

The Sheffield College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130531

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the provider

1. The Sheffield College is a large general further education college, which recruits a high proportion of its learners from disadvantaged areas and mostly from the Sheffield area. It is organised on a federal structure and situated on three main campuses: Sheffield City College in the centre, Hillsborough College to the north and Norton College in the south of the city. Further sites serve different areas and types of provision and include the Matilda Street Centre, close to the Sheffield City campus, for employer engagement and work-based learning; the Peaks Centre, delivering courses largely at advanced level at Crystal Peaks; Hillsborough Barracks, a business centre in the north of the city, and The Source, another business centre at Meadowhall, a large retail outlet to the east of the city. A number of other sites across the city offer courses at various levels, from pre-entry through to higher education programmes, including on-line courses. Programmes are available in all Learning and Skills Council (LSC) sector subject areas and include apprenticeships and Train to Gain provision in many areas.
2. In 2008/9 there were 36,561 enrolments and some 22,516 individual learners at the college. The majority of full-time learners are aged 16 to 18 and the majority of part-time learners are aged over 19. There are more female than male learners. The percentage of learners from a minority ethnic group is higher than that of the local population. There are seven schools with sixth forms in Sheffield, and five general further education colleges and two sixth form colleges that are within 15 miles of the college. The proportion of school leavers with five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including mathematics and English in Sheffield has risen to 44.5% in 2009, which is below the national average for England (49.8%), but the gap has narrowed. The unemployment rate for Sheffield is higher than that nationally.
3. There have been a number of recent changes at senior level within the college. First a new Principal was appointed, effective from 1st September 2008. A new executive director of finance and resources was appointed early in 2009 and a completely new executive team was recruited and fully in place by July 2009. The rebuild of the Castle (City) College campus is planned to be completed in 2010, bringing to an end an interim period of temporary accommodation from 2007 to 2010. Other planned changes to accommodation have been affected by recent developments within the sector and the current economic climate. All provision funded by the LSC was inspected and six subject areas were looked at in depth.
4. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Hallam University – higher education
 - The University of Sheffield – higher education
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - Yemeni Community Association - learner responsive

- Yemeni Education & Relief Organisation - learner responsive
- Learn For Life - learner responsive
- Peter Rowley Ltd - Train to Gain
- D C Training & Development Ltd - Train to Gain
- Sheffield School of Health & Beauty (White Rose Training) - learner responsive

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	766 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	5,185 full-time learners 745 part-time learners
Foundation learning	900 full-time learners 284 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	1,813 full-time learners 9,262 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	1,973 learners 707 apprentices

Summary report

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

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

Subject Areas	
Health, social care and public services	2
Science and mathematics	2
Engineering	3
Construction	2
Arts, media and publishing	3
Literacy and numeracy	3

Overall effectiveness

- The Sheffield College provides a satisfactory and improving level of provision. Learners' achievement is satisfactory overall and good for those learning in the workplace. Success rates are comparable to national rates in similar colleges at advanced and intermediate level, but well below at foundation level. Certain groups of learners underachieve, such as learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from certain minority ethnic groups. These issues have been accurately identified and plans are in place to address them. Overall, learners make satisfactory progress and are increasingly making good progress in lessons.

7. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Most lessons are well planned and actively involve learners; however, in some there is insufficient stretch and challenge. The scheme for observing teaching and learning has improved, but needs further development to ensure that an accurate grade profile is achieved and that all staff are observed.
8. The college meets the needs and interests of learners very well with a wide range of provision and good progression routes. Opportunities for work experience are limited in some areas. The college has very effective links with schools, employers and the local community. Learners receive good care, guidance and support, which help them settle on their courses and progress to positive destinations when they leave the college.
9. The leadership and management of the college have gone through significant change, with the current structure in place for less than a year. Great progress has been made in identifying and tackling key areas for improvement and building a positive and empowering culture. Initiatives are having a positive impact, but it is too early to see their full effect. The sharing of good practice is underdeveloped, as is the learner involvement strategy. Governance has improved markedly and there is more effective use of data and target setting. Work is ongoing to develop an in-year overarching view of progress and developments.

Main findings

- Learners' success rates are satisfactory. On advanced and intermediate courses success rates are in line with national rates in similar colleges. At foundation level, success rates are well below national rates, where low success rates on Skills for Life courses have had a significant negative impact. Success rates on apprenticeship and Train to Gain courses are high. Certain groups of learners have underachieved, particularly in 2009.
- Learners make the progress expected of them overall and are increasingly making good progress in lessons. Learners enjoy their studies, develop skills well and work well together. The attendance of learners is improving overall, but there are some pockets of poorer attendance and punctuality.
- A good range of enterprise activities are available and increasingly well used by learners. Learners feel safe. Community safety is well promoted. Various themed weeks promote healthy lifestyles well. A range of sporting and fitness activities are available, but are not very well taken up. The college promotes volunteering to learners, but uptake is limited.
- High priority is given to improving teaching and learning which is improving. In the better sessions teachers use a good range of activities. In the less effective sessions teachers do not provide sufficient stretch and challenge. Assessment is frequent and generally well planned. Feedback to learners is good, except on literacy and numeracy courses.

