

# Birmingham Metropolitan College

General further education college

## Inspection dates

16–19 October 2018

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>Good</b>
Outcomes for learners	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Requires improvement</b>

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Significant weaknesses from the previous inspection remain unresolved, in particular the progress that all students studying on level 3 courses make from their starting points.
- Leaders' and managers' recent actions have yet to improve the standard of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is at least good across all areas of the college's provision.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account fully due to the lack of information they receive in relation to students' progress.
- Too few study programme students have access to external work experience to develop the skills that employers value.
- Too few teachers use information about students' starting points well enough to plan learning so that all students make good progress.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Governors and senior leaders have a clear vision and set high expectations; they ensure that the curriculum is highly responsive to the needs of students and businesses within the West Midlands region.
- Most apprentices improve their technical and customer service skills, make good progress in their job roles, and are valued highly for their contribution to their employers' businesses.
- Adult learning programmes are good; managers and teachers implement successfully a well-designed curriculum that meets the needs of students and employers alike.
- Students demonstrate a thorough understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good; students and apprentices attend their lessons, behave well and demonstrate high levels of respect towards each other and college staff.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Birmingham Metropolitan College is a large, general further education college with approximately 20,000 students, across four main colleges with seven smaller campuses. The college recruits from local communities in Birmingham, the Black Country and Wyre Forest. Most students on full-time programmes are aged 16 to 18. Most employers linked to the college are within the regions covered by the Black Country and Greater Birmingham and Solihull local enterprise partnerships (LEPs). The college delivers training in partnership with a number of large employers.
- Many students are from the most economically deprived areas in the West Midlands. Unemployment rates in Birmingham and Dudley are higher than the West Midlands overall and national rates. Around 50% of students are from minority ethnic groups. In Birmingham and Dudley local authorities, secondary school pupils' achievement of expected GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is below the national average.

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

- Improve the progress that all students make at level 3, by ensuring that teachers provide students with helpful feedback that students use to improve their work.
- Ensure that senior leaders and managers use information routinely from the college's new tracking and monitoring system to monitor closely students' progress. They must ensure that teachers and their managers put in place swift and effective actions to support students, so that the most able students receive sufficient challenge.
- Ensure that senior leaders provide governors with sufficiently helpful information, particularly regarding the progress made by students studying at level 3, to enable governors to hold leaders to account fully.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that teachers:
  - use information about students' starting points as a basis for planning to ensure that the most able students achieve the grades of which they are capable
  - use questions and other methods skilfully to check that all students understand and think deeply about what they are doing, develop their confidence, and make good progress.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that all students on study programmes develop industry-standard work skills necessary for their future employment ambitions, including ensuring that more learners have access to high-quality work experience.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not tackled successfully the key weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. These include making sufficient improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and in particular, the progress that all students studying on level 3 courses make from their starting points. This last remains a very significant area for improvement. However, leaders and managers have made improvements in students' attendance and students' achievement of English and mathematics qualifications, and in ensuring that apprentices have a sufficient understanding of the potential threats from radicalisation and extremism.
- 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. There have been substantial changes in the senior leadership of the college, including the departure of the principal, who left the college in September 2018.
- Leaders and governors, while addressing the college's very weak financial position, have recently introduced initiatives that are beginning to have a positive impact on learners' and apprentices' experiences. Actions taken by leaders since the previous inspection have ensured that an increasing proportion of students now achieve their qualifications and make the progress expected of them.
- Senior managers have introduced a culture of high aspirations and accountability at all levels of the organisation. They regularly communicate leadership messages to promote expected improvements in all aspects of the college's work, including attendance, and English and mathematical skills development. As a result, managers and teachers know clearly what is expected of them. Performance scorecards provide them with precise information to help them monitor progress and achieve their challenging improvement targets.
- Senior leaders monitor closely the broad range of useful information about students' progress and quickly identify courses and programme areas that are of concern. Where necessary, leaders and senior staff escalate their level of scrutiny and place poorly performing areas into an 'intensive care' process. In most cases, performance generally improves as a result. However, in the case of the college's A-level provision, the improvement actions failed to increase AS-level achievement and the proportion of A-level students achieving the grades of which they are capable.
- Self-assessment is thorough and draws upon an appropriate broad range of evidence to identify strengths and areas for improvement, but leaders give insufficient weight to remaining weaknesses. Consequently, managers' view of the quality of teaching and outcomes for students is too generous.
- Teachers are beginning to improve their teaching and assessment skills as a result of accurate and helpful feedback from a much energised and newly formed team of progress learning coaches (PLCs). Most PLCs accurately identify the key strengths and areas for improvement during observations. However, in a few instances, observers focus narrowly on students' progress in completing activities in lessons and do not consider the extent to which students demonstrate gains in new knowledge, skills and understanding. Managers

act quickly where teaching practices do not meet the college's high expectations. Teachers identified as requiring improvement receive good support to quickly improve their practice. The very few who – even after support – do not meet managers' expectations leave the organisation.

