

# Stafford College

## Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 130813

Name of lead inspector: Philippa Francis HMI

Last day of inspection: 13 November 2009

Type of provider: General Further Education College

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## Information about the provider

1. Stafford College is a large college with a main site and a smaller site in the town centre. The college serves the town and a large part of mid and south Staffordshire. The college's mission is to 'meet learner needs and aspirations through excellence in performance and successful partnerships'.
2. The college offers work-based, vocational and general education courses from foundation to higher education level across all 15 subject areas funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Government funded training represents approximately 80% of the college's business. The number of students aged 16 to 18 has increased by around a third since the previous inspection. Four subject areas were graded during the inspection: health, care and early years; engineering and manufacturing technologies; sport, leisure and recreation; and visual arts.
3. The college is a member of the Stafford Collegiate, a partnership with local secondary schools, which offers GCE A, and AS level courses. Higher education courses are available in association with Staffordshire University. The college contracts with Staffordshire LSC to offer Train to Gain courses, but with much reduced numbers in the current year. The college delivers a range of adult and community provision through a contract with Staffordshire County Council.
4. Unemployment and the level of social and economic deprivation in Staffordshire are low. Around 700 students, however, travel a considerable distance to college including some from areas with much higher levels of deprivation. The proportion of pupils aged 16 who achieve five or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C including English and mathematics in Staffordshire is slightly above the national average. Local schools have sixth forms. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups at 5% is higher than the percentage within Stafford Borough at 3%. Just under half of students are male.
5. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Staffordshire County Council
6. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the college:
  - Francesco Group

Type of provision	Number of enrolled students in 2008/09
Provision for young students: 14 to16	261 part-time students
Further education (16 to18)	2538 full-time students 230 part-time students

Foundation learning	579 full-time students
Provision for adult students: Further education (19+)	361 full-time students 1564 part-time students
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	226 students 237 apprentices

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject areas	Grade
Health, care and early years	2
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2
Sport, leisure and recreation	2
Visual arts	2

## Overall effectiveness

7. The college's good overall effectiveness is ensured by the improved and good quality of its provision, strong and productive leadership and management and good capacity to improve. Whilst students' outcomes are satisfactory overall, they are improving strongly and are good for employed students and pupils aged 14 to 16. Students develop good personal, social and employability skills. Students are highly successful on long courses at intermediate level but their success is more average at foundation and advanced level. The college is a safe, friendly and happy place. Students progress well through levels of study and make good use of their achievements in their next steps. Students have a strong voice and their influence on college and community life is significant.
8. Teaching and learning are good. Staff are well qualified with strong technical credibility. Relationships between teachers and students are productive and good. Some students on advanced courses receive insufficient challenge to stretch and extend their learning in lessons. Target setting lacks a sharp focus

on skill development. Levels of care, guidance and support are high. Development of the curriculum has ensured that most students' needs are met. A minority of group tutorials covering general themes, however, are too basic compared to students' level of knowledge.

9. The college has a clear direction, which is well understood by governors, managers, staff and partners. Governors play an active part in college life and promote, along with managers, the college's inclusive and friendly atmosphere. The emphasis on developing students as successful and rounded people is high. Managers have brought about many improvements, such as in work-based learning and are particularly good at developing beneficial partnerships, such as those through the Stafford Collegiate. Financial and resource management is very effective and the college provides good value for money.