- An improved process for observing teaching and learning has been introduced. This presents an inflated picture of the quality of teaching and learning which the college is aware of. Agency teachers and support sessions are not observed. Paired observations during the inspection were accurate.
- The college provides a very broad range of provision from foundation to advanced level and progression routes are good in most curriculum areas. Learners benefit from a wide choice of subjects and qualifications which enable many of them to successfully make the transition to employment and further learning. However, there is limited access to work experience in a number of curriculum areas.
- Links with employers, schools and community groups are good and continually developing. The college is highly responsive to local community demand and successful partnerships have resulted in some innovative projects aimed at young disadvantaged groups.
- Learners receive good individual care and support. Personal support is particularly effective and learners benefit from comprehensive support services. Tutors provide good support to learners and tutorials are effectively arranged. Information, support and guidance are successful at ensuring that learners have a smooth transition into the college and on to positive destinations on leaving.
- The Principal, senior leaders and governors have a clear vision, strategy and plan of how they will achieve excellence. New and more challenging targets have been set and these are beginning to be achieved. There is a need to draw together all sources of information, such as monitoring data, to gain a single overview of progress being made in-year.
- The quality improvement process accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement and has resulted in almost all underperforming courses being improved. The college is making good progress in improving the quality of its provision. The sharing of good practice is underdeveloped.
- The quality of governance has improved significantly since the last inspection and governors are now in a good position to monitor outcomes for learners closely and drive forward improvement. The use of learner views and the learner involvement strategy need further development.
- Safeguarding arrangements are extremely robust. A culture has been created where staff and learners are strongly safety-aware. The college listens carefully to learners' views on safety-related issues and takes appropriate action.
- The college actively promotes equality and diversity and effectively tackles unfair discrimination. The performance of different groups of learners is analysed and gaps in performance identified. There is an achievement gap between the college success rate and that of black learners, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and learners from certain vulnerable groups in 2009.

What does The Sheffield College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates particularly at foundation level and in Skills for Life. Narrow the achievement gap for those groups of learners currently

underachieving, such as those in certain vulnerable groups and from some minority ethnic groups.

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching. Provide sufficient stretch and challenge so that learners of all abilities make better progress and achieve more highly.
- Further develop the process for observation of teaching and learning so that it provides an accurate and reliable picture of the quality of teaching and learning. Increase tutorial observations and extend the process to include agency staff, support sessions, induction and initial assessment.
- Increase the work readiness of learners by ensuring that full-time learners have access to appropriate work experience and work placements.
- Further develop the sharing of good practice across the federation to ensure that all learners receive the same high level of learning experience.
- Improve the learner involvement strategy to ensure that it has clear and measurable targets that are based on significant elements of the college's management of learning.
- Bring together data and information to provide an overview. Draw together the various sources of monitoring data to provide an analysis of in-year progress and bring together the evidence available on the impact that actions have had on progress in lessons and upon learners into a single overview.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the way they are treated as adults
- provision for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- the good rapport between teachers and themselves
- how very knowledgeable the teachers are
- the equipment and facilities, particularly the technology-based ones
- how teaching and extra support are given when needed
- that the college is a friendly place to study.

What learners would like to see improved:

- resources to be more accessible outside their timetable
- improved facilities at the Olive Grove site
- a more varied choice in what they can study at foundation level
- clearer assessment plans to prevent 'bunching' of hand-in dates
- better car parking facilities.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- good communication between the college and the employer
- the well organised provision
- that the college is considerate to their needs
- the good relationship they have with the college
- that more account is being taken of their input.

What employers would like to see improved:

- some issues were raised in relation to individuals and changes that have taken place due to the restructure, but it was felt by employers that these were being dealt with by the college.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement Grade 2

10. The Principal, senior leaders and governors have set, as a clear priority, the need to accelerate the rate of improvement in learners' achievement. There is a clear vision of how this will be achieved and an appropriate plan has been put in place.
11. Challenging targets have been set and these are being monitored well. College data in 2009/10 indicate improvements to the in-year retention rates in most subjects. Success rates on apprenticeships have improved; advanced apprenticeship and Train to Gain success rates are now good.
12. The subject inspection grades awarded represent an improved profile from the self-assessment grades awarded by the college in 2008/09. The college has made good progress in rectifying the two key areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Key skills success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 have improved and are now satisfactory. Much better links have been developed between the observation of learning and teachers' professional development.
13. The self-assessment process accurately identifies almost all the strengths and areas for improvement that the inspection identified. Key underperforming courses have been improved; a number have been withdrawn and, in others, course teams have received effective support from senior managers to drive up success rates. The college is making good progress in improving the quality of its provision. The quality of governance has improved markedly since the last inspection and governors are now in a good position to monitor outcomes for learners closely.