- Staff at all levels receive the necessary support to help them become more skilled and confident in their practices. For example, the new learning and technology coaches help staff to enhance their digital skills and offer a wider range of digital learning activities in their lessons, including the effective use of apps to check further on students' understanding. However, training support has not yet rectified specific areas of improvement sufficiently well, for example in equipping teachers with the skills to meet the different ability levels of students.
- Leaders and governors have developed highly effective and productive partnerships with local and regional organisations, including Jobcentre Plus, Birmingham City Council, the West Midlands Combined Authority and LEAs. Leaders use labour market intelligence particularly well, so that the college curriculum reflects very well the needs of students, employers and the wider community. As a result, students access a wide range of further studies, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.
- Leaders are very responsive to meeting the needs of the local community and develop courses to engage students with low skill levels and complex social needs. Leaders ensure that the college is meeting local priorities in areas such as business, the creative industries and construction. Leaders have established the Greater Birmingham Professional Services Academy (GBPSA), the Digital Engineering Academy, the Creative Career College and the rail academy at the James Watt Campus.
- Leaders ensure that diversity and inclusion are at the heart of the college. Students take part in a wide range of activities that promote diversity, challenging their perspectives of people from different backgrounds and beliefs. Staff provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students through the 'ready, respectful and safe' values that are shared widely across the college community. Staff and students replicate such behaviours, making the college a cohesive and supportive environment. Senior leaders have ensured that the college provides a welcoming environment for students, with good-quality and well-maintained accommodation and industry-standard resources.
- Students and staff respect differences in cultural, social and lifestyle choices. Leaders and managers monitor achievement gaps between different groups closely and have implemented a range of appropriate strategies, reducing previous gaps. Managers also monitor surveys and complaints by different groups carefully and take appropriate action where necessary. However, a few of the diversity and inclusion targets set within the updated equalities plan are not sufficiently aspirational. For example, targets to raise female students' participation in construction and engineering sectors are set too low.
- Senior leaders' strategic priority to improve the teaching, learning and assessment of English and mathematics within study programmes and other types of provision has had some success. However, this has not yet translated into consistently good outcomes for most-able learners and those studying towards GCSEs at levels 9–4.
- Leaders manage subcontracted provision very well. They set subcontractors high standards for quality and performance. As result, achievement for subcontracted provision is high. Since September 2017, the volume of subcontracted provision is much reduced.

- Leaders give high priority to providing students and apprentices with good-quality careers guidance and information support. Advisers are very well qualified for their roles and they benefit from regular continuing professional development to help them deliver an effective service.

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

- Governors have a broad range of relevant experience and expertise, including in education, industry and commerce, and audit and finance. They have a very good range of complementary skills that makes them an effective team to support and challenge leaders effectively.
- Student governors' attendance at the main board and academic standards committee ensures that governors benefit from a particularly strong view of the student body. Consequently, governors are well informed about their issues when evaluating the impact of leaders' and managers' improvement actions.
- Governors use their skills well to support the principal and senior leaders by asking pertinent and challenging questions of them to accelerate the rate of improvement across the college.
- Governors are rigorous in their review of the quality of provision. However, they accept that their understanding of how leaders judge students' progress from their starting points is not sufficient to enable them to challenge leaders fully to improve the progress of all students.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective
- Leaders' and governors' approach to safeguarding students is particularly strong. Managers meet their statutory duties. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and members of the safeguarding team (known as 'safeguarders') are well trained. They respond swiftly to all notifications of concern that indicate that a student or apprentice may be at risk. Members of the safeguarding team are vigilant and take effective action for all types of referrals, including those involving extremism, children looked after, forced marriage, honour-based violence, female genital mutilation, online abuse and child sexual exploitation.
- The DSL and safeguarders use the 'signs of safety principles' well to inform how their response to a safeguarding referral ensures the safety and welfare of students and apprentices. Leaders analyse safeguarding referrals and use their findings to ensure that high standards are maintained consistently across the team.
- Managers have strong and well-developed links with external support and referral partners, including local authority children's services, the police service and other local agencies. They provide specialist support for students in need with matters such as mental health and well-being, substance misuse and homelessness.
- Managers implement safe recruitment processes well. They carry out detailed and rigorous checks when recruiting staff and keep thorough and up-to-date records. All staff and subcontractors undertake annual safeguarding training and training about the 'Prevent' duty to ensure that they are alert to the health, welfare and safety of students and apprentices.

