

City of Bristol College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 131094

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the provider

1. City of Bristol College is one of the largest further education colleges in the country. It was formed by a series of college mergers that ended in 2002. In 2005 the college took over responsibility for Bristol's adult and community learning provision that had previously been delivered by the local authority. In 2008 the college acquired a large private training provider. The college has eight main centres across the city and delivers provision at a range of other venues. The college has achieved the Training Quality Standard for engineering, business and care and, in 2008, achieved a Beacon Award for school partnership and collaboration.
2. Bristol is the largest city in the south west, its economy now more reliant on aerospace and financial services than on its port. Bristol has areas of economic deprivation that are among the worst in the country. There has been a history of low success for pupils at age 16 from Bristol's schools, with the proportion gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE remaining well below the national average. The college faces significant competition for students at the end of their GCSE courses as a result of post-16 provision in secondary schools and academies across the city, and in the sixth form college. Approximately 15% of the college's learners are of minority ethnic heritage, which is a higher proportion than in the local population as a whole.
3. The college's provision covers all 15 subject areas. In 2008/09 learners aged 16 to 18 studying at level 3 accounted for around 20% of all learners in learner-responsive provision. Learners aged 16 to 18 in learner-responsive provision accounted for just under 40% of the college's provision. Train to Gain accounted for around one third of employer responsive activity. Around 40% of learners in Train to Gain were in the business subject area. Around 50% of apprentices were in the engineering subject area.
4. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Onsite (off-the-job training for apprentices in engineering)
 - JTL (off-the-job training for apprentices in engineering)
5. Organisations providing training on behalf of the college include:
 - Beacon Centre (preparation for life and work)
 - Bristol City Council (a range of subject areas)
 - Carillion (engineering and preparation for working life)
 - Construction Learning World (construction, and retail and commercial enterprise)
 - Hartcliffe and Withywood Ventures (a range of subject areas)
 - Silai for Skills (a range of subject areas)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to16 Further education (16 to18) Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment	92 full-time learners 1,000 part-time 3,994 full-time learners 1,554 part-time learners 1,563 full-time learners 534 part-time learners 273 learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	1,215 full-time learners 13,092 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	5,186 learners 1,726 apprentices
Informal adult learning (Personal and Community Development Learning)	2,690 learners

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	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	
Health, social care and child care	2
Engineering	2
Art, design and media	3
Preparation for life and work	2
Business, administration and law	3

Inspectors graded learner responsive provision in health, social care and child care; engineering; art, design and media; preparation for life and work; and business, administration and law. They graded employer responsive provision across subject areas for both learners aged 16 to 18 and adults combined, informal adult learning, and provision for learners aged 14 to 16.

Overall effectiveness

- This is a good college with good capacity to improve outcomes for learners and the quality of its provision. The college is highly inclusive and provides a welcoming environment for its learners. It works very well with partners to ensure that learners from a wide variety of backgrounds are successful in gaining qualifications across the wide range of the college's work. The college's response to meeting the needs of learners and employers is outstanding.

7. Outcomes for most learners are good and have improved over the past two years. The college knows itself well, although new quality assurance arrangements are not yet fully established in a few areas. It has very sound finances and has a clear vision for its future. Learners benefit from a wide range of support. The college promotes equality and diversity well, although there is work to do to improve the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons.
8. The college recognises that it has further work to do in a few areas to maintain the progress made in improving performance. Learners aged 16 to 18, and particularly those doing A-level courses, are not as successful as most learners in the college. Too often, lesson activities do not meet the needs of all learners. Lesson observation is not yet sufficiently effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning. One-to-one progress reviews are of inconsistent quality.

Main findings

- The college's outstanding partnerships make a valuable contribution to community and social cohesion through providing extensive opportunities for young people and adults. Sound strategic planning ensures that the curriculum is very clearly mapped to important business and industry needs in the area and to support learners' employability skills.
- The college offers clear progression routes in all sector subject areas, including extensive provision in work-based learning. The excellent range of vocational options for learners aged 14 to 16 is having a demonstrable impact in raising achievement and aspiration. Carefully-targeted provision for young people makes a significant contribution to reducing the numbers not in education, training or employment.
- Successful management action has brought about significant improvement in success rates over the past two years, leading to good outcomes for most learners.
- Leadership and management are good. The principal provides a clear strategic vision which is supported by all staff. An excellent governing body knows the college well and sets ambitious targets covering all aspects of college provision. Financial management is very strong.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college monitors the progress of different groups of learners well and is reducing the differences in success rates of most groups. The college provides many opportunities for learners to raise awareness of working and living in a multi-racial society. However, there is insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity in many lessons and reviews.
- Quality assurance procedures are good. Termly performance reviews (TPRs) are mostly used well. However, implementation has been slow in a few areas and

actions for improvement are not always rigorous. Strengths and areas for improvement identified during lesson observations remain insufficiently precise. Current arrangements for giving teachers notice of observations provide an insufficiently critical view of the quality of teaching and learning.

