

# Southampton City College

General further education college

**Inspection dates**

11–14 December 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>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for learners	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Students' achievement of their qualifications is not yet sustainably good across all courses and provision types.
- Too much teaching and learning in theory classes are ineffective.
- Teachers and assessors fail to provide feedback for students and apprentices that identifies and/or corrects mistakes in work and shows them how to improve.
- Apprentices too often lack clear challenging targets that promote improvement and develop their skills and understanding.
- Attendance in English and mathematics classes at all levels is still too low, despite recent improvements.
- Teachers on some adult courses do not assess the skills and knowledge of students who are moving on to a course from another at a lower level. This makes it difficult for them to plan appropriate learning goals for such students.
- Leaders and managers have not yet made sufficient progress in improving curriculum-level self-assessment, teaching and learning observation activity and tracking of students' progress.
- Teachers do not plan learning that meets individual needs and involves sufficient levels of challenge for the most able and the least able in every class.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Students and apprentices develop strong practical, technical and vocational skills that prepare them well for employment.
- Adult students on programmes for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) at all levels benefit from good-quality teaching, learning and assessment that lead to consistently strong outcomes.
- Teachers successfully develop students' and apprentices' mathematical skills and understanding. Achievement rates for mathematics courses are high compared to most similar providers.
- Staff, leaders and managers in the college provide very high levels of personal, financial and learning support, without which very many students and apprentices would not be able to engage with learning or move on into work.
- Teachers and assessors use their up-to-date industry skills and extensive vocational experience successfully to benefit students and apprentices.
- Students develop a strong and beneficial understanding of the world of work, and of the behaviours needed for success at work.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Southampton City College is a small general further education college serving the City of Southampton. The college provides a wide range of post-16 education and training, including 16 to 19 study programmes in a variety of vocational areas, adult learning programmes and apprenticeships. The vast majority of the college's students come from areas of the city with higher-than-average levels of deprivation.
- Southampton has a diverse population that includes large areas of deprivation and smaller areas of prosperity. Unemployment in the Southampton area is higher than regional and national averages. The proportion of pupils at schools in Southampton that achieve five GCSEs grades 9 to 4 – including English and mathematics – is below national rates. Around three quarters of all students coming to the college require either an English or a mathematics GCSE, and around half require both qualifications.

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

- Maintain a close focus on achievement rates and ensure that these become sustainably good across all courses and provision types.
- Support staff to improve the effectiveness of theory teaching across curriculum areas and provision types. Where appropriate, leaders and managers should share examples of good practice in teaching and learning from practical vocational areas.
- Ensure that all teachers plan learning that makes effective use of initial assessments, meets individual needs and involves sufficient challenge for the most able and the least able in every class.
- Make sure that all teachers and assessors provide feedback for students and apprentices that identifies and/or corrects mistakes in work and shows them how to improve.
- Improve attendance in English and mathematics classes at all levels.
- Improve target-setting and progress reviews for apprentices so that they have clear, challenging targets that help them to improve their work and develop their skills and understanding.
- Support staff to improve curriculum-level self-assessment, the accuracy and effectiveness of teaching and learning observation activity, and the tracking of students' and apprentices' progress.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