- Security arrangements at all the college's campuses are good. Visitors' access is managed well. Welfare officers provide a reassuring but authoritative presence. Staff and students' use of college information and online systems is closely controlled and monitored through a range of e-safety software.
- In case of an emergency or threat, leaders have critical incident plans setting out a range of appropriate preventative controls and mitigation actions to protect students and staff from harm. Students state that they feel safe when at college and know to whom to report any concerns they may have.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection, it is not yet consistently good.
- Teachers on study programmes, adult courses and provision for learners with high needs do not always use information about students' starting points well enough. In too many level 3 study programme theory lessons, teachers do not help the most able students to achieve their potential. Too often, teachers set tasks aimed at the majority of students and do not challenge sufficiently the more capable students to develop their higher order thinking skills.
- Too few teachers and trainers check students' understanding thoroughly. Questions are often too general and directed at the whole class. Consequently, teachers do not check the progress of those students who are less confident. In classroom-based lessons for students who have high needs, teachers do not challenge sufficiently many of the most able students. As a result, these students do not make expected progress or develop further their levels of confidence.
- Many teachers and assessors plan practical lessons that engage and interest students, and they produce work of a good or better standard. For example, students on a level 3 games art course use higher order skills to synthesise and report their findings in their blogs, and students who have high needs studying level 2 hospitality and catering work in the college café and prepare and serve breakfast and lunch for paying customers. Most teachers on GCSE English and mathematics courses teach effective lessons to ensure that students make sufficient progress in their learning.
- Most students and apprentices receive helpful verbal feedback on the quality of their practical skills and standard of work. For example, adults studying construction at the Erdington skills centre receive specific feedback from their teachers and specialist technicians to improve their plastering and bricklaying techniques. As a result, students talk positively about the progress they have made in developing new practical skills, and apprentices are encouraged to produce work of a high standard. However, a small minority of teachers on study programmes and programmes for students with high needs do not provide students with feedback that is helpful enough to enable them to improve and deepen their learning sufficiently.
- Too often, teachers' and trainers' written feedback to students and apprentices is not sufficiently helpful, so that students know how to improve their work, and for a few apprentices, avoid repeating the same errors. A minority of teachers provide students and apprentices with highly effective written feedback, so that they can improve their work.

For example, level 2 customer service apprentices receive very specific and constructive feedback on how to provide customers with a high-quality service.

- Many students and apprentices benefit from frequent and timely assessment. They receive detailed reviews of their progress with staff and their employers. Students know broadly how much progress they are making and their targets overall. However, too often, students do not receive or create targets that are specific or helpful enough for them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Most students and apprentices who need extra help in their studies benefit from effective additional support. Learning mentors, counsellors and additional learning support (ALS) staff provide students with support in lessons and at the college's Metro centres. ALS staff help students to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. For example, one adult learner who speaks English as their third language developed their literacy skills from entry level 1 towards achieving a high grade in GCSE English in just three years after attending the college. Most ALS staff provide students with effective behaviour management, but they do not have sufficient subject knowledge, for example in mathematics, to support students to achieve their potential.
- Most teachers and assessors develop students' English and mathematical skills that are relevant to their subject or vocational area. For example, students in A-level history develop speaking and listening skills when presenting their opinions on historical events to their peers. However, a few teachers of students who have high needs do not provide students with relevant or purposeful learning activities in these subjects. As a result, students are not engaged well enough in the lessons and do not develop their skills sufficiently.
- Teachers and trainers use their industry-standard expertise to teach students advanced industrial skills. For example, students on engineering level 3 courses gained an insight into the skills expected of them by investigating the latest industrial robotics and automation practices.
- Parents and carers of students on study programmes receive appropriate information about the course, and about students' attendance and progress. Parents value the timely feedback that they receive and the opportunities to visit teachers to discuss their son's or daughter's progress. Most employers contribute routinely to apprentices' progress reviews, providing helpful feedback on their progress.
- Teachers and assessors increase students' and apprentices' understanding of diversity and life in modern Britain very well in lessons, tutorials and one-to-one reviews. Teachers use a wide range of learning activities to help students understand the beliefs and values of others in society and to celebrate diversity. For example, students in a public services class debated the reasons behind White young men's differing attitudes to people from other ethnic groups. Many students demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the diverse community that they live and study in, and the importance of tackling issues such as discrimination and radicalisation.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Students' behaviour in most lessons and around the college campuses is good. They are respectful towards each other, their teachers and their environment. They work well

together and support each other in lessons. Most students arrive at lessons on time and are ready to learn.

