. Assessors do not challenge apprentices to think about the knowledge they are developing and how it relates to their skills and behaviours. For example, apprentices could conduct electrical testing competently through 'dead' and 'live' tests but did not have sufficient recall of the theory behind these tests.
- The quality of written feedback is not consistently precise or helpful across all subject areas. Teachers and assessors in the majority of subjects do not routinely provide sufficient guidance and challenge to promote apprentices' development to their potential. Apprentices who are able to achieve higher standards, such as merit or distinction, or to excel in their job roles are unclear on what they need to do to improve. However, apprentices in childcare, health and social care, business administration, and veterinary nursing benefit from helpful feedback which enables them to improve their work.
- Teachers and assessors do not set targets specific to apprentices' individual starting points in personal learning and thinking skills. Teachers and assessors align skills development for personal thinking and learning skills to the completion of qualifications. All learners are expected to achieve these by the end of their planned end date. This does not challenge and inspire learners sufficiently to improve and consolidate their personal skills to the highest level at the earliest stage.
- The proportion of current apprentices who achieve their qualification within their planned timescales has declined and is low.
- A small minority of apprentices are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, care apprentices wrote to their Member of Parliament about poor pay, long hours and the

challenges of working in the care sector. The majority of apprentices do not have sufficient awareness of British values and how these values affect them in their daily lives and in their work situations.

- Managers have developed apprenticeship programmes well to meet the needs of local businesses, as well as those identified by the local enterprise partnership. Programmes are adapted to meet the specific needs of corporate clients, national construction companies, and local councils. Managers work effectively to provide apprentices to address skills gaps within small and medium-sized employers who experience high staff turnover, such as in electrical installation, care, and plumbing.
- Leaders and managers have made good progress towards implementing apprenticeship standards. They offer additional qualifications that are not required for the standards but are valued highly by apprentices and their employers. Managers should improve teachers' and assessors' understanding of how to prepare learners to achieve at merit or distinction level.
- Staff are highly qualified, skilled and experienced in their vocational subjects. As a result, apprentices develop good technical and vocational skills. They become competent workers, alongside experienced colleagues. Apprentices talk confidently about what they have learned and demonstrate good communication skills to customers. For example, horticulture apprentices talked very sensitively about how they ensure that the final resting place for the loved one of their customers is aesthetically pleasing by planting and maintaining shrubs and plants, mowing grass and trimming the hedges at the crematorium.
- Managers have developed good learning resources to reinforce and consolidate apprentices' skills in English and mathematics. Teachers and assessors work closely with employers and apprentices to integrate English and mathematics skills development into everyday tasks. The majority of apprentices develop well their English and mathematics skills and apply these skills to their work place and job roles.
- The vast majority of apprentices' standards of work and the services they provide are good. Apprentices on plumbing programmes fit competently boilers, bathrooms, and underfloor heating. Apprentices on electro-technical programmes are skilled at rewiring homes, and fitting refrigerators in large supermarkets. They are competent at testing circuits and fix common faults, working alongside more experienced colleagues.
- The vast majority of apprentices progress into sustained employment and gain additional responsibilities and promotion. Learners contribute well to their employers' businesses. Learners understand their employers' business well and talk knowledgeably about their job roles. Apprentices in health and social care provide effective care for residents and contribute to the welfare of the residents in care homes or hospices.

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have significantly increased the number of learners in receipt of high-needs funding since the previous inspection. At the time of the inspection, 328 learners have education, health and care (EHC) plans, of which 149 are in receipt of high-needs funding from 11 local authorities. There are 61 learners with complex needs who attend a purpose-built centre on the Rodbaston campus. There are 38 learners accessing

programmes designed to meet their individual needs, and 50 learners access a wide range of vocational study programmes from entry level to level 3.

- Leaders and managers have not identified or acted to reduce the achievement gaps for learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities – compared to those learners without these needs. This applies both on programmes specifically designed for them and/or vocational programmes where they study alongside learners without special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Teachers on vocational programmes do not plan learning effectively for learners in receipt of high-needs funding to ensure they make good progress. Teachers and managers do not sufficiently take into account the prior learning and potential of learners with high needs. As a result, too many learners do not achieve as well as their peers.
- Managers and staff have not implemented effective routes to work for learners in receipt of high-needs funding. Learners have limited access to work-related programmes, including supported internships. Teachers and managers do not plan effectively to enable learners on vocational programmes to develop their skills and knowledge relevant to the world of work. Teachers' and managers' planning of work experience requires improvement. As a result, too few learners progress into employment.
- Teachers and managers provide learners with good access to impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance to support transition into college.
- In a small minority of lessons for learners with complex needs, teachers do not plan activities that reflect the needs of young adults. The majority of teachers link targets to the planned EHC plan outcomes. A minority of teachers do not ensure that targets are consistently in an appropriate and accessible format required for the individual learner. As a result, a minority of learners with complex needs do not know how well they are doing or which skills they need to develop in order for them to progress.
- Leaders and managers use high-needs funding well to provide good support and individualised programmes. These enable learners to build their confidence and develop good communication skills. Teachers use EHC plan outcomes to develop programmes to meet individual needs effectively for learners with complex needs, and those who are on programmes designed to meet their needs. Teachers plan lessons using a wide range of communication methods, such as signing, pictures and story boards, to build learners' confidence with basic English and mathematics and practical activities. Learners at breakfast club use one of the college food counters where they make choices, queue, communicate with counter staff, pay, and discuss 'seconds'.
- Skilled and experienced learning support assistants provide good and effective support. They enable learners to access a wide range of specialist assisted technology, support applications for smart phones and tablets and communication aids. As a result, learners become more confident and independent in managing their own learning, at an appropriate level, preparing them well for their next steps. Staff work closely with families and carers to support their usage when at home.
- Leaders and managers work well with specialist providers, which enables teachers and learning support assistants to meet the needs of learners more effectively. Teachers and learning support assistants work closely with speech and language therapists, counsellors and sensory and mental health teams to provide appropriate and focused support for learners.

- Learners with complex learning needs make good progress in developing employability skills through a range of work placements and enterprise activities. Learners have collected favourite recipes from staff and their peers to include in a book they have designed, developed and are producing for sale to raise funds for Birmingham Children's Hospital charity.
- Learners feel safe and know who to go to if they have concerns. They develop a good understanding of health and safety practices in practical workshops and in independent living skills sessions, working in the kitchen and when travelling outside of the college. The regular walking, talking register sessions for groups with complex needs incorporate initial road safety practices and build healthy life skills.
- Learners develop their personal, social and communication skills and community engagement well on those programmes designed to meet their needs. Learners regularly attend The Bread House, a local homeless charity, where they help to produce soup and bread, to lay tables, to serve and to interact with customers. They have recently introduced clothes collection on site to provide additional support to the charity and its patrons.

Provider details

Unique reference number	135658
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	6,485
Principal/CEO	Claire Boliver
Telephone number	01543 462200
Website	www.southstaffs.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	680	213	584	817	1,046	221	-	22
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	182	274	88	294	1	25		
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	149							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

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

Inspection team

Andrea Dill-Russell, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Charles Searle	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harmesh Manghra	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector
Margaret Garai	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Lacey	Ofsted Inspector
Bryan Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Price	Her Majesty's Inspector

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