- The college provides a wide range of support. Initial advice and guidance and learning support are very good. Although inspectors saw good examples of one-to-one progress reviews, these are not consistent across the college. In some cases, one-to-one progress reviews do not start early enough in the year.
- Outcomes for students aged 16 to 18 in learner-responsive provision have improved to around the national average. Variation in course performance within and across curriculum areas is significant. For students on A-level courses success rates remain below average. In A levels and other advanced level courses there is too much variation in students' progress across the range of subjects.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In practical sessions teachers provide interesting and meaningful activities that link well with theory work. Teachers use information learning technologies (ILT) successfully in many lessons. However, in too many lessons teachers do not provide sufficiently challenging tasks for a wide range of abilities.
- Teachers' lesson plans are beginning to focus more appropriately on learning. However, too many staff do not use the group profiles produced to plan effectively for different learners' needs.

What does City of Bristol College need to do to improve further?

- Teachers should challenge all learners sufficiently and provide a range of learning activities that keep learners interested and inspired.
- Ensure that learners have clear and timely targets for their learning and progress that meet their individual needs and prior attainment more fully.
- Improve the rigour of observation of lessons and other learning activities to ensure that managers gain a clearer view of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve the critical analysis within TPRs, reducing the inconsistencies that exist across curriculum areas to enable managers to have a more accurate picture of the quality of provision.
- Train teachers and staff more effectively to ensure equality and diversity are promoted well in all lessons and in reviews for work-based learners.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the high-quality support they receive from their teachers and support services in the college
- the knowledge and enthusiasm of their teachers
- the welcoming atmosphere in the college.

What learners would like to see improved:

in a few instances:

- lesson activities meeting their individual needs more fully
- information earlier on in the course about next steps into education or employment
- course organisation and communication between teaching staff
- application of theory work in practical classes.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the wide and flexible range of training on offer that meets their needs well
- good working relationships, support and customer care
- the boost to employees' skills and performance as a result of training provided by the college.

What employers would like to see improved:

in a few instances:

- a closer link between on- and off-the-job training
- greater involvement in the review of learners' progress
- more effective and more frequent communication with the college.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

9. The college has a key role in education and training in the greater Bristol area. The college has successfully managed the effects of local and national challenges to ensure that learner numbers continue to grow and that its financial health is strong. It is making good progress in improving outcomes for learners. The clear strategic vision is shared by all staff and governors. The governing body provides appropriate challenge and excellent support. Partnerships are exemplary, allowing the college to extend education and training opportunities to a wider range of the local population. Self-assessment procedures are good and the resulting report is mostly accurate. Recent improvements in the quality-assurance procedures are already showing impact in some areas. However, implementation is slow in a few areas.
10. The college has made good progress in addressing most of the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Success rates for apprentices are much improved. However, less progress has been made on ensuring that the individual needs of learners are met or planned in lessons, particularly those learners of higher ability.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

11. Successful management action has brought about significant improvement in success rates over the past two years, leading to good outcomes for most learners across the wide range of the college's provision. Most learners make good progress. Many learners with low prior achievement are successful in gaining qualifications, often overcoming negative attitudes to education from their previous experiences and a lack of confidence in their potential to learn.
12. Success rates for adults in learner-responsive provision were above average in 2008/09. Overall and timely success rates in apprenticeships are good. However, success rates in Train to Gain are satisfactory. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 in learner-responsive provision have improved to around the national average. Variation in course performance within and across curriculum areas is significant. For students on A-level courses success rates remain below average. In A levels and other advanced level courses there is too much variation in students' progress across the range of subjects. Students make broadly the progress expected from their starting points on entry, but across the range of courses there are examples of both exceptionally high and low performance, as the college acknowledges.
13. The standard of learners' work is good, and this equips learners well for further study or employment. Learners' progression into further study or employment is good. Learners develop good numeracy and literacy skills; success rates in key skills are high. Learners enjoy college. Their attendance is satisfactory.