- Leaders and managers have not brought about sufficiently rapid improvements in the performance of the college during the past three years. Although outcomes and achievements for students and apprentices improved in 2017/18, change has taken too long and is not great enough in all areas. Leaders have not yet securely established improvements across all areas of the college.
- Actions taken by leaders and managers have not yet had sufficient impact on the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. For example, actions taken during the past year have yet to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the college, particularly in theory lessons in study programmes. Such unevenness in the quality of teaching and learning slows students' progress. There is still too much variation in the progress that students make in different curriculum areas.
- Managers have improved the steps they take to assure the quality of teaching and learning. They have developed a supportive culture for improving teachers' practice. Learning coaches give high levels of support for colleagues through mentoring and coaching activities. Some positive impact is beginning to show, but changes to teachers' practice and to quality assurance arrangements are not yet leading to sufficiently rapid improvements in all areas of the curriculum. As a result, students do not experience a consistently good standard of teaching, learning and assessment in study programmes or in apprenticeships, particularly in theory lessons.
- Leaders' strategic plan for English and mathematics has yet to have sufficient impact on improving students' achievement and attendance in these subjects across all provision types. Managers' sharp focus on improving students' attendance at lessons has been effective in vocational and technical lessons but attendance is still significantly lower in English and mathematics lessons. Students on study programmes – and apprentices – do not benefit from sufficiently clear guidance and feedback that help them to improve their skills in English.
- New leaders have supported improvements in the self-assessment process – developing the skills of curriculum staff – but improvements are not yet having a clear and consistent impact in all curriculum areas. Curriculum managers now prepare self-assessment reports that focus more on the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on their students. Despite such improvements, curriculum self-assessments remain too generous in their appraisal of the quality of provision.
- Leaders have drawn on a good range of up-to-date performance data to inform the latest college self-assessment report. The report is accurate in its account of the key strengths and weaknesses in provision and of most of the causes of these. However, the grades initially awarded to provision types were overinflated and not reflective of the narrative accuracy.
- New managers are beginning to have a positive impact on the planning of the curriculum to broaden students' experiences and learning opportunities. Leaders and managers ensure that the curriculum is responsive to local priorities. Leaders work productively with local employers, the enterprise partnership, the local authority and Southampton City

Council to ensure that the range and content of provision meet skills gaps and priorities.

- Leaders continue to set their curriculum to meet effectively current regional employment demands, such as in performing arts, marine engineering and construction. Leaders and managers also shape the curriculum by analysing carefully the destinations of students according to major employment sectors in the locality and region. Managers have successfully developed some effective work experience placements for study programme students. However, the proportion of students moving from other courses into apprenticeship provision at the college is low. This limits students' employability and career opportunities.
- Leaders and managers have improved the quality of teaching and learning for adult students. These are now good. Managers create effective partnerships with employers to design training that develops the knowledge and employability skills of unemployed adult students. Employers value the support that managers provide, such as the development of an employability programme to help students prepare for employment.
- Leaders and managers have a strongly held and forcefully communicated aspiration for the direction of the college. They are committed to developing skills that will improve the long-term employment options for students who live in some of the most deprived areas of the city. Leaders and managers have established an inclusive environment where students and staff exhibit high levels of respect and tolerance for each other. Students are accepted – regardless of their starting points – and given good support to continue with their studies. Managers work very closely with local community groups and agencies to offer support for disadvantaged students.

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

- Governors have not given sufficient support or challenge to leaders to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and students' outcomes sufficiently rapidly across the past four years. Improvements during the past year only bring most areas to around the performance of similar providers.
- Governors bring a wide range of experience to the board and are strong advocates of the college's mission and values. Governors have considerable and relevant expertise in the commercial and education sectors. They have worked diligently with leaders to manage the college's precarious financial footing.
- Leaders and managers provide governors with frequent detailed reports that inform them of the key indicators in the performance of students. As a result, they have now begun to develop a more realistic and accurate awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. For example, governors now hold senior leaders and managers to account for delivering the quality improvement plan. Minutes of meetings show that they challenge senior managers on their performance in delivering the plan.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers pay good attention to the development of safeguarding practice. They make sure that staff and governors keep up to date with broader topics of safeguarding legislation through frequent training. Managers make sure that staff have a

good understanding that enables them to give support for the many complex problems that affect the college's students. Leaders and managers accountable for the safeguarding record carefully follow up safeguarding referrals to full resolution. Managers keep an incident log which they review often to identify trends in safeguarding incidents. They produce a detailed annual report for the corporation, in addition to regular reporting throughout the year.