- The standard of students' and apprentices' practical work is good. For example, engineering apprentices who work with a global car manufacturer develop their skills to a high industrial standard. Construction students quickly gain the skills to prepare mortar mix and carry out trowel work to lay bricks and blocks to a good standard.
- Most adult students make good progress in improving the skills that they need in their jobs and in their personal lives. For example, on courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), students who begin their courses speaking little or no English quickly gain the confidence and skills to converse in a wide range of situations. Most students who have high needs develop the social skills necessary to become more independent. Most apprentices develop the technical skills that their employers demand. Consequently, most students are better prepared for employment.
- The standard of adult students' and apprentices' written work and practical skills is good. Students on study programmes produce written work at an appropriate level. Those following vocational courses develop good practical skills.
- Most full-time students benefit from a varied and informative tutorial and enrichment programme. The student council and staff work well together to ensure that most students attend health and well-being events. Students learn about the benefits of healthy lifestyles, the risks associated with alcohol and drug misuse, and managing emotional health and stress. Students also benefit from access to specialist support, such as counselling and financial advice.
- Most students receive helpful information, advice and guidance at the start of their course. A series of well-planned events provides timely and useful information to help students opt for the most appropriate course based on their career ambitions. As a result, most students are placed on the right course at the right level.
- The large majority of students use the careers advice and guidance service very well to plan the steps they need to take to achieve their career aspirations. Dedicated careers staff are well qualified and help students to investigate a range of options linked to their future goals. Consequently, most students and apprentices continue to higher levels of study or into employment. In a few cases, apprentices are not fully aware of the transferable skills that they develop and how they might use them to move on in their career.
- Students are safe and demonstrate a good understanding of issues such as internet safety and bullying. They know to whom to report their concerns if they do not feel safe. Students know how to protect themselves from the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.
- Many students have a good understanding of British values. They speak confidently about democracy, demonstrating very effectively freedom of speech through the student council process. Teachers create positive and inclusive learning environments, ensuring that students take account of students from different backgrounds and cultures. For example, dental nurse apprentices routinely discuss religious festivals. They learn how to adapt their working practices to respect their customers' beliefs, for example using different types of dental products and scheduling appointments outside Ramadan. Consequently, students are prepared very well for life in modern Britain.



- The large majority of students on study programmes develop their skills for work well through a wide range of activities. These include working in the college's commercial environments, such as hair salons and the training restaurant, and through trips and visits. However, too few students apply these skills in a work placement with an employer.
- Attendance has improved over the previous three years and is now high in most lessons. However, in a minority of mathematics lessons, attendance remains too low.

## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- Most students now achieve their qualifications. However, based on their starting points, too few students make the progress expected of them and achieve the grades of which they are capable. For example, too many students studying A-level and AS-level subjects at the Sutton Coldfield Campus do not achieve the grades predicted for them. Also, too few students studying subsidiary and diploma qualifications in subjects such as information technology (IT), sport, applied science, business, and health and social care achieve the grades of which they are capable. A higher proportion of students studying 90-credit diploma courses in sport, public services and IT now make good progress.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have increased the proportion of students achieving their study programme qualifications. Most students now achieve level 3 diploma qualifications in subjects such as art and design, business, IT, engineering, and health and social care. The proportion of students achieving A-level subjects has also increased and is high. Achievement of AS-level qualifications is low. Most students on study programmes develop vocationally relevant skills that enable them to produce work that is of an appropriate standard that meets industry or awarding body expectations.
- Most adult students achieve their qualifications. Achievement of adult students studying substantial diploma qualifications and for those on subcontracted provision is high. However, too few students studying access to higher education and functional skills courses achieve their qualifications.
- The majority of apprentices achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales. For apprentices due to complete their training in the current academic year, their performance records show the predicted proportion to be higher, with the large majority of apprentices making at least expected progress. Achievement of students on subcontracted provision, including apprenticeships, is high.
- Overall, the proportion of students on study programmes and adults who achieve English and mathematics qualifications has increased. For students on study programmes, their achievement of high grades in GCSE English is above that expected, but below for GCSE mathematics. However, based on their starting points, these students on GCSE mathematics courses make the progress expected of them. For adults, their achievement of high grades in GCSE mathematics is above that expected, but below for GCSE English. While most study programme students gain English and mathematics functional skills qualifications, too few adults successfully achieve in these subjects.
- Leaders have closed successfully most of the gaps between different groups of students, including for those students with a declared disability. However, students who are disadvantaged, and adults who have a Bangladeshi background, do not achieve as well as

their peers.