14. Learners feel safe. They value the college as a welcoming environment and the support they receive from both their teachers and support service staff. Attention to health and safety in lessons and practical activities is good.
15. Learners are well equipped to make informed choices about their own health and well-being. Healthy eating is promoted well, and this is supported by a good choice of healthy food and nutritional information in the refectories. Learners make a good contribution to the community through charitable work.
16. The college monitors achievement by different groups of learners carefully and to good effect. It has been successful in narrowing achievement gaps in most areas. For example, in 2008/09 learners aged 16 to 18 from Black minority ethnic heritage were as successful as their White British peers. However, the college is aware that areas of underachievement remain, such as a difference in achievement at level 2 between male and female learners aged 16 to 18. The college is taking suitable steps to address these differences.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The college has carried out much useful work to develop further focus on learning. This is beginning to have an impact, as is evident from schemes of work and lesson plans. Inspectors found good personalised learning in some subject areas, and effective flexible assessment in work-based learning. However, inspectors found inconsistencies in meeting the needs of all learners in a significant number of lessons and too many lessons remain insufficiently focused on learning.
18. Good initial assessment systems identify additional learning needs and students say that they receive support quickly. However, these readily-available results are not routinely and consistently used well by all teachers in planning teaching to meet the different needs of students. Teachers are not taking full account of the range of learners' abilities to provide sufficiently challenging tasks for the more able. Meeting the needs of all learners in lessons was an area for improvement at the last inspection.
19. Inspectors found good use in many lessons of ILT, including web-based resources and examples of very effective use of Blackboard to enable learners to work independently. In foundation studies, teachers use initial assessment well to produce a learning plan for students. Particularly effective communications between teachers and support staff ensure learners can work at their own pace. In adult-targeted provision, teachers plan very carefully, effectively ensuring learners' individual needs are met. In vocational areas, staff share their expertise and professional knowledge very well. Teachers integrate practical and work placement activities well with theoretical aspects of the curriculum.
20. The quality of assessment varies across subject areas with some good feedback in some subject areas. However, in arts and media and in engineering,

feedback is insufficiently detailed and in too many areas teachers do not routinely correct grammatical errors and spelling mistakes.

21. The college's extensive partnership working is highly successful in meeting a very wide range of learners' and employers' needs. The college works very closely with partners and employers to ensure that provision meets national and local priorities. Provision is very clearly mapped to important business and industry needs in the area and to support learners' employability skills. Provision for personal and community development learning (PCDL) is very closely targeted for learners who have had poor experiences of school education and/or considerable additional barriers to learning. Partners speak very highly of the college's flexibility and responsiveness.
22. The college offers courses in all sector subject areas and from pre-entry level to higher education, with clear progression routes to higher level study and employment. There is extensive provision for work-based learners through apprenticeships and Train to Gain, particularly in engineering, construction, hairdressing and business. The extensive provision for learners aged 14 to 16 provides an excellent range of vocational options and is having a demonstrable impact in raising achievement and aspiration. Carefully-targeted provision for young people makes a significant contribution to reducing the numbers not in education, training or employment. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities, many of which are developed to enhance their employability skills. In response to the changing economic climate the college has been proactive in developing new provision to meet employers' and employees' changing circumstances through providing training and support for re-employment.
23. Most employers are very satisfied with the quality of training provided by the college, identifying the positive impact that this has in improving and accrediting employees' skills, boosting their confidence, and supporting progression in the job market. However, a few have indicated that communications with the college could be improved and that they would like to have more direct involvement in reviewing learners' progress.
24. The college has a very clear, strategic focus on widening participation through personalising support. The wide range of study support and specialised support plays a key role in the college's work to reduce barriers to learning for students with a very diverse range of needs, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged students.
25. Initial advice and guidance are successful in ensuring students are placed on appropriate courses and levels. Comprehensive and detailed referral processes thoroughly explore potential barriers to learning and engagement. High-quality study support, available in and outside lessons, assists higher levels of achievement. Students in receipt of additional learning support do at least as well as those not needing support. The college has analysed the impact of learning support by age, gender and ethnicity, but not yet by type of support

and managers recognise this as a useful way to refine and improve services further.