- Managers have proper safeguarding arrangements in place, including those to meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. However, they have not ensured that all apprentices have sufficient awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Managers keep accurate records of Disclosure and Barring Service checks and they adhere to safer recruitment practices.
- Learners feel safe in the college and at work. In practical classes, students wear the correct protective equipment and follow industry-standard working practices. Students understand how to stay safe online and keep their information secure.
- Leaders and managers work effectively in partnership with Southampton City Council, the local safeguarding children board, local police and others. Such work helps promote safeguarding messages and protect young people.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- Too much theory teaching on study programmes is ineffective. Teachers do not plan lessons well to ensure that students gain the essential knowledge they need. They do not check learning sufficiently to make sure that students make good progress. In English entry and level 1 lessons, teachers do not ensure enough variety in learning activities. As a result, students complete too many worksheets that lack vocational context and so lose interest in their work.
- Teachers do not set challenging enough activities for the most able students. Because of this, such students finish their learning activities too easily and quickly and have little to do for parts of the lesson. However, in hairdressing, teachers plan lessons better to ensure that the most able students have more difficult activities that stimulate and challenge them.
- The pace in a significant minority of adult learning programme lessons is too quick for the students' abilities. As a result, they have insufficient time to reflect on what they have learned before moving on to the next topic. In these lessons, teachers do not build in enough time to assess learning or give students feedback.
- When marking work, a significant minority of teachers and assessors do not correct students' and apprentices' spelling and grammatical errors. Only a minority of students benefit from useful developmental feedback in their marked work. On level 1 and entry level courses, teachers do not always review or check written work to see how well students understood the topics dealt with. Too often, assessors just affirm that apprentices have met the standard needed, rather than giving them valuable feedback about the quality of their work.
- Teachers and assessors cannot always identify students' and apprentices' skills and knowledge at the start of their courses. For example, they do not use the results of the initial assessments of apprentices and of a small number of adult learners well enough to

plan learning or support. Apprentices are not always given assessments at the start of their programmes, particularly if they have previously achieved English or mathematics GCSE at grades A\* to C or 4 to 9. Even where apprentices do take an initial assessment, teachers make little use of their results to plan learning. Adult learners who move from one English or mathematics course to another at a higher level do not always take a further diagnostic test to check their skills and knowledge. Assessors do not agree challenging or time-bound targets with apprentices during their progress reviews. They often set the same target dates for all main parts of apprentices' programmes. As a result, apprentices cannot easily prioritise work or know when they should complete work on the various parts of their course. Teachers and assessors rarely set apprentices personalised learning or development targets but focus too heavily on unit assessment dates. They do involve employers in apprentices' progress reviews but take too little account of their views when setting targets for apprentices.

- Teachers and assessors use their experience from industry well to make practical lessons interesting and relevant. They demonstrate practical activities effectively, encouraging learners and apprentices to work to a high standard. Teachers promote good use of technical language during lessons and assessments. They make good use of their contacts with employers to bring a commercial aspect to lessons. For example, a construction company is sponsoring and providing resources for a brickwork project, and media students are producing an online advertising campaign for a company. Apprentices develop a good range of up-to-date practical skills that employers value.
- Mathematics teaching is effective. Teachers plan lessons carefully to ensure that students develop their knowledge and skills logically and sequentially. They explain new concepts clearly and ask students questions to ensure that they understand these. Teachers make it clear to learners which mathematical concepts they should apply during vocational activities. For example, childcare learners produce linear graphs and charts to illustrate their work on children's development.
- Teachers and assessors give students and apprentices useful and developmental oral feedback on their work during workshop and practical classes. This helps them to improve. Students value the constructive way their teachers explain different approaches that they could use in subsequent practical activities. For example, photography students now use different camera settings more confidently after their teacher prompted them to experiment more. In ESOL lessons, teachers give particularly effective oral feedback that helps students with low levels of functional literacy to develop their language skills.
- Teachers plan with – and deploy – learning support assistants well in lessons. Learning support assistants very effectively integrate students into lessons. For example, communication support workers sign for deaf students, enabling them to speak during class discussions. Students use a good range of adaptive learning resources, such as large print materials, mini whiteboards and tablets. Learning support assistants and their team leader identify very effectively each learner's support needs. They put appropriate support in place early in students' programmes. They liaise closely with schools, special educational needs coordinators and local authorities, are involved in learners' initial interviews and attend taster days.
- Teachers of adult learning programmes use a range of directed and challenging questioning techniques. This helps students develop higher-level thinking skills and complex vocabulary. Adult learning teachers also use technology well to enhance their