## Main findings

- Students' achievement is satisfactory and their enjoyment of college life is mostly at a high level. Success rates are high at intermediate level but close to average at foundation and advanced level. Since the last inspection, success rates have improved substantially for students aged 16 to 18 but more steadily for adult students. Attendance is high.
- The outcomes for apprentices on employer-based courses improved significantly in 2008/09. Apprentices produce good standards of work and a high percentage are successful in completing their courses by the target end date. Employers praise apprentices' skills and employability.
- Most students make the progress that is expected of them compared to their prior attainment and an increasing number exceed expectations. Students' develop good personal and social skills. Their awareness of health matters and safety is well-developed. Most become good communicators, and capable numerically and in the use of information and communication technology.
- Students feel safe and value the secure and friendly college environment. They enjoy a productive relationship with teachers. Students contribute to college and community life in many ways and work to making beneficial things happen. The students' voice is powerful. The impact of their opinions and suggestions is significant. Students, however, have no representation at senior management meetings.
- Students are highly satisfied with the good teaching. Detailed lesson planning focuses increasingly on all students' needs but a minority of students on advanced courses are insufficiently challenged. Assessment is well planned and marking is accurate. Teachers provide informative and detailed feedback to most students but some feedback is limited. The use of information and learning technology is productive.
- The recent revision of the process for recording and monitoring students' progress to raise attainment has been thorough. Its implementation is at an early stage. Most target setting lacks a sharp focus on individual skill development.

- Outstanding partnership and collaborative arrangements benefit and enhance the curriculum and students' well-being. A wide and responsive range of courses includes good and well-used opportunities for progression. Good links exist with employers, which ensure the college meets most local and regional priorities. Formal involvement of external stakeholders in determining strategic development is underdeveloped.
- The college uses students' feedback well to help shape the curriculum and improve the quality of provision but feedback from students from minority ethnic groups is not considered in enough detail. The evaluation of cross-college enrichment activities is limited.
- Good care, guidance and support help students from a wide range of different backgrounds. The quality of tutorials has improved greatly since the last inspection and students' awareness of Every Child Matters themes is well embedded. However, the quality of teaching of group tutorials varies and a aspects of general content is too basic.
- Leadership and management are good. The principal, governors and senior managers set ambitious and challenging targets, directed at developing students' personal and educational achievements and raising their aspirations.
- The promotion of equality, diversity and safeguarding is good. The college has been very successful in raising the profile of these areas, such that staff and students are conversant with the key aspects and implement them well. The proportion of women who are governors or senior managers is low.
- The management of resources is very effective and efficient. The college demonstrates excellence in the way it promotes and implements sustainability practices thoroughly.
- The evaluation of students' progress relative to their prior attainment is underdeveloped in self-assessment. The college's reporting of students' achievement data for 2007/08 to the LSC was, in some instances, not fully compatible with LSC guidance.

### What does Stafford College need to do to improve further?

- Raise the level of challenge to stretch and extend learning in lessons at advanced level and promote independent learning so that all students make consistently good progress.
- Ensure that learning targets focus sharply on what each student needs to do to improve and achieve well. Ensure consistently high quality feedback is given on all marked work to enable students to achieve their full potential.
- Increase the use of data to evaluate the progress students make in their learning and achievement compared to their prior attainment and ability.
- Evaluate the impact of the cross-college enrichment programme fully, including the level of students' participation in activities, in order to increase its effectiveness in broadening all students' experiences.

- Analyse the views of students from minority ethnic groups in more detail to ensure all students' needs are met.
- Strengthen quality and content of tutorials by better monitoring and ensuring tutorial resources are adapted effectively to match students' level of ability.
- Increase the representation of women and students by raising the proportion of women on the governing body and senior management team, and students on senior management committees.
- Increase the formal involvement of external stakeholders in determining strategic development and improvement, so that their wider perspective informs the future direction of the college.
- Ensure that data for 2008/09 and subsequent years are fully compliant with LSC guidance.

#### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

##### What students like:

- the harmonious mix of different groups and cultures within the student population
- the mutual respect between students and teachers
- the presence of effective but friendly security guards
- the effective use of their views to influence college life
- freshly prepared affordable and tasty food
- high levels of personal support by tutors
- effective support for dyslexia
- technically credible and experienced teachers

What students would like to see improved:

- promotion of cross-college enrichment courses
- access to information and communication technology in some parts of the college
- car parking on campus
- class sizes, which are too large in a few subject areas
- the large gaps in timetables for a minority of students
- the heavy assignment workload in a few subjects

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the productive partnerships established
- good communications with all members of staff
- good support for employer-based students provided by the college
- reliable assessors who have regular contact with the employers
- help given to enable employers' continuing professional development