26. As recognised in the self-assessment report, individual learning plans (ILPs) are not used consistently well across the college. In some courses they are used regularly with precise targets and sharp deadlines, but in others targets and deadlines are too vague. Some learners said they used ILPs regularly and found them helpful in setting targets and monitoring progress, but others found they made little contribution to their progress or sense of how well they were achieving.
27. Tutorial schemes of work include coverage of the 'Every Child Matters' themes and topics related to promoting students' understanding of equality and diversity, although the quality and detail of this varies. There is still considerable variation in the timing and frequency of one-to-one progress reviews. On some courses, these do not take place until late in the first term.
28. Students receive good guidance on career and progression opportunities, which supports high rates of progression to further or higher education, training and employment, although some students said they would appreciate this a little earlier in their programme. Employers report that work-based learners receive good support from college assessors.
29. The college monitors the quality of tutorial provision through observations and checking documentation, including ILPs. Managers acknowledge that this process is less well developed for tutorials than for other lesson observations, and that a more detailed analysis of key findings would be valuable in sharing best practice and ensuring greater consistency across the college.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

30. The principal, governors and senior managers provide very strong and ambitious strategic leadership, and a clear direction supported by all staff. The college responds very well to national and local initiatives. It continues to make a major contribution to local regeneration partnerships and collaborative education and training developments. It maintains and extends excellent relationships with a wide range of partners, including schools, employers and other organisations. Governors have relevant experience and hold senior staff to account for the effective management of the college. They monitor and review key performance indicators very closely.
31. The college seeks and acts on the views of learners, staff and employers well. Learners are fully engaged in the strategic and day-to-day management of the college through very effective course representatives, student council and student governors. Learners are kept well informed of changes, although the college recognises that feedback on progress could be improved. Revisions to the management structure have resulted in much clearer communication to staff, and they have a clear understanding of their areas of accountability.

32. The college promotes the safeguarding of learners well. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements and the college is preparing well for the new legislation. All appropriate staff have relevant Criminal Records Bureau checks and receive appropriate training. Many managers receive enhanced training. There are comprehensive policies and procedures for protecting young people and vulnerable adults which are reviewed regularly by the governing body. Other agencies are used where appropriate. Risk assessments of most activities undertaken by learners are comprehensive. The college ensures that work placements provide a safe environment through appropriate assessment of the working environment and safety procedures prior to learners working at the premises.
33. This is an inclusive college. Strong partnerships with a wide variety of other organisations enable it to respond positively and successfully to extend education and training opportunities to the disadvantaged and under-represented sectors of the local population. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is significantly higher than that of the locality. The college pays very close attention to equality and diversity and promotes and celebrates equality of opportunity well in many areas of its work, for example in its PCDL provision. Managers and governors monitor equality and diversity impact measures carefully. The performance of learners from different ethnic backgrounds, and of those with disabilities and specific learning needs, is analysed carefully and to good effect. When underperformance is detected, actions are taken to address this. As the success of learners has improved overall, differences between the achievements of different groups of learners have significantly reduced. The college meets its obligations under race relations, gender and disability legislation.
34. Equality and diversity are promoted well to learners through, for example, induction, tutorials, and theme weeks. Learners appreciate the ethos of the Respect campaign, initiated by the student council. Various initiatives inside and external to the college, such as student ambassadors and the 'E&D Challenge', enable many learners to develop and improve their awareness of the wide diversity of needs of different groups. In too many lessons, equality and diversity are insufficiently promoted. However, where they are, for example on some art and design courses, practice is very effective. Marketing materials generally represent learners from diverse backgrounds well and show male and female learners in non-traditional settings. The governing body sets appropriate targets for the ethnic and gender profile of itself and college staff. Although the gender profiles match those of the student body, representation by minority ethnic groups on both are lower. Managers and governors analyse staff recruitment carefully and make good efforts to redress the balance.
35. Following the restructuring of the college, quality assurance systems and processes have recently been updated and improved, the impact of which can already be seen. Middle managers and teachers have assumed greater accountability for the quality of provision and the success of their learners. Improved access to accurate management information through termly performance reviews (TPR) allows senior managers to agree challenging but

realistic targets with course leaders, and to monitor progress in a more effective and timely manner. This enables effective actions to be taken at an earlier stage. However, the use of TPRs, and the quality of targets in action plans, varies across curriculum areas. The 'notice to improve' system is improving the quality of underperforming courses.