teaching and enliven learning, for example using a good range of quizzes and online activities in lessons, which students enjoy.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Students and apprentices develop good vocational skills. In practical lessons, students apply theory well. This helps them develop skills that meet industry standards. Painting and decorating students become adept at painting walls without leaving brushstrokes, and photography students gain confidence in speaking with clients. Apprentices develop practical skills early in their courses and apply these well.
- During vocational lessons, students and apprentices demonstrate good mathematics skills. Adult ESOL students use mathematical terminology in English lessons, and access to higher education students work confidently with complex formulae. Construction apprentices calculate angles correctly when constructing roofs, and engineering apprentices work to precise measurements and tolerances.
- Students are respectful and their behaviour is generally good. They are attentive and ready to learn. Teachers and leaders have set higher expectations this year for students' behaviour. This is starting to have a positive impact. Students are polite and respectful of each other and know what is expected of them. They increase in confidence, which helps them to ask their teachers for further explanations when they are unclear about concepts or subjects.
- Students gain an insight into the world of work through an interesting range of industry-related talks, visits and events. Hospitality students compete in catering competitions and hairdressing students in barbering competitions. Many students have external visits. Travel and tourism students visit cruise ships, and engineering students visit a tea factory. During industry week, employers typically set and contribute towards the assessment of realistic work projects. Performing arts, production arts, theatrical/media make-up and media students put on an annual pantomime attended by around 500 local schoolchildren.
- Students feel safe and know how to work safely. They understand which areas outside the college may put them in danger and know how to avoid these. Students value the increased visibility of helpful security staff on the college site. Most students appreciate the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They understand the importance of keeping workstations clean and tidy. In workshops, apprentices use tools – such as chisels and blades – safely.
- Most students have a good understanding of British values. They respect and tolerate each other's opinions and differing views. The college's annual 'pride against prejudice' and 'walk a mile' events help students appreciate diversity and empathise with groups such as refugees. Students learn about democracy in action through electing class representatives for the student voice.
- Staff review carefully and frequently the education, health and care plans for students with high needs to ensure that these learners benefit from well-coordinated support. They liaise effectively with external specialists, staff from previous settings, parents and carers, and learning support assistants to agree suitable support and strategies that develop students' independence and skills. Staff review students' progress very thoroughly. As a

result, they know that students manage their conditions and behaviour better, improve the quality of their written work, gain new friends and identify career goals.

- Students value the wide range of pastoral and financial support available to them. They know about – and make good use of – the many college services available to them, including counselling and health and well-being specialists. In response to lower achievement by young carers, managers brought a team of advisers into the college to help students cope better with their home situation while studying.
- Teachers provide planned and structured careers advice and support for adult students. Students rightly value the ways their programmes and qualifications contribute to their employment opportunities and develop practical vocational skills. They have aspirational and clear career goals and know what they need to do to achieve these. Apprentices benefit from good initial advice and guidance. This ensures that they are on the right course at an appropriate level to meet their career aspirations. Students have a suitable range of taster days, interviews and online information to help them choose their courses.
- Despite teachers and careers advisers promoting the college’s careers service, many students on study programmes lack awareness of this support. Most students cannot recall the careers tutorial they had during induction. As a result, they do not access impartial careers guidance early enough in their programme.