- Achievement for students who have high needs is lower than in the previous year and now broadly in line with those for other similar providers. Most students make good progress in their vocational and practical skills, preparing them for employment and adult life. However, too few students develop sufficiently their English and mathematical skills.
- Most students on study programmes and adults studying a substantial qualification move into a positive destination in further and higher education and employment. The proportion of students progressing from study programmes to apprenticeships is slightly lower than it is for similar institutions.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### Requires improvement

- Around 6,000 students aged 16 to 19 attend study programmes across all of the college campuses. Courses offered range from entry level to level 3 and across all sector subject areas. The 16 to 19 study programmes account for nearly two thirds of the college's provision.
- Leaders' and managers' actions have resulted in improving achievement rates on the large majority of courses, but have not yet ensured that the quality of students' experience on all study programmes is consistently good.
- Too many theory lessons, particularly at level 3, do not help the most able students to achieve their potential. Teachers do not adapt learning activities sufficiently to challenge, stimulate and stretch these students to develop their higher order thinking skills. Too few theory lessons focus sufficiently on students' individual needs. As a result, students do not develop independent learning skills well enough and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not use the information about students' starting points sufficiently well to plan work to help students achieve their individual learning goals. Teaching in too many lessons, particularly at level 3, focuses mainly on preparing students for future tests and examinations. In these lessons, too few students develop a passion for their subject or broaden and deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding well enough.
- Teachers do not check sufficiently students' understanding to extend their learning. Questions in many lessons are too general and addressed to the whole group. Students often shout out answers, meaning that the quieter students cannot contribute effectively. However, in a minority of classes, for example in level 3 business classes, teachers make very good use of questions to probe and test fully students' understanding.
- Too few students know their precise learning targets, or the actions needed for them to improve. Teachers encourage students to set their own targets; however, too many of these targets do not state clearly how students will achieve specific goals and complete actions so that they can achieve their best.
- The majority of students develop appropriate employability skills, such as the importance of arriving to work on time, working well with others and solving problems. These students benefit from valuable and relevant work experience, for example in the college hair salons and catering outlets. A small minority of students, however, do not complete a

purposeful external work placement. As a result, these students do not experience the industry standards and behaviours expected in the commercial world.

- In the majority of practical lessons, and in a minority of level 3 theory lessons, teachers motivate and spark students' interests in well-planned and challenging lessons. For example, students on a level 3 music technology class worked intently on their own to improve their practice. Their teacher's skilful use of individual and small-group coaching helped them to make very good progress. The students' work was of a high standard.
- Most teachers have good professional subject knowledge and industry-standard vocational experience that students value. Students learn quickly from their teachers and apply theory to practice in high-quality learning environments, for example the recently opened A-level centre and dance studios for performing arts students.
- All students develop their English and mathematical skills and make at least the progress expected of them. Students who have achieved the mandatory GCSE grades in these subjects continue their development. For example, students studying A-level biology and religious education extend their knowledge and use graphs appropriately to represent a range of information.
- Most students benefit from the additional support that they receive. Most develop useful study skills and most achieve their courses as well as their peers. In a few cases, in-class learning support is not sufficiently well targeted to ensure that students make the progress of which they are capable.
- Most students receive effective advice and guidance about career options that help them to make informed choices about their next steps. Many teachers of vocational courses involve employers to support students' careers education. Employers provide mentoring, give presentations, run employability workshops and organise workplace visits. Students value these lessons highly. They learn about effective communication, meeting deadlines and the importance of working in teams. Students receive the appropriate support to help them apply for higher education.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is generally very good. Teachers challenge poor behaviour promptly. Managers and teachers create a productive and purposeful environment where students are respectful and their attitude to learning is positive. Students' attendance in most classes is good. Students arrive promptly and are ready to start work. In a minority of slower paced and more crowded lessons, students exhibit some disruptive behaviours, slowing the progress of the group.
- Students feel safe and understand how to stay safe. Health and safety practices in practical workshops are robust and clearly understood by the students. Students have a sound understanding of e-safety.
- Teachers conduct confidently discussions and debates with students, challenging stereotypes and ensuring that they understand diversity and related topics. For example, during a psychology lesson, the teacher highlighted potential cultural sensitivities within specific groups when discussing mental health issues.