What employers would like to see improved:

- poor organisation of courses in a very few cases
- some slow progress in completion of apprentices' training programmes in a very few cases



## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. The college is making good progress in improving its outcomes for students and the quality of its provision. The college met most of its challenging targets in 2008/09. Governors, senior and middle managers have a clear vision for the future development of the college focusing firmly on students' personal growth and progress. They have the expertise to further the aims of the college. Quality improvement and self-assessment processes include the views of users at curriculum level, but less formally at strategic level. The sound management structure, good communication systems and efficiently managed human and physical resources place the college in a strong position to effect further improvement.
11. Managers have made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement noted at the last inspection. Success rates in construction and key skills qualifications have increased. Apprentice framework success rates have improved significantly, as has the management of work-based learning. The arrangements for group tutorials are more consistent. The monitoring of the quality of the tutorial process has improved and it is satisfactory. The quality of delivery, however, remains variable and students do not always benefit from a full and challenging coverage. Students are much more aware of equality and diversity matters and speak confidently about them.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

12. Students' success rates on long courses are just above average. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 are just above average at foundation level, high at intermediate level and average at advanced level. Adult students have above average success rates at foundation level, high rates at intermediate level, but their success rates at advanced level remain just below average despite improvement. Success rates overall have increased steadily between 2006/07 and 2008/09, the rate of increase is strongest for students aged 16 to 18 where it is better than seen nationally. In particular, retention of students has increased at a higher rate than nationally, especially at advanced level. Pass rates are mostly high and the percentage of high grades on advanced courses is close to the average but below for GCE A and AS levels. Students' achievement data for courses ending in 2007/08 could not be relied on to provide an accurate picture of the college's success rates, particularly for adult students, but inspectors judged data for 2008/09 to be reliable.
13. The outcomes for apprentices on employer-based courses improved significantly in 2008/09. They have high success rates and a high percentage complete their qualifications by the target end date. Employers speak highly of their skills and employability. Students on Train to Gain courses have above average success rates and the timeliness of their completion has increased substantially to be at least satisfactory. Success rates for key skills qualifications

are around the average. Success rates by subject and level vary but are high on communications at level 1 and on all key skills qualification delivered over a year as opposed to a longer period of study.

14. Almost all students make satisfactory progress in their learning and an increasing number make good progress, especially on vocational courses. The progress made by students on GCE A and AS courses has improved and most make at least satisfactory progress, an improvement on the under performance in previous years. Students gain a broad range of useful skills and their personal and social development is good. The college places a high emphasis on the development of students' employability skills and economic awareness to good effect. Rates of progression at all levels are high and most students make good use of their period of study to secure employment or progression to higher education.
15. Students feel safe and almost all are happy at the college. Attendance has improved consistently and is good for both part-time and full-time students. Students show high awareness of safety priorities and put into practice much of what they learn about healthy and safe lifestyles. Data on health indicators from well-established surveys are used effectively to plan health initiatives, which are well supported by students. Students are included on the health and safety committee and safety and safeguarding are regular items on the active student council. Students contribute to the life and work of both the college and the community. Fund raising events and numerous initiatives such as a cultural diversity day, sending Christmas boxes to needy Romanian children and a 'Fair Trade' event involve students from across the college's provision.
16. The performance of different groups of students is monitored closely. There are no significant differences between group's performance between 2005/06 and 2008/09 and in almost all cases any gaps in performance have narrowed, except for students of mixed ethnic origin. The college has recognised the need to improve the performance of male students at advanced level as the gap between this group's performance and the college's widened in 2008/09. Success rates for students in receipt of additional learning support have improved and are broadly in line with the college's average. Students who travel some distance into college including those from areas of social and economic deprivation achieve as well as their peers.