### Outcomes for learners

### Requires improvement

- Achievements on too many courses at all levels have taken too long to improve. Although most courses in the college show a three-year rising trend of achievement, many began from a very low starting point. Despite improvements, across all courses, too few students achieve their qualifications.
- Students and apprentices make insufficient progress in theory classes. In their practical vocational sessions, students and apprentices make better – and sometimes good – progress.
- Students aged 16 to 18 on study programmes do not make sufficient progress and too few achieve their main vocational qualifications. Across the past three years, levels of achievement have risen, but remain too low.
- Students on study programmes are not acquiring English skills quickly enough on functional skills or GCSE courses. Achievements for both qualifications remain low, despite improvements in 2017/18. The proportion of students who achieve GCSE high grades declined slightly in 2018 and are low. Students who enter the college with a grade 3 in GCSE in English make particularly poor progress. Functional skills achievement in English has improved in each of the past two years, but remains low.
- Too few 16- to 18-year-old students made sufficient progress in their basic skills mathematics courses. Achievement in mathematics GCSE has been above the rate for similar providers for two years, but the proportion of students gaining their qualification remains low.
- Achievements among adult students on basic skills English and mathematics courses – although improved significantly since 2016/17 – also remain low.
- The proportion of adult students who achieve a high-grade pass in GCSE English has



decreased and is low. However, achievement of grades 9 to 4 among adult students on mathematics courses is high compared to similar providers and has been so for around three years.

- A greater proportion of apprentices now achieve their qualifications, with a significant rise in the past year. Achievement levels are just above those seen in other providers nationally. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications within the expected time has improved since the previous inspection and has continued to improve to above the level seen in similar providers so far this year. Employers recognise and value the good range of practical vocational skills gained by their apprentices.
- Apprentices do not acquire English skills quickly enough. Vocational teachers and assessors do not help apprentices improve their English skills sufficiently. They rarely identify apprentices' spelling mistakes or develop strategies to improve their English skills. Apprentices generally develop good mathematical skills, and a greater proportion of apprentices gain their mathematics qualifications than was the case in previous years. Apprentices make good use of their mathematics skills in the college and the workplace.
- The proportion of students who move from one course in the college to another at a higher level is low. Across the past three years, the proportion of students moving to a higher level of course has improved, but still stands at a lower point than in 2014/15. The proportion of students who move on to apprenticeships from other courses is low. In art and design, hairdressing, media and performing arts, the proportions of students who move to higher-level courses or apprenticeships are high and improving.
- Students on ESOL courses make good – and sometimes very good – progress. They quickly develop good language skills and gain confidence in using the language. The proportion of students who achieve ESOL qualifications has been very high for several years and remains so.
- Leaders and managers have effective arrangements in place to track the destinations of former students and apprentices. They analyse data carefully and ensure that the curriculum directs students towards areas where they are most likely to gain sustainable employment or opportunities for further learning.
- Students in early years, theatrical make-up and marine and electrical installation take great care with their work and develop very good vocational skills in presentation. For example, students develop good-quality portfolios in theatrical make-up, and carefully design and make circuits and ducting in electrical installation.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### Requires improvement

- Teaching and learning in too many lessons are ineffective. As a result, too few students make sufficient progress in their classes. This is particularly the case in vocational theory classes and classroom-based lessons, where students make limited progress. However, in workshops and practical sessions, students make the progress that they should.
- Teachers do not plan sufficiently carefully to ensure that lessons meet the needs of the most able and the least able students in each group. The most able students are not stretched by the tasks they are set and often become bored with the lesson. The less-

confident students cannot always keep up with – or understand – the direction of the classes, and so do not make the expected progress.