Outcomes for learners Grade 3

14. Success rates for learners are satisfactory. On advanced level programmes the success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 and adults show an improving trend and are in line with comparable national rates. However, there are variations between subject areas, with some subjects having weaker success rates. On intermediate programmes success rates are also improving and just below comparable national rates for both age groups. On foundation programmes success rates are low and well below comparable national rates. The college is acutely aware of the issues behind the poor performance, such as the significant decline in Skills for Life success rates in 2009, and has put a range of improvement strategies in place.
15. Success rates on apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships show improving trends for both the overall and timely success rates. Overall success rates are just above the high comparable national rate and the timely success rates are well above. Success rates for Train to Gain qualifications are high and for some subjects, such as engineering, are excellent. There are variations

between subjects and within subject areas. Success rates on short courses are low for adults and broadly in line with national rates for learners aged 16 to 18. Success rates for 14 to 16 year old learners are satisfactory. Key skills success rates are satisfactory.

16. There are variations in the achievement rates of different groups. There are minimal differences in the achievement rates for male and female learners and for different age groups. However, for learners in some minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, success rates are significantly below comparable national rates and the overall success rate in the college in 2009. This is partly due to the decline in performance of Skills for Life courses mentioned above and marks a reverse from a previously improving trend. The college carried out a rigorous analysis of data, has identified where there are attainment gaps and has put detailed actions in place. These are at too early a stage for clear improvements to be seen.
17. Learners aged 16 to 18 make the progress expected overall on advanced qualifications, when comparing 2009 success rates with their prior attainment, with variations between subjects and qualification types. The progress that learners are currently making in lessons is satisfactory and improving, with learners making good progress in a number of areas. The standard of work produced by learners is at the expected level overall, and better in some areas. Learners develop the skills they need to succeed in their studies, including literacy and numeracy skills. They enjoy their studies, behave very well and work well together. The attendance of learners overall is improving in the college, although there are pockets of weaker attendance and issues relating to punctuality.
18. A highly innovative and award-winning Enterprise Gateway provides a good range of activities for learners which are often delivered by employers. An increasing number of learners achieve additional qualifications. Employability skills and financial literacy are integrated into a growing number of courses. Learners feel very safe and say that they benefit from their health and safety induction. Safety in workshops and laboratories is prioritised. Learners' safety concerns are acted upon quickly. The monitoring of health and safety in work placements is very thorough.
19. Learners are helped to make informed choices about their own health and well-being. They are able to access sexual health and counselling services on all sites and increasingly use these services. Various themed weeks promote healthy lifestyles well. Healthy eating options are available, but are not well promoted. A range of sporting and fitness activities are available, but are not well taken up overall. Learners enjoy contributing to charitable fund-raising. The college promotes volunteering to learners, but this is underdeveloped. The student union has been re-introduced; learner representatives have been appointed and are meeting with course teams. There are examples where this has led to improvements and learners contributed to the design and sustainability features in the new Sheffield City College.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

20. High priority is given to improving teaching and learning, which is satisfactory and improving. A wide range of staff training is available with teaching facilitators and subject learning coaches providing good peer support for teachers. Arrangements to share good practice in teaching and learning are developing. The incorporation of equality and diversity in the curriculum is not yet consistent.
21. Most lessons are well planned. In the better sessions teachers use a good range of activities; learners are actively involved and clearly enjoy their learning. Information and learning technology (ILT) is used very effectively to enhance learners' experiences. Teachers make frequent checks on learning. In the weaker sessions, teachers do not provide sufficient stretch and challenge, use undirected questions and a few teachers ask learners to copy notes from whiteboards. Most teachers set appropriate homework. During the inspection attendance was low in lessons observed in literacy and numeracy and media and art; learners who arrived late disrupted the learning of others. Training for apprentices is very good. On- and off-the-job training are highly complementary. Learner feedback on the quality of teaching is mainly positive.
22. Learners' progress towards their learning goals is sufficiently monitored. Those at risk of not completing are identified and supported. Most teachers have effective data information systems to monitor learners' progress, but these do not feed into central management information systems. Assessment is frequent and generally well planned. On a minority of courses assignments are issued concurrently causing excessive workloads for learners. Work submitted for assessment is marked and returned within reasonable timescales. Feedback from assessors is thorough and enables learners to understand how they can improve. In literacy and numeracy assessment feedback is poor.
23. An improved process for observing teaching and learning has been introduced. The process now links to teachers' appraisals and includes action plans. The grade profile shows a very high proportion of good or better teaching, but the college recognises that this presents an inflated picture. During the inspection, judgements and grades awarded by college observers in paired observations with inspectors were accurate. Agency teachers and support sessions are not yet observed and few tutorial sessions have been observed in the current year. A small number of observation records are too descriptive and lack clear judgements.
24. The college provides a broad range of provision from foundation to advanced level which includes courses for apprenticeships and Train to Gain courses for employment-based learners. Progression routes are good in most curriculum areas. Learners benefit from a wide choice of subjects and qualifications which enable many of them to successfully gain employment and to improve their future job prospects. To address low success rates on foundation level and Skills for Life provision, courses are now structured to give opportunities for

learners to achieve more relevant vocational qualifications. Skills for Life provision is now delivered within curriculum areas and linked more closely to the courses learners follow.