## The quality of provision

Grade 2

17. The college monitors the quality of teaching and learning well. The regular analysis of students' feedback on teaching and learning indicates a high level of satisfaction. The lesson observation process is reliable; however, observers tend to understate the significance of individual student's progress in some lessons.
18. Links between lesson observation outcomes, the performance management of staff and the provision of support and training for individual staff and teams are strong and beneficial. Implementation of action plans following each

observation are strong. The regular programme of staff training is effective in raising standards in teaching and learning. Teaching teams are supported further in the implementation of new teaching techniques through an innovative peer coaching scheme. Information and learning technology (ILT) is used well in lessons. The college makes a substantial investment in the development of electronic learning materials to improve the consistent use of the virtual learning environment across departments.

19. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and thorough. Lessons include a good variety of learning methods. Informative group profiles cover students' prior attainment, literacy and numeracy skills and preferred learning styles. These teachers use effectively in planning in most lessons; however, in some advanced level lessons students are insufficiently challenged. Teachers provide extensive support for students. Relations between teachers and students are good. Teachers use good quality learning materials, especially at intermediate level; however, some students do not develop independent learning skills sufficiently, especially on advanced level courses. In most lessons the promotion of equality and diversity is good.
20. A thoroughly revised support system of using individual learning plans and target setting is at an early stage of implementation. Too few targets have been set at the first half termly review. Targets set over-emphasise assignment completion or course requirements rather than the development of students' personal or study skills. Teachers make satisfactory provision for the development of key skills, providing good additional support if needed. Assessment is well planned and detailed. Marking is accurate. In most subject areas, students receive full and helpful feedback, although this is not consistent across all subjects.
21. The college meets the needs and interests of students very well. The curriculum offers a wide range of subjects with ample opportunities for students' progression. The curriculum is very responsive to the needs of employers and aligns its provision effectively to meet Stafford's local and regional priorities. Many well-established links exist with employers and managers effectively seek further links. Managers use employers' feedback to shape bespoke and flexible training programmes. The college's range of courses for pupils aged 14 to 16 is good, ranging from entry level to intermediate level. The majority progress to full-time programmes at the college.
22. Extra-curricular activities are mostly good and successfully enrich the students' learning experience. A reasonable range of enrichment activities is available to students, although the evaluation of these activities does not always sufficiently inform future planning. The use of the views of students to inform curriculum design and improve the overall quality of provision is good. However, detailed evaluation of the views of minority ethnic groups is insufficient.
23. Partnership arrangements across the college are outstanding and contribute significantly to the development of students' personal and economic well-being.

Links with local schools and the collegiate arrangements are strong and contribute to the increasing curriculum breadth. Collaboration with the NHS Primary Care Trust has increased expertise on sexual health and is expanding opportunities for students' work placements. Effective links with external organisations support local community groups, such as those with the Ministry of Defence to assist the families of Ghurkha soldiers. The college's approach to social inclusion is excellent.

24. Care, guidance and support for students are good. The management of support services is very effective. Well planned induction ensures students have clear expectations of their course and understand their rights and responsibilities. Good collaboration with a range of external agencies supports vulnerable students who may not otherwise be able to continue their education. Students value greatly the support they receive from their personal tutors. The very good deployment of support-related resources such as financial help and assistive technologies removes the barriers to learning faced by some students. Thorough monitoring has improved the attendance of all students.
25. College managers' improvement of the structure and content of group tutorials has firmly raised students' awareness of personal safety, equality and diversity and healthy lifestyles. Improvements mean that students receive frequent and effective individual tutorials and a wealth of tutorial resources are available. The quality of group tutorials varies. Where group tutorials are most effective, tutors adapt resources to meet the specific interests and abilities of the group and extend discussions and tasks to be thought provoking and developmental. Careers guidance is good and supports students' future economic well-being effectively.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

26. The principal, governors and senior managers set ambitious and challenging targets to improve the quality of students' learning experience and raise their expectations. They monitor and review progress against these targets frequently and rigorously. They aim to develop students as responsible citizens, raise their aspirations and enable their progress in a wide variety of ways. Faculty managers prioritise quality assurance and self-assessment processes and the effective and efficient utilisation of resources. The self-assessment report, quality improvement plan and development plan are coherent and staff are well aware of the college's ethos and strategic aims. They understand the clear management structure and communication is good. The leadership and management of subject areas are good. The college's reporting of students' achievement data for 2007/08 to the LSC was, in some instances, not fully compatible with LSC guidance.
27. Governors focus particularly on students' outcomes and financial health. They challenged managers over work-based learning and accommodation matters; consequently, these improved. Governors promote safeguarding, health, safety, equality and diversity fully, including through their links to areas of the college's

work. Governors have a wide range of skills and experience. The proportion of female governors is low.