- In most lessons, teachers do not check that students have understood topics fully or made sufficient progress in their learning. This slows progress for many students. For example, learning in English functional skills and level 1 classes is dominated by worksheet completion. Teachers in these classes oversee the completion of the worksheets but do not check students' answers carefully enough. They also fail to provide students with enough variety in the range of tasks undertaken. Too often, teachers give insufficient or no feedback that will help students improve the work in the future.
- Most teachers do not mark work in ways which help students improve. On most programmes, teachers do not routinely point out to students where they have made mistakes with spelling, punctuation and grammar in written work. Written formative guidance is rare on a significant minority of courses. As a result, student do not have a record that they can consult about how to improve. Senior managers have introduced a range of trackers this year to encourage self-evaluation and responsibility among students, but this is yet to have a significant impact on the rate of progress.
- A small minority of students do not have external work experience with employers planned this year. Last year, only around 60% of level 2 and level 3 students completed work experience. Very few level 1 students benefited from external work experience. Leaders and managers have worked hard this year to plan work experience earlier. All students have benefited from a tutorial to prepare them for work experience. In some subjects – such as hospitality, hairdressing, health and social care, and early years – students' work experience is well planned. In others, staff have been late organising this, for example in forensics and motor vehicle engineering. Students complete logs of their work experience that demonstrate where they have developed new skills, but too few consider how well they have met the targets agreed for their placement.
- Students' attendance in English and mathematics lessons increased slightly last year but remains too low. Attendance has improved through the use of attendance officers and increased parental involvement, but the level is still too low.
- In tutorials, most teachers do not plan or contextualise the centrally produced material to meet the needs of their specific group of students. Managers plan tutorial topics thoughtfully throughout the year and give teachers flexibility to add their own topics, but do not check how well teachers use materials. Too few teachers use these materials and opportunities to good effect. Students do not always understand the complexities of topics raised during the tutorial programme and their recall of these is sometimes weak. For example, teachers did not use activities on drugs and body image well enough to ensure that students gained a deep enough understanding of the topic, and the subsequent discussion was very shallow.
- Most students are motivated to learn and they enjoy coming to the college. The large majority are keen to talk about their subjects and courses. They are attentive, concentrate and are confident asking and answering questions. The majority can work independently. Students are polite, are respectful of each other, staff and visitors, and are able to articulate expectations of good behaviour.
- Effective teaching in GCSE mathematics classes helps students to develop their skills and confidence in a subject at which many have had little prior success or achievement. Students also improve their numeracy skills – often to a high level – in marine

engineering, electrical installation and travel and tourism. One marine engineering student was able to explain how he had deployed Pythagoras' theorem to plan the installation of an engine in a boat that had an irregular hull. In electrical installation, an enthusiastic group of students worked on a variety of tailored challenges using measurements with precision to cut pipework and calculate power supply and usage.

- Students benefit from teachers' recent vocational experience. Teachers demonstrate well and help students to develop hand skills and model professional standards in practical tasks. For example, students in a hairdressing class learned new skills and developed their confidence as a result of close personal guidance while they practised sectioning and layering. With clear, targeted guidance from their teacher, art and design students learned how to visualise shapes by using maps.
- Managers use employers and the local enterprise partnership – as well as market intelligence – to inform decisions about curriculum development for study programmes. For example, a digital employers' forum led to a new emphasis on soft skills – as well as technical skills – on the level 3 information and communication technology diploma. Course leaders used performance and progression data to identify a gap in the local market for event management and forensic science, both of which recruited well this year and provide new local opportunities for students.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe in college and where to go for help if they need it. They understand how to stay safe online and the reasons for caution. Most students have an awareness of the danger signs associated with radicalisation. Teachers and students maintain good health and safety practice in vocational areas.

## Adult learning programmes

**Good**

- Students in practical sessions can demonstrate how to apply theory to practice. They are also able to articulate how they apply theoretical knowledge to their workplace. For example, students in a practical culinary session demonstrated their learning from previous lessons by competently making a range of sauces for their formal practical assessment.
- The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics lessons is generally good. Students in these lessons benefit from well-planned teaching and learning that help them understand concepts fully and in a logical sequence. As a result, students can remember key concepts well, and can apply learning in a range of practical contexts.
- The majority of teachers demonstrate good levels of competence in a range of directed and challenging questioning techniques. The majority of teachers also question students and check their understanding of topics often, before moving to the next topic or stage of learning. Teachers make sure that students can demonstrate higher-level thinking skills and make accurate use of complex vocabulary.
- Most teachers use technology well to enhance learning and improve student engagement. Students enjoy the range and variety of activities and make good progress as a result. Teachers involve students in online quizzes and they encourage students on ESOL courses to use electronic tablets in the workplace. In lessons, teachers frequently use online music and YouTube videos to enliven learning, and they encourage students to take photographs of their in-class work to reinforce their classroom notes.