## Adult learning programmes

**Good**

- At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 4,900 adults in a wide range of vocational programmes from entry level to level 5. Curriculum areas include community learning and employability training, access to higher education, health and social care, engineering, IT and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).
- Managers and teachers have high expectations of students and use their expert knowledge and experience to plan and deliver a curriculum that meets the needs of both students and employers. For example, managers design provision to close the skills gaps in the region. This offer includes engineering, construction and rail qualifications for the high-speed rail project. Employability courses – in conjunction with Jobcentre Plus – help adults who have been long-term unemployed to develop the confidence and skills to help them secure employment.
- Teachers use a wide range of well-planned teaching, learning and assessment activities to engage and motivate students, so that they achieve their best. These activities enable students to consolidate their learning and make good progress. For example, teachers encourage students to explore ideas in depth and assess each other's progress; they expect high standards of work.
- Teachers provide students with accurate and timely assessment feedback to help them make good progress. For example, teachers provide wall trackers in construction workshops at the Erdington skills centre and site carpentry at Stourbridge. Students who attend just once a week quickly check their progress to target and what they need to do next, and quickly get on with their work.
- Teachers help students develop appropriate English and mathematical skills to meet the requirements of their course. In lessons, teachers ensure that students use the correct subject-specific terminology, and they provide helpful feedback for students to improve their writing and speaking skills. For example, in construction lessons, students carry out a range of calculations to estimate the amount and cost of materials needed to complete a job. Students benefit greatly from these lessons, which help them grow in confidence, achieve their qualifications and develop further their social and work-related skills. However, in a few lessons, too many students on construction courses do not value the development of their literacy skills. In mathematics and engineering lessons, teachers do not help students to develop sufficiently their knowledge of technical language.
- Most students attend their courses and arrive on time, ready to learn. Students are confident and conduct themselves very well both in theory and workshop activity. Teachers help students to develop their skills and understanding, including those necessary for self-employment. For example, female students on a construction course spoke enthusiastically about how their newly acquired plastering and painting skills will enable them to start a decorating business.
- Students value and benefit from the range of good-quality and flexible support that they receive from their teachers and support staff in lessons and those based in the college's Metro centres. For example, teachers support students on the access to higher education programme very well in writing personal statements and university applications.
- Teachers use local employer networks well to provide most students with helpful advice and guidance, so they are able to make informed decisions about their next steps. For example, students studying access to higher education in sport secured work placements in the NHS to help them with their application to study physiotherapy at university. Most

students move on successfully into further learning or employment.

- Students feel safe in college settings and in the workplace. They demonstrate the college's values of tolerance and mutual respect. They have a comprehensive understanding of the diverse community in which they live, and of the importance of tackling issues such as discrimination and radicalisation.
- In a minority of lessons, ESOL tutors do not use the information gathered on students at the start of the course well enough to plan learning that is appropriate for their individual needs. As a result, ESOL students on entry-level qualifications do not make the progress they could. Additionally, in a few lessons, teachers do not consistently challenge all students sufficiently to develop their higher order thinking skills.

## Apprenticeships

**Good**

- The college has 927 apprentices in learning in 10 subject areas. Of these, one in three is following the new apprenticeship standards. There is an equal number of younger and adult apprentices. Approximately two out of every three apprentices follow level 2 apprenticeships, with the remainder at level 3. There is a small number of higher level apprentices following a business administration and IT programme.
- The largest volume of apprenticeships is in engineering, followed by construction, business administration, dental nursing and pharmacy programmes; a few apprentices are on creative and digital, early years, education and horticulture programmes. The college works with around 350 employers, with about half the total number of apprentices from employers who pay the apprenticeship levy.
- Leaders and managers plan and manage both apprenticeship frameworks and standards-based apprenticeships well. Apprenticeship programmes meet the Department for Education's principles and requirements for an apprenticeship.
- Managers, teachers and trainers work successfully with employers to plan programmes that meet employers' particular needs. Employers work closely with managers to help ensure that the recruitment and induction process identifies the most appropriate candidates for the job. Managers previously identified the recruitment process as a root cause behind declining timely achievement. As a result, at the time of the inspection, retention rates were much improved on the previous year.
- Teachers and trainers are highly qualified and have substantial vocational experience. Apprentices benefit from their up-to-date experience, are motivated, and work hard to meet the high standards expected of them. Teachers and employers work well together to plan learning, so that theory sessions link closely to their practical work. For example, trainers provide employers on the construction programme with detailed information on the work their apprentices do at college. This allows employers to plan workplace activities that link to apprentices' theoretical work. This coordination helps apprentices understand what they have learned, increasing the pace of their progress.
- Apprentices learn specific workplace behaviours required by their employer, modelling the example set by their teachers and trainers. As a result, they become confident and develop swiftly the technical and professional skills necessary for their job roles. For example, customer services apprentices at an insurance company develop high-level interpersonal skills. They gain knowledge about specific – and sometimes sensitive –