36. Self-assessment procedures involve most areas of the college's work, including emphasis on the views of learners and employers. The resulting report provides an accurate picture in most respects, including strengths and areas for improvement. Similarly, faculty and curriculum leaders have a good awareness of what they need to do to improve further. The college recognises that grading of lessons in previous years has been overgenerous. The lesson observation scheme has been improved in the current year, with fewer observers and a greater focus on actions for improvement. Observations made jointly with inspectors were accurate. However, current arrangements in some areas for giving teachers notice of observations provide an insufficiently critical view of the quality of teaching and learning. Improving rigour in lesson observation is an area for improvement for the college as the capture of strengths and areas for development is often insufficiently precise.
37. Accommodation and resources are generally good, although there is a shortage of specialist resources in multi-media and media in the art, design and media subject area. Very strong financial management and prioritisation have ensured the effective use of resources, and the successful funding and management of a major new building programme. The college provides good value for money as a result of achieving good outcomes for learners.

Subject areas

Health, social care and childcare

Grade 2

Context

48. There are 978 learners in the area, of whom some two thirds are on health and social care and one third on childcare courses. Courses are available from foundation to advanced level. Most students are female. However, the college has been successful in recruiting males in this sector. Most learners in health and social care are adults and most learners in child care are aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are good. Much of the provision shows a significant trend of improvement in learners' success, with success rates well above average and showing the impact of strategies to improve retention. Other awards show a variable trend and in a small minority of courses success rates have declined since 2006/07.
- Many learners with low prior achievement are successful in gaining qualifications. Learners make good progress, often overcoming negative attitudes to education from their previous experiences and a lack of confidence in their potential to learn.
- Learners' written work is of a good standard. Work demonstrates good theoretical knowledge of the principles and values involved with caring for children and vulnerable adults. Learners take pride in their work and use their information technology skills well to further enhance the presentation of their work.
- There is a good balance between practical and theoretical learning activities to support and increase learners' employability skills. Learners enjoy their lessons, work hard and participate well.
- The promotion of learners' safety is good within lessons. Learners state that they feel safe within the college environment.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons well and use their vocational experience successfully to motivate learners. Teachers use a variety of learning activities and make good reference to learners' work experience to enhance learning. They check learners' understanding effectively. However, not all teachers plan their lessons to ensure that learning activities are sufficiently demanding for higher-attaining learners.
- Teachers provide good written and oral feedback on learners' written work and ways to improve. However, too few teachers correct literacy mistakes and encourage learners to use numerical concepts in their work. Teachers do not always use opportunities in learning activities in intermediate and advanced vocational subjects to reinforce learners' literacy and numeracy skills.

- The college has developed a very good range of programmes that successfully meet the needs of a wide group of learners. Well-planned progression routes enable high numbers of learners to progress from foundation to advanced levels.
- Good, long-standing relationships with employers and public services provide valuable work experience for learners on health, social care and childcare courses. Staff have been involved in developing the new diplomas in this area of work. Further partnership work includes the school links work to provide good opportunities for learners aged 14 to 16.
- Teachers' care, guidance and support to learners are good. In tutorials learners produce useful action plans that contain behavioural as well as learning targets. Tutors provide good advice and guidance particularly on progression within the sector. They provide a valuable point of contact for learners on how to deal with any incidents of bullying and harassment that might occur.
- The leadership and management of health, social care and childcare programmes are good. Senior managers provide clear leadership and direction. Managers and staff work well together to provide a good learning environment for learners. Managers and staff are aware of local and national priorities and changes in workforce training to meet the challenges within the care and childcare occupations.

What does City of Bristol College need to do to improve further?

- Develop a range of more demanding learning activities to better meet the needs of higher-attaining learners, providing more and better opportunities to develop further their critical reflection and analytical skills.
- Make improvement to the contextualisation and application of literacy and numeracy skills within the vocational programme to assist learners in raising their skill levels in these areas.

Engineering

Grade 2

Context

49. Of the 1,578 learners enrolled on engineering programmes, 761 are aged 16 to 18 with two thirds of these following full-time programmes. Of the remaining 817 adult learners, around a third follow full-time programmes. There are 173 learners aged 14 to 16 from a range of local schools on a variety of engineering programmes. The college provides programmes at all levels in a wide range of engineering disciplines including automotive, aeronautical, mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering. The college has a significant involvement in work-based learning with a further 894 learners following employer-led apprenticeship programmes. Many of these are on specific programmes that recruit nationally and they attend college on a full-time or block-release basis. Many of these employers enhance the resources to support the learning experience. Female learners make up 5% of the total and those from minority ethnic groups represent 9% of the total learner numbers.

Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are good. Success rates have improved significantly in 2008/09 and for most programmes are now well above the national average. There has been significant action within course teams to bring about these improvements. The key skill success rates for work-based learners are high. Learners who receive support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups achieve at least as well as their peers.
- The standard of learners' work in practical workshops and laboratories is good. Learners produce work pieces to industrial and commercial standards and work competently and diligently on industrial-standard hardware and software.
- In most lessons learners make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of engineering topics. They develop confidence and self esteem and make valuable contributions within the sessions. Learners value the opportunity to improve their skills and improve their employability. They report that they very much enjoy learning.
- Learners feel safe on the college campuses. Health and safety arrangements are good. Learners pay good attention to developing and maintaining safe working practices. They make appropriate use of personal protective equipment.
- Overall teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They have good rapport with learners and successfully encourage a culture of mutual respect. They ask searching questions of learners and use a variety of teaching techniques. However, all too frequently teaching is unstructured and does not challenge the more able. In the observed sessions insufficient account was taken of learners' identified support needs.

- The resources to support learning are very good and some are exceptional. Workshops are very well equipped with sufficient high-quality, industrial-standard equipment. Most classrooms provide a good learning environment with appropriate technical resources. Many are also equipped with data projectors and interactive whiteboards; teachers used these effectively to enhance the learning experience.
- Assessment is frequent, timely and in line with the awarding body requirements. However, feedback on learners' work is often brief, especially for those achieving the higher grades, and does not provide sufficiently detailed information to enable learners to improve their work. Tutorials are effective in monitoring and targeting learner progress. Internal verification complies with the appropriate standards and ensures that the assessment is consistent and fair. However, it does little to improve the quality of the assessment process.
- The range of courses is wide, identifying clearly identified progression routes. Large numbers of learners have progressed through these programmes from level 1 to level 4. Learners value highly the range of additional qualifications and enrichment activities available on most programmes. There are good partnerships with local school consortia for the provision and development of the 14-19 Diploma and for programmes for learners aged 14 to 16.
- The college has paid particularly attention to meeting the needs of employers and the arrangements in place are outstanding. Employer-specific programmes have been developed with a range of high-profile national employers. Course content, attendance patterns and high specification resources and accommodation have been developed in close liaison with the employers to ensure that their particular needs are supported.
- The initial assessment of learners' additional support needs for literacy and numeracy is good. Most learners identified receive effective out-of-class support. However, in the observed lessons, teachers made little allowance for individual needs or learning styles, making little use of the information provided to them in group profiles about those learners receiving support.
- Leadership and management are good. There has been a recent reorganisation of the team with some arrangements still evolving. The structure reflects the main strands of work and programme/contract managers are clear about their role in promoting improvements, particularly in the key performance indicators. Staff at all levels can articulate clearly the strategic vision and the position the college occupies within the local community.
- There is a clear meeting structure and vertical lines of communication. However, managers and staff within programme teams have too few opportunities to share practices and develop common patterns and expectations. Staff within different teams experience differing expectations of their performance and development needs. They are fully aware of the procedures for dealing with safeguarding issues and safe working practices are prioritised effectively.
- All staff are actively involved in self-assessment and the process is well understood. The subject self-assessment report recognises accurately most strengths and areas for improvement.

What does City of Bristol College need to do to improve further?

- Fully implement well-conceived actions to improve success rates across all programme areas.
- Improve learning in many sessions by planning to meet the differing needs of learners through support and extension.
- Provide more opportunities for managers and staff within the faculty to share experiences and practices.

Art, design and media

Grade 3

Context

50. Currently 936 students study art, design and media, of which approximately 521 are aged 16 to 18 and 558 are female. One hundred and ten are studying for GCSE AS or A levels and 581 are undertaking BTEC diplomas in art and design, fashion, graphic design, multimedia, media or photography at foundation to intermediate level.

Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are satisfactory. Success rates for students on foundation and most intermediate diploma courses are at, or above, the national average. On A-level courses they are high also. However, success rates are low on GCSE courses, AS level courses and on advanced diploma courses.
- Students on foundation level, AS and A-level programmes are set clear targets for achievement and these are systematically monitored. However, target setting is not fully embedded in all intermediate and advanced vocational courses.
- The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Students on foundation level art and design and fashion and clothing courses produce some invigorating, innovative work and exploit a wide range of media; their work is executed to a high standard. However, on vocational diploma courses much work is satisfactory. In many cases sketchbooks lack depth and experimentation is limited. Too much written work is of a low standard and remains uncorrected.
- Attendance and punctuality are low on a number of courses and staff do not sufficiently challenge student absence and lateness.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but are good on foundation level art and design and on fashion and clothing courses. In these areas students are provided with a range of activities which relate directly to their daily lives. Teaching is well structured and tasks are clear. However, in many other lessons teachers do not provide a sufficient range of activities to invigorate and inspire students and teachers do not plan adequately in order to raise student aspirations.

- In a number of lessons the needs of individual students are not sufficiently considered and, as a result, those who are able to work at a more advanced level, or at a faster pace, are not adequately challenged.
- Teachers provide students with good individual support and give helpful guidance on techniques, research and the generation of ideas. Pastoral support on the BTEC introductory and first diploma courses in art and design is outstanding.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, significant changes to staffing, together with the introduction of revised quality process, are beginning to raise standards.
- Good practice is insufficiently shared across the sites and accommodation is not always appropriate for the requirements of the creative industries. Some rooms are cramped and isolated from other specialist areas. This then inhibits students' experimental work and opportunities for students, and for staff, to learn from each other. The area has a shortage of specialist resources in multi-media and media.
- Equality and diversity are not sufficiently integrated into assignments. Opportunities to engage students in discussion, or in tasks based on cultural, environmental, age- or belief-based stimuli, are not well exploited. However, on the fashion and clothing and the BTEC introductory art and design course, students' work exhibits a vibrancy of colour and strong cultural and environmental influences.
- The self-assessment report is generally accurate but does not place sufficient emphasis on teaching and learning and their impact on raising standards.

What does City of Bristol College need to do to improve further?

- Interrogate more closely the reasons for the disparity in success rates between different college sites and share good practice.
- Review teaching methods to ensure that all students, particularly the most able, are being sufficiently challenged to reach their full potential.
- Review teaching observations to focus more closely on learning which would allow teachers to develop their teaching methods to meet individual need.

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

Context

51. Around 1,353 learners are on part-time adult literacy and numeracy programmes and 1,349 on programmes for learners aged 16 to 18. The courses range from pre-entry, independent living for learners with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to level 3 Access and are held on three main sites. In addition, 4,435 learners aged 16 to 18 and 414 adult learners are taking key skills in application of number, communications and information technology. Literacy and numeracy are large parts of courses for learners who have not

been in education, employment or training. English for speakers of other languages was not part of the scope of the inspection and so is not covered in this report.

Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are good. Overall success rates for key skills are outstanding at between 5 and 35 points above national average. There has been a marked improvement from 2007/08 to 2008/09 as a result of intervention strategies. Leaders and managers have sustained performance so far in the current academic year.
- Basic skills are at, or slightly above, national success rates. The college actively engages with partners in the community to deliver basic skills to hard-to-reach groups. The college recognises that outcomes for these learners need to improve and has appropriate strategies in place.
- Learners improve their confidence and independence, and enjoy learning. Enrichment opportunities are not consistently of a high standard across the area. Attendance is monitored well and remedial action taken as necessary.
- The standard of learners' work is good with most learners interested and completing tasks set. Many learners use the ILT as part of the numeracy and literacy lesson activities.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use successfully a range of strategies and resources that engage learners' interest and promote discussion. Learning activities challenge learners. Planned learning objectives provide information on an individual learner basis and most achieve their targets within the timescale given.
- Initial and diagnostic assessment is good and is used well to establish a comprehensive learning plan for the individual learner. Targets are meaningful and agreed between additional learning support and curriculum teams. However, staff do not use these individual learning plans (ILPs) consistently well across the area. Good examples were seen in a few lessons with learners updating their progress and achievement with the teacher, but in other lessons learners had little or no knowledge of their ILPs.
- Learners receive good individual and group support in lessons from home support workers and additional learning support staff who explain tasks and keep the learner focused on tasks.
- Learners on vocational courses have good work experience opportunities which develop their confidence, independence and prepare them for employment. Enrichment opportunities are limited in some programmes.
- Leadership and management, and quality assurance across the area are good. Self-assessment is rigorous and is bringing about improvement. Improvement plans have accurately identified the areas for improvement and staff are sharing good practice across subject areas.