28. Managers give a very high priority to the promotion of safeguarding. Students and most staff and volunteers are well aware of safeguarding, bullying, harassment and electronic safety matters. Systems and procedures meet legislative requirements. The new policy and action plan are comprehensive and detailed. Risk assessment is very effective. The college promotes the reporting of accidents, incidents and 'near misses' strongly. Site security is effective. Students have confidence in the levels and type of security and surveillance.
29. The college promotes equality and diversity very effectively. The proportions of governors, managers, staff and students from minority ethnic backgrounds are greater than the proportion in the local community. The equality and diversity policy is comprehensive and contains relevant impact assessments. Managers monitor the single equality and diversity code of practice and action plan thoroughly and report outcomes to governors annually. The college encourages complaints and manages responses and actions consistently. It has not received any complaints regarding equality and diversity matters. Managers analyse data by different groups, including by different types of disability and by areas of disadvantage. Managers analyse the outcomes of students' surveys by many different groups and take appropriate action. The college works with a wide variety of external agencies to improve community cohesion and opportunities for disadvantaged groups. Managers have improved access for people with limited mobility, so that no one is prevented from being a student or employee. Marketing materials represent different groups of students and avoid stereotyping. The proportion of senior managers who are female is low.
30. The college welcomes students' views and successfully obtains them through a wide range of approaches. They collect the views of franchised and collegiate students, those who have left the college, and those who applied to the college but did not enrol. Many students respond. Managers listen to, act on and communicate outcomes to students thoroughly. Students are confident that managers consider and implement their views wherever feasible; they feel empowered. Their satisfaction with most aspects of their college experience is high and it has improved over time. The student representative system is effective. The impact of students' views through course reviews is significant. Managers, however, do not obtain the views of external stakeholders sufficiently systematically to inform the overarching self-assessment report and development plan. Students are active in governors' meetings and in important cross-college committees such as equality and diversity. They are not represented, however, on senior management teams.
31. Quality assurance and self-assessment systems are coherent, planned systematically and in most cases implemented appropriately. The development plan for 2009/ 12 is well considered. The self-assessment reports of course teams include the views of students, employers and external organisations and these make an impact on the curriculum. In 2008/09, most of the challenging

targets set in the improvement plan were achieved, except for success rates for students aged 16 to 18, especially those on GCE AS provision. Self-assessment and the use of data have improved, but not all areas emphasise areas for improvement sufficiently. Managers do not evaluate key skills fully in course level reports. Managers monitor and moderate action plans frequently and rigorously and require evidence of impact. They implement audits based on priority areas and subjects of concern. The college has reduced the variability in the quality of its provision. The quality, self-assessment and staff development processes apply equally to the franchised and the collegiate provision.

32. The use of resources to secure value for money is good. Financial management and procurement and sustainability practices are very good. Accommodation is satisfactory and specialist resources are good. Staff are well qualified. Students' access to computing facilities is insufficient at busy times. The planning and use of resources are very effective and efficient. Managers are well aware of the workforce reform requirements and implement them thoroughly.

## Subject areas

### Health, care and early years

Grade 2

#### Context

33. Of approximately 450 students, around two thirds are on health and social care courses and a third on child care and development courses. Courses are available from foundation to advanced level. Most students are female and study full-time. Approximately 4% of students are from minority ethnic groups. Some 36 students are on work-based apprenticeships and 46 students on Train to Gain programmes.