issues, which they manage carefully to help retain existing customers and secure new sales. Apprentices develop effective independent learning skills. They take useful notes for revision, and check meticulously the accuracy of their practical work.

- Most trainers give apprentices constructive and helpful verbal feedback. They outline what apprentices have done well and what they need to do to improve. Teachers' and trainers' written feedback is mostly accurate and confirms the achievement of tasks and assessments. However, this feedback is not always helpful enough for apprentices to improve their work or recognise fully their efforts. For example, a few apprentices became demotivated when assessors made only cursory comments in their comprehensive, well-completed log books and reflective journals.
- In a few sessions, trainers focus too much on the completion of tasks without stressing the application of the skills and knowledge apprentices acquire. For example, apprentices on an electronics apprenticeship soldered resistors in configurations of parallel and series circuits. Although they did this competently, they were not aware of exactly where and why they might use the different types of circuits at work.
- Almost all apprentices on entry to their apprenticeship have the requisite qualifications in English and mathematics. They continue to develop these skills through discrete classes or in their vocational lessons. At a large vehicle manufacturer, for example, apprentices study further mathematics to help prepare them for advanced engineering theory and to assist them in working in a highly technical discipline.
- Employers value highly apprentices' contributions to their business. They offer apprentices responsibilities for managing small projects and solving technical problems. For example, apprentices at BMW learn the skills to work on the production and manufacturing technologies of hybrid and electric vehicles at an early stage in their training, and apprentices at TerraQuest provide up-to-date hardware and software to the field staff to survey the land that is required for the high-speed rail project.
- Apprentices are well motivated to learn. They are proud of their achievements. They benefit greatly from earning a wage while learning and developing the skills and experience for their future careers. Staff provide apprentices with high-quality careers guidance on entry and throughout their apprenticeship. Consequently, apprentices are aware of the opportunities for them to move on in their chosen field or with their employer.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their apprenticeship in the time allocated is comparable with that in similar providers. Most apprentices continue in employment with their current employer. The few apprentices who leave their employer move successfully into employment, higher education or higher level apprenticeships.
- A high proportion of apprentices secure pay rises and move on into work in different teams and undertake more complex roles. Many gain additional qualifications that extend their knowledge and skills base. For example, apprentices in insurance achieve professional qualifications alongside their apprenticeship to help them move into institute membership and to improve their career prospects in a very competitive industry.
- Apprentices are safe. They follow correct working procedures and wear appropriate protective equipment for specific job roles. Those in residential accommodation when staying away from home are aware of safeguarding and what to do if they or their peers feel threatened. They are aware of the 'Prevent' duty and the threats posed by

radicalisation and extremism.

- Leaders have developed successful initiatives to attract under-represented groups onto apprenticeships. For example, construction partners' sophisticated marketing campaigns and the provision of female-only courses have successfully resulted in a significant increase in female apprentices. However, strategic college targets to increase the recruitment of these groups are not ambitious enough. Apprentices show high levels of respect for their colleagues, peers and teaching staff.