25. Employers' views are extensively sought and acted upon very effectively. However, the involvement of employers and learners in the design and content of courses is limited. The college's enterprise programme is very effective, has achieved Beacon status and is the regional hub for Yorkshire and Humberside Enterprise Academy. Enterprise activities are successfully arranged within curriculum areas and local employers are invited into the college to improve learners' understanding and development of work-related and self-employment skills. The college recognises that work experience for learners is insufficient and is working hard to address this. Enrichment opportunities, especially cross-college activities, are limited.
26. Links with employers, schools and community groups are good and continue to develop. Excellent partnerships, especially with major local employers, have contributed to good progression for learners onto advanced apprenticeships and to the achievement of vocational qualifications leading to longer term job security. The college's growing partnership work with schools has resulted in the sharing of facilities and resources, the development of courses for 14 to 16 year olds, and improved the progression routes for school leavers onto further education. There are more school leaver applications and better and more comprehensive information to ensure that learners are more likely to be placed on the correct courses. The college is highly responsive to local community demand and successful partnerships have resulted in some innovative projects aimed at young disadvantaged groups. Working collaboratively with local community groups the college has been effective in increasing recruitment of learners to the college and in reducing the numbers of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).
27. Learners receive good individual care and support. Personal support is particularly effective and learners benefit from the comprehensive support services available to them. Learners are very positive about the support they receive. Improved initial assessment identifies individual learners' needs well and information from referral organisations and providers ensures that additional support needs are put in place effectively. Tutors provide good support to learners and tutorials are effectively arranged and adapted to meet the needs of learners on particular courses. Learners at risk are quickly identified and immediate actions are taken to improve their attendance. Counselling is available and in high demand for learners requiring help with personal issues. Curriculum areas now deliver direct support to learners with additional support needs. In-year retention rates have improved. Good individual specialist support is provided for those with more complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities and sensory impairments. The college's monitoring of the quality and effectiveness of the support provided by subject teachers to learners is underdeveloped.

28. Information, support and guidance are successful in ensuring that learners are placed onto appropriate courses and progress onto higher level qualifications, education, training and employment. Learners are inducted into college life very effectively and introduction days are well organised. Parents are very positive about the support their young people receive. There are good examples of how curriculum areas involve and liaise with parents about learners' progress. However, this does not happen consistently and a few parents report that they would like to be better informed.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

29. The mission, strategic objectives and operational plans of the college have been radically improved in the last year. The new Principal and executive team aspire to achieve excellence for learners within the positive and supportive culture they have created. Leaders have produced a clear and realistic strategy that focuses on the development of high quality learning programmes. Plans are carefully aligned with national and local priorities. Partnership working has improved significantly and is very effective. The culture of the college has changed and a more cohesive team is in place. A new management structure gives departmental managers more time to monitor course performance against specific targets. The college recognises that the sharing of good practice between departments and sites is underdeveloped and plans are in place to improve this.
30. The governance of the college has improved significantly and is good. Governors provide proper scrutiny and challenge to senior managers and statutory duties are met. Governors monitor financial health effectively. Good systems are in place to assess and monitor risk. The impact of the various committees has improved and they are used well to help shape the strategic direction of the college. The quality of information provided for governors has improved and enables them to have a secure basis for evaluation of the quality of provision and outcomes for learners.
31. The college has a clear strategy for safeguarding learners. A culture has been created where staff and learners are strongly safety-aware. The college listens carefully to learners' views on safety-related issues and takes appropriate action. Comprehensive training is in place to ensure that staff are aware of the action they should take in response to safeguarding issues. The college meets government requirements with regard to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. There is a central list which shows that appropriate checks have been carried out on all staff. Apprentices are appropriately safeguarded while being trained by their employers. The college co-operates with other agencies to protect vulnerable learners. There are effective arrangements for the health and safety of learners and staff. Learners are made aware of unfair, unsafe and abusive practices and how they can access help and support.