#### Key findings

- Success rates on most college courses and on work-based apprenticeships are high. Most work-based students complete their courses by the target end date. Students enjoy learning and make good progress towards attaining their learning goals. Progress made by apprentices has improved and is now good. Students gain good practical skills and theoretical knowledge. They develop literacy and numeracy skills well.
- Employed students develop good practical competence, which improves their employability. Many gain promotion or take on an increased level of responsibility at work. They understand the importance of using safe working practices, both for themselves and for clients.
- Students feel safe at work and in the secure college environment. Thorough annual risk assessments of work placements ensure their safety at work. Tutorials include specific, relevant sessions on being and keeping safe.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers have a good rapport with students. Lessons are interesting and extend knowledge, skills and understanding for most students. However, some teachers miss opportunities to stretch the more able students, particularly at advanced level. Some group sizes are too large for teaching rooms, inhibiting the use of different teaching strategies.
- Feedback given to students is good. Assignments are marked promptly. Teachers give detailed feedback including how to improve and achieve the best grade. A minority of students' work, however, has insufficient written feedback on how to improve grammar and spelling. Assessment of workplace practice is well planned.
- The good range of courses supports progression from foundation level to advanced level. Progression rates are good. Nearly two thirds of health and social care students, progress to higher education.
- The college has very good, long-standing relationships with employers, providing on the job training for employed students and work experience opportunities for college-based students.

- Students are well supported throughout their courses, both in college and in the workplace. They receive regular reviews where relevant actions are agreed. Employers provide good support for learning and assessment in the workplace.
- Leadership and management are good. Monthly course team meetings standardise assessor practice and monitor progress well. The performance management of staff is good.
- Promotion of safeguarding is good. Students know their personal tutor or assessor, who acts effectively as the first point of contact. At induction and reinforced at tutorials, tutors provide clear information about safeguarding procedures and practice.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well. Learning activities and materials promote positive images of different groups of students and take account of cultural difference. Students' responsibilities for using correct terminology and behaviour are emphasised.
- Managers make good use of students and employers' views and take effective action to ensure improvement. Regular course team reviews inform self-assessment and quality improvement plans well. Managers monitor these rigorously. Staff training encourages the sharing of good practice and supports professional development effectively.

What does Stafford College need to do to improve further?

- Support teachers in challenging the more able students to extend their skill, knowledge and understanding in lessons.
- Increase the amount of written feedback to students on the correct use of grammar, spelling and vocabulary.
- Resolve accommodation issues related to large groups.



## Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

### Context

34. The college has approximately 300 students studying a range of full, part-time and apprenticeship courses at foundation to advanced level. Courses are available in engineering and in vehicle maintenance and repair, which is the larger of the two subjects. Some 60 pupils aged 14 to 16 attend college through schools' link programmes. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and attend full-time programmes. There are 31 apprentices. Very few students are female or from minority ethnic groups.

### Key findings

- Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 are high. On motor vehicle courses, retention is particularly high and most students are successful. On engineering courses, success rates are high at intermediate level but at the average at advanced level. Many students on full-time programmes progress to the next level of study or into employment.
- Work-based learning apprentices on vehicle maintenance and repair courses have high success rates. While still below average, success rates for apprentices on engineering courses have increased, in part because of more frequent and timely assessment.
- Students enjoy their studies and make good progress. Timekeeping and attendance is mostly good. Students on engineering courses produce work of a high standard.
- Students feel safe at work and in college. Reinforcement of health and safety takes place in college-based lessons and students are aware of what is safe practice. Most apprentices follow safe working practices at work, but occasionally they choose to use less safe approaches which staff do not always correct quickly.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned with a good mix of theory, practice and assessment. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Teaching accommodation and workshops are satisfactory and specialist equipment is good. Assessment is satisfactory; students' portfolios contain a minimum of evidence and students miss opportunities to use a more comprehensive range of evidence to support their competence.
- Teachers make very good use of information and learning technology in lessons. The technical support for students who need assistance is good. Students work well in teams.
- The range of courses is satisfactory. The number of full-time programmes has increased and the college has successfully recruited a small but significant number of females onto motor vehicle courses. Working arrangements with employers are productive. Nevertheless, opportunities to support students to

access work experience and involvement of employers in the provision of specialist equipment have not been maximised.