### Provision for learners with high needs

### Requires improvement

- The college currently has 88 students for whom it receives high-needs funding from three local authorities. The majority of these students study on academic and vocational courses across the college. Within the Foundation Learning Department, 41 students are working on a mixed programme of English, mathematics, and social, personal and employment skills, and accredited courses and qualifications at a variety of levels.
- Leaders and managers use the funding for students who have high needs well, and the majority of resources and accommodation are good. As a result, students make progress in their vocational and practical skills, preparing them for employment and adult life. The 'flat' at the college's Art and Design Centre is well equipped and supports students to develop a range of transferable skills to help them in daily tasks such as cooking, cleaning and developing social skills during mealtimes.
- Teachers and support staff do not use information on students' starting points well enough to plan learning to enable students to make progress according to their potential. Too often, teachers do not challenge most-able students with sufficiently complex tasks, and so these students disengage. They wait for learning support assistants (LSAs), who often reply to questions or complete tasks for the students.
- Although teachers are well qualified and use their vocational expertise well, too few are sufficiently skilled to deliver basic English and mathematics to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In one session, students were supported to look up words in the dictionary; however, little discussion was had to explore the meanings and check that students had fully understood. As a result, students made little progress and did not understand the task.
- Too few teachers on foundation learning programmes use verbal feedback sufficiently well to help students to improve. Feedback to students is not helpful enough, and too often students are overpraised with no clear reason for the recognition. As a result, students do not make progress and develop the skills of which they are capable. For example, in one lesson looking at adjectives, a student used a new word that was unfamiliar to most of the group. The teacher praised the choice of word, but did not check whether the rest of the group had understood its meaning.
- In a few foundation learning lessons, teaching resources were not age appropriate for young adults and were not put into context to support the development of skills for adult life and/or their vocational aspirations. In one lesson, students were adding up numbers with only simple pictures of random items or animals. The images did not link to daily living skills, money or vocational areas; the majority did not complete the task. Consequently, students did not make sufficient progress in developing their numeracy

skills or in preparing for adult life.

- In practical lessons, teachers integrate English and mathematics well in a range of activities to help students to develop these skills further. In a horticultural lesson, students pricked out and re-potted seedlings, calculating the number of trays they could produce in one day. As a result, students became more confident in their number skills and began to understand how hard they would need to work in a nursery or garden centre.
- Students in practical lessons demonstrate confidence and adhere to health and safety practices. They work well together and are supportive of each other. Students on a level 2 catering course work independently, providing breakfast and lunch services in the college café, and preparing food, serving, clearing and cleaning. Students also work on front of house, managing money and interacting with customers.
- LSAs and teachers support students who study across the college on a range of academic and vocational courses well. They make appropriate adjustments to include students in all lessons. As a result, most students make the progress expected of them. For example, teachers' timely assessment of students' needs ensured that a few students moved to more appropriate groups without hindering their progress.
- In a minority of foundation learning lessons, LSAs use questioning effectively to support the students to manage their own learning and become more independent. In these lessons, teachers encourage students to reflect on their learning and answer their own questions to reach the correct answer.
- Students' attendance is high in most lessons. They arrive on time and their behaviour is good and managed well. Students enjoy their lessons and celebrate the diversity of their group. They participate in a range of activities that help them understand better the principles of equality, diversity and British values. Students are tolerant of others and respectful, and produce good work that demonstrates their understanding well. In one group, students designed a poster showing them linking hands with other students to show how 'we fit together'.
- Students feel safe and well supported in their environments. They know whom to ask for help, and at an appropriate level, and demonstrate an understanding of the 'Prevent' duty through a 'Run, Hide, Tell' initiative. Students develop their understanding of safeguarding further as a result of talks by the local police service on hate crime, visits to the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool and the Imperial War Museum, and local community groups.
- Students benefit from a range of enrichment activities and work projects in the community. They develop further their social and communication skills in realistic settings. Groups of students from horticulture programmes work at Kidderminster police station maintaining the grounds, and prepare displays for 'Brierley Hill in Bloom', the local authority's floral competition.
- Students take part in a wide range of work-related activities and work experience. For example, students work on conservation projects with wildlife rangers out in the community. One learner is volunteering at a disability advisory service, and the college is supporting the student to access a long-term volunteer position. Students receive helpful careers guidance from specialist college staff. However, too few students still do not have individual work placements to help them develop their employability skills further.



- Students' transition into the college is well managed. Teachers link effectively with parents, carers and local schools to prepare potential students for college and to ensure that the appropriate support is in place. Managers work effectively with appropriate specialists to access equipment or personal support to meet individual students' needs. The majority of students achieve their course and move on to further learning; however, managers do not have a good enough knowledge of the destinations of all their students.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130466
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	17,905
Principal	Cliff Hall
Telephone number	0121 446 4545
Website	<a href="http://www.bmet.ac.uk">www.bmet.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	1,097	2,335	1,455	1,331	3,407	761	7	26
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	162	141	297	303	17	25		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	88							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Care First Limited Pendersons Eagles							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of 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 students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Richard Deane, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Denise Olander	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harmesh Manghra	Her Majesty's Inspector
Victor Reid	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Murrie	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Pemberton	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Parton	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqui Ecoeur	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Kinghorn	Ofsted Inspector
David Baber	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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