32. The college actively promotes equality and diversity and effectively tackles unfair discrimination. The promotion of equality and diversity is embedded in many aspects of the college's work, especially recruitment of learners and programme planning. Learners have clear guidance on the standard of behaviour expected; they work with staff to promote the values of tolerance and respect whilst at college. The college attracts many learners from disadvantaged areas and those who have not traditionally studied in further education. The performance of different groups of learners is analysed and gaps in performance identified. Overall the gaps between college success rates and the success rates of black learners and those from minority ethnic background and those from some vulnerable groups have not closed significantly. However, there are some specific examples where college action has brought about improvement. The profile of the governing body does not reflect that of its learner population with regard to race and disability; however efforts are being made to improve this. There are some gaps in the way the college approaches equality in terms of its systems to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and support. The college's response to equality in terms of the apprenticeship programmes is particularly strong.
33. Employer engagement has improved significantly and is effective. Employers feel that the recent changes to the leadership of the college have greatly enhanced their opportunity to ensure that their views are represented. The strategy to involve learners in the decision-making process is under development. The views of different user groups are canvassed and acted upon to improve some aspects of facilities for learners; however, there is less impact on the management of teaching and learning. The extent to which all groups of learners and individuals have the opportunity to give their views on the provision has improved recently. Learners are broadly confident about their contribution to the improvement of the college.
34. The college quality improvement arrangements have improved and are effective. The college self-assessment process is thorough and links between the self-assessment report and the quality improvement plans are clear. In most cases it is too early to judge their impact on success rates, although the college has evidence of improved retention rates and overall attendance and punctuality. The positive evidence available on the impact that plans have had on progress in lessons has not been brought together yet to provide an overview of the current position. There is a greater focus on analysing and promoting the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The analysis of data has improved and is used well in setting targets and self-evaluation.
35. The college provides satisfactory value for money. The new City College building provides an excellent environment for learning and an outstanding range and quality of equipment. On other sites learners have appropriate access to a satisfactory range of learning resources. There has been good investment in ILT. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have access to appropriate specialist staff and specially adapted learning resources. Accommodation is managed carefully. Sustainability is given a high priority.

Staff are well qualified. Financial planning and controls and mechanisms to ensure accountability and financial stability are satisfactory.

Subject areas

Health, social care and public services

Grade 2

Context

36. The college offers courses from entry level to foundation degrees in health and social care, child care and public services. Apprenticeship programmes and Train to Gain courses in health and social care, child care, learning and development and dental practice are also offered. There are 2,420 learners on learner responsive programmes, 223 on Train to Gain courses and 257 on apprenticeship programmes. Around half of learners are aged 16 to 18. The majority of the learners are female and of White British heritage.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates were satisfactory in 2008/09. Success rates on advanced apprenticeships are good, and for other employer responsive provision and learner responsive courses are satisfactory. Learners develop good knowledge and skills and have a good understanding of the science that underpins their practice. Learners improve their confidence and their independent learning skills are well developed.
- Learners make good improvements to their economic well-being. The learners on the NHS programme working in conjunction with the Sheffield hospitals have a guaranteed interview on completion of their programme and many secure employment through this. Learners develop their roles in the workplace and their improved skills are recognised by employers.
- Learners use safe working practices in learning and at work, and learners on child care programmes have a good understanding of how to deal with safeguarding issues. Learners feel safe at college and appreciate the security measures in place.
- Learners have a satisfactory understanding to enable them to make informed choices about their health and well-being, mainly through curriculum delivery. In some lessons healthy lifestyle choices are promoted but, in others, there is little reinforcement to encourage this.
- Teaching and learning are good. ILT is used well to engage learners and develop good independent learning skills, such as research and critical thinking skills. Sessions are interactive and learners carry out some challenging and interesting tasks. Learners are motivated and concentrate well in most sessions. Monitoring of progress is good on apprenticeship programmes and feedback to challenge learners to improve is good.
- Strategies to personalise learning and ensure that all learners are fully stretched and challenged, or supported, are underdeveloped. In the better lessons teachers are aware of individual learner's needs and adapt their delivery to meet them. These strategies are used best in the childcare provision. However,

the planning of differentiated tasks and strategies is very limited in most lessons.

- The needs and interests of users are met very well. The range of provision is very broad, with clear progression routes from entry level to foundation degrees. The college is highly responsive to employers and adapts provision to suit their needs. Learners' views are considered well and teaching and learning sessions are adapted to account for these.
- Partnerships are excellent. The college works very closely alongside the Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. This model benefits the NHS and learners by providing a broad range of tailored provision and support, advice and guidance to increase employability. The college has a wide range of partnerships with hospitals, the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and schools, extending and supporting its provision very well.
- Support for learners is good. Learners are well supported in their workplaces and by assessors and tutors, and receive good pastoral care. Advice and guidance about careers and further and higher education are good and learners are well informed about the opportunities available to them. Learners on advanced programmes are well prepared for university and tutorial programmes assist learners in gaining employment.
- The strategic planning and leadership and management of health and social care are good. The college works closely with its partners and staff to plan strategies to meet local needs and improve the quality of provision. The team are highly committed to achieving their aims and staff have a good awareness of what they need to do to achieve these.
- The reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Assessors on apprenticeship programmes check that learners are treated fairly and understand their rights and responsibilities. The planning of teaching, learning and assessment does not sufficiently focus on raising awareness of equality and diversity. The college has identified an achievement gap for learners from certain groups and has put measures in place to narrow this gap. It is too early to see what impact these measures have had.
- Quality improvement procedures are good. A wide variety of methods are used well to collect users' views and use them to improve provision. There have been improvements in a number of areas, for example the quality of teaching and learning, interactive learning strategies and pre-entry advice and guidance. Sharing of good practice between the different departments is underdeveloped.