- ESOL students benefit from particularly effective teaching and learning. They make good progress as a result. In an entry level ESOL session, students identified how they have progressed from not being able to write the alphabet to now being able to write and spell well and construct simple sentences.
- Teachers successfully embed English and mathematics skills development activities into the majority of vocational sessions. This is the case for practical and theory lessons. In ESOL sessions, teachers develop mathematics skills effectively, with students encouraged to use complex mathematical terminology to enable them to understand the language of mathematics. In English and mathematics courses, students moving from one level course to the next do not undertake an English and mathematics initial or diagnostic assessment. Teachers, therefore, cannot accurately identify the starting points of such students as they move up a level.
- Students benefit from well-planned one-to-one tutorials with their teachers. These include effective discussions and information sessions about careers advice and guidance, tracking of progress, feedback on work and pastoral support.
- Students feel safe, behave well and respect each other and their teachers. Students are aspirational and are clear about what they need to do to achieve their career goals. Their teachers help them to understand how the programme and qualification they are taking will contribute to their improved employment opportunities or to their well-being. This enhances confidence and raises aspirations.
- Most students receive robust developmental feedback on their written work that clearly identifies what they need to do to improve the work. In a minority of cases, feedback is overly positive and does not include enough detailed developmental feedback to students. Oral feedback is generally effective and helps students to develop their skills and understanding. In ESOL classes, oral feedback is particularly effective in helping students with low levels of functional literacy to develop their language skills.
- Managers have developed strong links with local employers, agencies and charities. Employers value the collaborative partnerships they have developed with managers and teachers. They particularly value the way that such links support the professional development of their staff.
- Teachers and managers have developed strong links with staff at the Southampton Jobcentre Plus and Portsmouth Jobcentre Plus. Such links provide good routes into employment for many students. To offset the impact of reductions in mandated referrals by Jobcentre Plus, staff have extended and expanded their links to local agencies and charities working with unemployed people.
- A significant minority of teachers do not always plan lessons that involve enough difficulty for the most able students or plan accessible tasks for less-confident or less-able students.
- In a minority of sessions, teachers do not use directed questioning effectively and this results in some learners not engaging or participating in the feedback activities or being included in any assessment of learning that takes place. In the very small number of ESOL classes where questioning is less effective, students do not all have opportunities to practise their language skills or evidence their learning.
- A minority of teachers do not plan lessons that incorporate sufficient opportunities and time for students to confirm or consolidate their learning before they move on to the next

activity. As a result, teachers cannot judge whether students have understood the topic at hand or whether they are making good progress in their learning. In English lessons, teaching and learning are too often ineffective because the pace is sometimes too quick for learners to understand topics or reflect on learning before the teacher moves them on.