- Students receive good support and guidance. Tutorials are improving in quality. Although the use of individual learning plans is consistent, students do not always understand their importance and targets set within them vary in effectiveness. A minority of tutors provide group tutorials on personal and social development effectively but others lack confidence and expertise in using the tutorial resource packs.
- The management of engineering programmes is good. Managers are implementing improvements such as upgrading resources and tighter monitoring of entry qualifications to ensure students are placed on appropriate courses. Governors have a good level of involvement in monitoring developments through a well-supported faculty forum.
- Management of the apprenticeship course is good. Purposeful and effective operational management and new working procedures are in place. The quality assurance of a minority of documentation, especially records of apprentices' progress, is limited.
- Staff development is particularly good. Teachers participate in a wide range of subject specific technical training as well as college-based training to help them improve their teaching. Staff attend frequent meetings where they share best practice with colleagues from other subject areas.

What does Stafford College need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of engineering apprentices completing successfully by the target end date through ensuring close monitoring of their progress and frequent and timely assessment.
- Demonstrate students' competence fully in their portfolios by providing support for assessors on how students can collect and use a more comprehensive and varied evidence base.
- Increase access to modern specialist equipment and support students in gaining a full range of work-experience by working more closely with industrial partners.
- Improve the effectiveness of individual learning plans by increasing students' involvement in the process and by ensuring that targets are sharply focused and timely and that records of progress are detailed.
- Develop group tutorials by improving the confidence and expertise of vocational tutors on personal and social development.

## Sport, leisure and recreation

## Grade 2

### Context

35. Approximately 280 students study full-time courses in sport, leisure and recreation at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. GCE AS and A level courses in physical education are studied by 25 students. The majority of the students are aged 16 to 18. Approximately one third of students are female. A very small minority are from minority ethnic groups.

### Key findings

- Students' success rates are broadly average. Success rates are high at foundation and intermediate level and for the GCE A level in physical education course. Success rates are average on national diploma courses, largely because of below average retention rates. Effective action to improve retention is taking place with some early signs of improvement.
- Students demonstrate in lessons high awareness of health and safety. They take a lead in college-wide health initiatives such as an annual health fair. Students work highly effectively in teams. They are well prepared for their future through careers guidance that closely links to industry requirements. Progression rates, including into higher education, are high.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most teaching develops students' knowledge and skill well. The majority of students are motivated and engaged fully in lessons. Most work well independently and make good progress in their learning.
- Mostly high quality resources support teaching and learning, including a modern sports hall, a well-equipped gym and high quality workbooks.
- Teachers use questions effectively to check learning and extend students' knowledge. A minority of learning activities, however, provide insufficient stretch and challenge for students studying at advanced level. In a few lessons at this level, teacher-led activities dominate with limited development of independent research skills.
- Monitoring of students' progress towards the achievement of their learning goals has improved and it is good. The assessment schedule has been appropriately rationalised and an increased variety of assessment methods are used. However, the quality of feedback on assessment varies and does not always state clearly, what students can do to improve further.
- Managers, over the last year, have developed a good range of courses. Interesting specialist options are available at intermediate and advanced level enabling wider choice for students.
- Links with employers and local schools are strong. Teachers use their expertise and industry links to enhance students' experience.

- Students receive good support and guidance. Tutors are enthusiastic and committed to supporting their students; this support is highly valued by students. Expectations of students in respect of attendance, punctuality and behaviour are high and mostly met.
- Leadership and management are good. Judgements in the self-assessment report are accurate but the level of evaluation, especially of teaching and learning, is not always sufficiently rigorous. Improvement plans have clear targets and relevant actions, which mostly lead to improvement.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Students and teachers are mutually respectful, highly aware of equality matters and relationships across different groups of students are good. The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is not a strong feature.