What does The Sheffield College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that success rates improve by reinforcing the use of improved pre-entry procedures, closely monitoring learners' progress, setting specific and challenging targets and giving extra support where required. Ensure that the actions to narrow the achievement gap receive sufficient emphasis.
- Take action to improve further the use of differentiated learning strategies in lessons by using information about learners' needs to improve planning to

personalise learning. Provide more opportunities to share the good practice found in childcare. Regularly review the impact of actions to improve this.

- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity. Improve staff development to increase staff understanding of how to reinforce equality and celebrate diversity in learning by attending appropriate training and sharing best practice regularly following this.

Science and mathematics

Grade 2

Context

37. There are nearly 2,300 enrolments on science and mathematics courses in 2009/10. Most learners study fulltime and around two-thirds are aged 16 to 18. Almost 1,000 enrolments are on GCSE courses in science and mathematics, the majority being in mathematics. On the full range of AS and A level science and mathematics courses there are over 1,000 enrolments, around 90% being of learners aged 16 to 18. There are also vocational BTEC national courses in science, an Access to HE course for adults and a foundation level course, although the latter has a small number of enrolments.

Key findings

- Success rates on advanced level courses have improved over the past three years and are now satisfactory. On AS courses, the success rate is now above the comparable national average and on A level courses it is close to the national average. On A level courses the proportion of learners achieving high grades is at the national average.
- On A level courses, learners generally achieve the grades expected from their prior attainment. On AS biology, physics and environmental science, learners' progress is better than expected based on their previous attainment.
- Most GCSE success rates are close to the national average, apart from human physiology and health, and psychology, which are below national average. In GCSE mathematics, the proportion of learners achieving grades A* to C is above the national average, although this proportion has declined over the past two years.
- The standard of learners' work ranges from satisfactory to good. Learners of all ethnic groups work well together, enjoy their studies and are confident and feel safe in laboratory environments. A small number of learners participate in the college's Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and, as part of this scheme, they contribute positively to the local community.
- Teaching and learning are good. In a majority of lessons there is a variety of activities which motivate learners well. Teachers use their subject knowledge well. ILT is often used to good effect to support and reinforce learning. However, in some lessons, plans do not incorporate strategies for meeting the needs of all learners and checks on understanding are perfunctory and at group level rather than at the level of the individual learner.
- Work is assessed systematically and regularly and learners appreciate that it is marked and returned rapidly. However, a small minority of marked work does not give learners sufficiently clear and detailed guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- Learning resources range from good to outstanding. Science is taught in well resourced and, in many cases, state-of-the art laboratories, with good

technician support and there are dedicated rooms and software for mathematics. Handouts and other learning resources given to learners are usually of a good standard.

- The range of both vocational and academic courses is good and provides opportunities for progression. A significant proportion of learners on advanced level and access to HE courses progress to higher education, although this is not measured in an organised way across the federation.
- Learners benefit from good curriculum-based enrichment activities, but there is no systematic plan of enrichment for all learners throughout the federation.
- On advanced level courses, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners' progress is monitored against target grades. Academic enhancement workshops are available for all AS level courses for learners in need of additional help. On lower level courses, effective monitoring of learners' progress occurs, but there is no consistent monitoring system in place.
- Leadership and management are good. Self-assessment is largely accurate and actions have been put in place that have led to improvements. Staff utilisation and use of resources are good. Communication is good within each college, but formal communication between, and organised sharing of good practice across, the federation is limited.

What does The Sheffield College need to do to improve further?

- Analyse the reasons for and improve the declining A* to C pass rate in GCSE mathematics and improve A* to C pass rates in other GCSE subjects.
- Further develop strategies to ensure that teaching meets the needs of all learners so that every learner is appropriately challenged. Develop teachers in methodologies for checking that learning is taking place for all learners on an ongoing basis during lessons.
- Develop a consistent system for monitoring learners' progress on non-advanced courses.
- Develop and implement a strategy to share more good practice in teaching and learning across the federation.

Engineering

Grade 3

Context

38. There are 290 full-time learners, the majority of whom are aged 16 to 18. Ten per cent of learners aged 16 to 18 are female as are 18% of adult learners. There are 243 part-time learners; the majority of whom are adults, with 16% of learners aged 16 to 18 being female and 11% of adult learners. Around 60% of learners are in engineering manufacturing, with 40% in motor vehicle provision. There are 141 apprentices and 234 learners on Train to Gain provision. A school programme in motor vehicle provision has 15 learners on it.

Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are satisfactory overall, but with variation between courses. There is a high success rate on the national diploma in manufacturing engineering at advanced level, but the success rate on the intermediate certificate in vehicle maintenance is low. The success rate in motor vehicle Train to Gain provision is very high as is the timely completion rate. Learners' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.
- Learners develop satisfactory knowledge and levels of skills to industry standards. Vocational training has a strong focus on developing such skills by using teachers who are ex-practitioners with direct industrial experience and by using resources and equipment of an industrial standard.
- Health and safety are well embedded in all engineering activities, from initial briefings to best practice procedures for different processes, tools and equipment. Learners say that they feel safe and that the college is a safe and supportive environment; they particularly like the controlled access to the buildings.
- Tutorials are well planned, with a programme of first aid, bullying, sexual education and lifestyles. Learners in engineering are not generally involved in community-based activities and the development of skills relevant to understanding community cohesion is not actively promoted. Learners demonstrate satisfactory personal and social skills through team and group work, are encouraged to share ideas and give assistance to others.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the better lessons teachers use a range of teaching techniques to engage and motivate learners. Effective use is made of ILT, with interactive software supported by clear handouts. The use of question and answer sessions is routine and systematic to check learners' understanding. However, sharing of good practice is underdeveloped.
- There are good resources of an industrial standard. Engineering manufacturing has rapid prototyping and computer-aided manufacturing resources and, in motor vehicle provision, the enhanced diagnostic equipment, rolling road and paint facilities are all to the latest industrial standard. Assessment is accurate

and fair. Work is accurately assessed, well marked and returned promptly. Learners feel that the comments written by teachers are helpful.

- The range of provision is satisfactory, offering courses from entry level through to higher education with clear progression routes between the levels. However, while there are good examples of employer responsiveness, there is no formal forum at curriculum level to receive employers' views and to influence course content to ensure that it matches local circumstances.
- There is insufficient opportunity for work experience for full-time learners to ensure they are fully prepared for employment. Work placement is not a course component for full-time learners and there are very few industry visits. The opportunity for learners to undertake enrichment activities is minimal and is generally not taken up.
- Learners receive good guidance and support. Learners in engineering take an additional online assessment covering literacy, numeracy, spatial awareness and reasoning, with the final score determining their appropriate entry level. Support for learners in class and in practical sessions is satisfactory. In one motor vehicle session a signer provided very effective support for a profoundly deaf learner enabling the learner to fully participate in the activity.
- There are good management actions to effect improvement. Meetings and communication are effective and management information is used routinely in planning and progress reviews. The creation of heads of department, part of the management restructure, has refocused attention on quality and outcomes and the early signs of the impact of these changes are positive. Staff have confidence in the management.
- Some teaching accommodation is inappropriate, being cramped and in need of refurbishment. The computer-aided manufacturing suite is very restricted with the large numerical manufacturing machines alongside the learner workstations. When smaller rooms are used with larger groups they are cramped and ventilation is poor. The temporary classrooms are poorly maintained, creating an environment which is not conducive to learning.
- Learners believe they are listened to and are able to make suggestions. The proposed creation of a student services room at the Olive Grove centre is an example of a response to learners' requests.

What does The Sheffield College need to do to improve further?

- Review more regularly the progress made by intermediate level learners on motor vehicle courses to help them achieve the qualification.
- Develop the sharing of good teaching practice to ensure that all learners experience and enjoy the same high level of learning experience.
- Develop more curriculum enrichment activities and ensure that opportunities for work experience are available, especially for full-time learners.
- Formalise employer engagement at curriculum level to create a forum to ensure that provision matches local circumstances.
- Improve teaching accommodation through some refurbishment, decoration and room layout, and by raising the standard of maintenance.

Construction

Grade 2

Context

39. Almost 860 learners follow programmes in electrical installation, plumbing and heating and ventilation at the Olive Grove site and carpentry and joinery, brickwork, painting and decorating, and construction and civil engineering technician courses at the City site. Of these learners, 75 are female. Around 475 learners are on learner-responsive funded programmes, of which 377 are aged 16 to 18. Just under 150 learners are on apprenticeship programmes and 10 are on Train to Gain programmes. There are currently 27 pupils from local schools on a range of building craft programmes. The college also offers programmes for two large national apprenticeship managing agents and 142 learners follow a range of short bespoke programmes for employers.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Apprentice success rates, for those completing within the agreed time, are very high and well above national rates. Success rates on plumbing and electrical installation courses are good and mostly well above national rates. Success rates on the new diplomas in building crafts are satisfactory at foundation level and high on intermediate joinery. Success rates on part-time BTEC certificate programmes have declined, but these have been affected by recent redundancies. Key skills achievements are good.
- Learners enjoy their programmes and make good progress. During workshop sessions high standards are met and learners demonstrate a sound understanding of the related technical knowledge. Learners develop personal and social skills through a culture of the more able in the group willingly supporting those less able. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed well through the teaching of key skills in the vocational context.
- Learners feel safe and there is a strong health and safety culture. On all programmes learners develop the work ethic within realistic working environments and start times. In the area of sign writing, learners run an award winning enterprise through which a range of merchandise is designed, produced and sold. Healthy food options are available, but not popular. Links with the community are underdeveloped.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lesson plans have clear aims and objectives and identify a range of approaches to allow learners with differing needs to succeed. There is good checking of understanding in most lessons, although the use of open and undirected questions in a minority of lessons results in some learners' inactivity. Feedback is good and stretches learners' understanding. Assessment is regular and contributes to timely achievement of qualifications.
- Good use is made of ILT in many areas. Tutors use images of different types of materials to complement samples within the classroom. Video clips of different types of installations allow learners to develop their understanding of the workplace. An interactive package allows tutors to deliver a session and check