What does City of Bristol College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure those actions identified to improve basic skills retention, achievement and success are closely monitored and lead to the planned improvements.
- Ensure all teaching staff are using the individual learning plan with learners and that these plans are revised on a regular basis to inform learners on what has been achieved and how to progress.
- Review the range and availability of enrichment opportunities across the range or programmes.

Business, administration and law

Grade 3

Context

52. Currently, 1,328 learners are working towards a range of learner responsive vocational and academic qualifications in business, business administration, finance and accounting, management and law. Approximately one third of learners are aged 16 to 18; the remaining two thirds are adults following full-time and part-time courses. Provision ranges from foundation to advanced level.

Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are satisfactory. Success rates were at or below average on a significant number of key courses in 2008/09. However, success rates for learners on the BTEC First Diploma and for those following Trade Union Studies have remained consistently high.
- Actions have been unsuccessful to bring success rates for learners in a small number of black minority ethnic groups into line with the college average for business courses. Continuing strategies to improve these success rates are underdeveloped.
- The standard of learners' work and the development of workplace skills are good. On the NVQ Administration adult programme, for example, learners are well prepared for the workplace and are able to demonstrate the confident use of information technology and communication skills.
- Learners enjoy their learning experiences and feel safe. Learners speak highly of their teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm. They are clear about how their course has helped the development of their confidence and would help them to realise their future aspirations. Learners feel the college is a safe and productive learning environment.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the lessons observed, learning activities often provided insufficient challenge to more able learners. There was an insufficient range of teaching styles and assessment methods to fully meet

learners' needs. Teachers did not plan well for the ability range within the group.

- In better lessons teachers clearly outline the objectives and required outcomes of the lesson. They use questioning well to assess knowledge and understanding in a productive environment. The use of learning technology enhances learning.
- Assessment feedback provides learners with a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.
- The provision of enrichment activities contextualised to support the achievement of learning goals is good. Learners on the BTEC in business and NVQ Administration programmes participate in work experience and successfully develop their workplace skills. There are opportunities for learners to visit relevant employers linked to their assessment activities.
- Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners receive a full induction and undertake diagnostic assessments which are used to determine and confirm the correct level of entry to their programmes. However, teachers make ineffective use of this information to plan learning. Individual tutorials and learning plans are satisfactory in setting targets for improvement.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and managers use available data in the SAR process to identify areas for development and take action to remove underperforming provision. However, at curriculum level, staff are not sufficiently aware of the key development actions needed to effect improvements and the targets set are imprecise.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum is underdeveloped. In Trade Union Education programmes, the promotion of equality and diversity is clearly evident. However, from observed lessons and discussion with learners, most other learners are unaware of the concepts in relation to diversity and were insufficiently aware of college procedures through which they could address any negative experiences.

What does City of Bristol College need to do to improve further?

- Develop strategies to personalise teaching and learning to ensure that the needs of all learners are met more effectively.
- Improve the process of target setting to provide greater precision and rigour in the development of actions for improvement.
- Provide staff training in the development of equality and diversity themes in all aspects of curriculum delivery and the learner experience.

Information about the inspection

53. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the college's deputy 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) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
54. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)			
Provider Name:	City of Bristol College	Inspection No	343635
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full-time and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including E2E); 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships Blank Column: insert DWP employability programmes (including Workstep), or Judicial Services or nextstep as appropriate			

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 16-18/19+	19+ PCDL
Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection						
Full-time learners	5,301	92	3,994	1,215	0	0
Part-time learners	25,248	1,000	1,554	13,092	6,912	2,690
Overall effectiveness	2	2	3	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2					
A. Outcomes for learners						
A. Outcomes for learners	2	2	3	2	2	2
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2					
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2					
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	2					
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2					
A3. How safe do learners feel?	2					
A4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2					
A5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2					
B. Quality of provision						
B. Quality of provision	2	2	3	2	2	2
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3					
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1					
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1					
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2					
C. Leadership and management						
C. Leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2	2
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2					
C2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	1					
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2					
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2					
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2					
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2					
C7. 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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