What does Stafford College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the checking of the progress of students on national diploma courses by much closer monitoring of their performance and taking prompt action if they are at risk of withdrawal.
- Increase the level of challenge in lessons for advanced level students through developing their independent learning skills.
- Improve the effectiveness of assessment feedback to students by teachers providing a strong focus on what students need to do to gain higher grades.
- Develop students' understanding of equality and diversity matters by teachers maximising opportunities in lessons to cover this area.
- Increase the rigour of evaluation in self-assessment through identifying strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning and using a broader range of evidence to make judgements.

## Visual Arts

## Grade 2

### Context

36. Approximately 500 students study visual arts at intermediate and advanced level. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and study on full-time vocational courses. Courses offered include the first diploma in art and design, national diplomas in art and design, fashion and clothing, graphic design, photography, interactive media and the foundation diploma in art and design. Approximately 90 students study GCE AS and A level art. Two thirds of students are female and a very small minority are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

### Key findings

- Success rates on the large majority of courses increased in 2008/9. The majority of success rates are high. Success rates on the intermediate and foundation diploma courses declined due to below average retention in 2008/09 from a previously strong position. The proportion of students achieving high grades on the foundation diploma is high.
- Students produce a high standard of practical work that shows a confident and creative use of a wide range of skills and techniques. Students on the national diploma in fine art produce particularly good work. All students show a well-developed ability to use research effectively to inform their own work.
- Progression to higher education is high. The majority of students accept first choice offers at a range of universities. Students are well equipped and prepared for the application and interview process.
- Teaching and learning are good. Students rate the standard of teaching highly especially individual support in lessons. Teachers plan learning well using a wide range of resources to integrate theoretical and practical elements successfully. Information and learning technology is used well but the use of interactive white boards lacks in creativity.
- The rate of progress in learning made by students in intermediate lessons is good; however, a minority of students at advanced level are insufficiently challenged to achieve their full potential.
- The provision meets the needs and interests of students well with opportunities for progression from foundation to advanced level. Curriculum enrichment is good with includes the offer of substantial and varied local, national and international opportunities for students to broaden their experience.
- Partnerships are satisfactory. The good links with local schools are effective in attracting students to courses at the college; however, links with employers are not extensive.
- Tutorial arrangements are good. Both group and individual tutorials are well organised and effective in supporting learning, monitoring progress and developing an awareness of the Every Child Matters themes. Tutorials are highly

valued by students. There is some good practice in the use of individual learning plans but the quality of target setting is inconsistent.

- Leadership and management are good. Managers take highly effective actions to secure improvements, including tackling and improving courses with low success rates.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well through the curriculum. Students explore these issues creatively through their work including topics such as gender, power and the meaning of symbols and their relationship to cultural and moral issues. In lessons, teachers effectively challenge stereotyping and disrespectful language and attitudes.
- The self-assessment report is comprehensive and inclusive. Judgements are accurate. Underperforming courses are clearly identified and appropriate actions taken for supporting and monitoring progress. The report uses data well to support judgements. Targets set are challenging and realistic. There is, however, limited evaluation of teaching and learning.

What does Stafford College need to do to improve further?

- Develop the checking of the progress of students on the first diploma in art and design and the foundation diploma in art and design by closer monitoring of their performance and taking prompt action if they are at risk of withdrawal.
- Improve students' progress, particularly at advanced level by ensuring the development of independent learning skills and providing greater challenge in lessons.
- Develop more extensive partnerships with local employers to expand potential benefits for students
- Include more detailed and evaluative information on teaching and learning in the self-assessment report to ensure that strengths and areas for improvement are clearly identified.

## Information about the inspection

37. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice principal as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspections, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
38. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires that students and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed lessons, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from courses from across the subject areas the college offers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## Stafford College

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	3478	0	2538	361	0
Part-time learners	2518	261	230	1564	463
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	3	2	3	3	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3				
How well do learners progress?	3				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2				
Quality of provision	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

\*where applicable to the type of provision



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