## Apprenticeships

## Requires improvement

- Written feedback in apprentices' assessed work does not always indicate how apprentices can improve their skills, knowledge or behaviours. Feedback mostly confirms only positive features of work. In some areas, teachers are overly positive in their feedback, writing words like 'excellent' when there are several mistakes. Where mistakes are evident, teachers often correct them without asking learners to investigate where or why they went wrong.
- Apprentices do not always make the progress they should because targets set during progress reviews are not well timed or particularly challenging. The very large majority of targets relate to fixed dates concerning the completion of assessed materials. Targets set for completing assessed work are mostly all set for the same date, regardless of individual apprentices' abilities. In the large majority of cases, targets for the completion of individual qualifications are all set to the same end date. Too often, progress reviews do not accurately record the progress apprentices have made with the individual qualifications within their apprenticeship.
- Assessors and reviewers do not apply targets sufficiently closely to the skills apprentices need to develop so that they can make good progress. Where employers comment on apprentices' performance in the workplace, improvement targets are not routinely set in response. This means that apprentices do not always develop their skills at a pace employers require.
- Teachers and assessors do not make use of the results of apprentices' initial assessment to plan for the development of English and mathematics skills in lessons or training. Too often, teachers and assessors pay insufficient attention to challenging apprentices' poor use of English in their written work.
- Progress checking has not been effective for apprentices until very recently. Processes are insufficiently secure and overly reliant on the manager's collation of paper-based information to track and monitor the progress of apprentices in their on- and off-the-job training. Leaders and managers have recently improved the effectiveness of the way assessors track apprentices' progress through their course. As a result, they are better able to target support for those at risk of non-completion. However, although recently enrolled apprentices are making the progress expected of them, it is too soon to be able to measure the full impact of enhanced monitoring on all apprentices' achievements.
- Apprentices develop good practical vocational skills. Hairdressers expertly plait hair with confidence, wood trades apprentices skilfully assemble complex roof structures with accuracy, one engineering apprentice fitted a complex mechanical seal to a pharmaceutical mixer and another completed high-quality welds in stainless steel. Level 3 marine engineering apprentices developed the skills to interrogate risk assessments and ship plans and will implement changes at their workplaces as a result of their improved understanding of these materials.

- Most current apprentices' work is at least of the standard expected of them and, as a result, most apprentices who successfully complete their courses enjoy sustained employment.
- Apprentices adhere to good health and safety practices at college and in the workplace. They use the correct personal protective equipment, keep work areas tidy and safely use tools and equipment such as saws and chisels in wood trades and electrical components in construction areas. They readily follow stringent workshop and workplace health and safety regulations.
- Teachers and assessors give helpful and constructive oral feedback to apprentices during practical sessions. For example, apprentices are directed to explain more than just what they did in demonstrating competence. Their assessors ask them to explain fully how and why they performed certain activities.
- Employers value the skills that apprentices bring to the workplace and the positive impact they have on the productivity of their companies. Most employers appreciate the support received from knowledgeable and approachable assessors. Most employers also benefit from the way that assessors consult and guide them with respect to new standards apprenticeships. A small minority of employers are frustrated with the slow progress made by their apprentices and the time it has taken to resolve long-standing problems with assessment.
- Staff have good experience and knowledge about the subjects they teach and assess. As a result, they effectively promote good understanding among apprentices of the standards expected in each industry. They also promote apprentices' correct use of technical language in their areas. They ensure that apprentices develop the skills they need to be successful in the workplace.
- Most apprentices develop their mathematics skills at a good pace and to at least the level needed by their programme. They can put these skills to good practical use in their vocational areas. For example, site carpenters make the accurate calculations needed to precisely construct joints, make cuts or fix angles for roof beams.
- Apprentices feel safe around the college and work safely there and in their workplaces. They understand what actions to take if they feel bullied or harassed. They behave well and are respectful of those around them. However, for a significant minority, their knowledge and understanding of how to avoid the threats of radicalisation and extremism are underdeveloped. Apprentices' understanding of British values also requires improvement.
- Advice and guidance at the start of most apprentices' programmes are effective and ensure that apprentices study at the right level. Most apprentices understand their industries well and have a clear vision of their next steps in work or education.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130696
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	5,094
Principal/CEO	Sarah Stannard
Telephone number	02380 484 848
Website	www.southampton-city.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)	359	934	331	632	361	556	0	74
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	136	82	102	188	0	0		
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	30							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	MYF Training Ltd							

## Information about this inspection

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

## Inspection team

Richard Beynon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Janet Rodgers	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Baber	Ofsted Inspector
Jim Grant	Ofsted Inspector
Terri Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Joy Evans	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector
Carolyn Brownsea	Ofsted Inspector



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