understanding through individual handsets which time learners' responses to questions and presents them in rank order.

- There is a good range of provision in all areas up to intermediate level but a lack of progression opportunities at advanced level except in apprenticeship programmes. Technician programmes are offered at advanced and degree level. Women are actively encouraged to study construction, for example the women-only furniture programmes. Apprenticeship programmes offered by the college support employers across the industry. There are good partnerships arrangements.
- Learners are well supported by tutors and support workers. Within practical sessions learners support those less able. Diagnostic assessment prior to interview helps determine the appropriate level of programme for each learner and has supported high success rates, particularly in plumbing. Advanced level learners are well prepared for entry to higher education. Learners value the support they receive.
- Leadership and management are good. Staff welcome the changes to the leadership team and report an improved flow of information and higher visibility of managers. Curriculum management is good, with clear lines of responsibility. Recent changes have given heads of department the time to address operational issues. Programme meetings focus on raising attainment and the apprenticeship programme is strong with good links to workplace training.
- Target setting and monitoring are effective in all areas. Programme teams set challenging targets for retention and achievement and success rates have improved. However, although each section has developed tracking systems to meet awarding body requirements, there is limited sharing of good practice. Resources are satisfactory overall, but in some of the more popular areas there is a need to replace equipment and procure additional materials.
- The college keeps its learners safe. Health and safety standards are well promoted and security is highly visible. Learners feel safe and know how to make disclosures. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory and learners from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds report that the college works hard to promote respect for all. Staff are aware of the achievement gap between some groups and regularly check their progress.
- There is a critical self-assessment process in place. Curriculum teams regularly review progress, although this is not always recorded. There are clear guidelines to help staff judge the performance of programmes. Programmes at or below the national average have clear actions within the quality improvement plan. Self-assessment identifies most areas for improvement. Many areas now have learner representatives who feed their views into team meetings effectively. However, the employer voice is underdeveloped.

What does The Sheffield College need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates for BTEC programmes in construction and civil engineering.

- Further develop ILT and its use throughout the department.
- Increase the range of provision at level 3 for full-time learners.
- Ensure that good practice is shared effectively between sections and across both sites.

Arts, media and publishing

Grade 3

Context

40. The provision includes A levels, BTEC first and national diplomas, Access to HE and some part-time provision for adults. Subject areas include media, performing arts and most art and design specialisms. Of these, the large majority are aimed at learners aged 16 to 18, with a reducing offer for adult learners. There are over 1,600 subject enrolments in art and design, media studies, film studies, dance, drama and music. The provision is offered at the college's three main sites, with most at Hillsborough and Norton.

Key findings

- Learners' attainment of their learning goals is satisfactory. Success rates on most full-time courses are improving from a low base and were slightly below the national average for 2008/09. Success rates on intermediate courses are below the national average. At advanced level many vocational courses have poor success rates. On a minority of courses attainment is high.
- Retention of learners is satisfactory on most courses, but some vocational courses have very low rates. The in-year retention of learners is higher this year than at the same time last year. The progress made by learners on most courses is satisfactory, but on some courses, such as AS fine art and AS music technology, it is low when comparing learners' results with their attainment on entry. The percentage of learners achieving high grades on these courses is also lower than in other AS levels in art and design.
- Learners from different groups often do not achieve equally. Success rates for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below those of other learners and this gap has widened since the previous year. The self-assessment report from 2008/09 identifies this difference and the course management team has implemented initiatives to improve results. Learners at risk are identified, receive support and are monitored.
- The standard of learners' work is at the level that would be expected at this stage of their course. Their performances, portfolios and displays of work in classrooms show liveliness and care in presentation. One enrichment project in hat design was particularly successful, with some stunning finished pieces on public display. There are visits to galleries, performances, exhibitions and site-specific locations for most courses at least once per year.
- Attendance at lessons and punctuality in some observed sessions have been poor. Lateness is usually challenged, but at times is disruptive to learning. Attendance was low in lessons observed during inspection. This low attendance sometimes has a serious impact on learning where performances rely on team work. Several initiatives have been implemented, but have not solved the problems on all courses as yet.

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons team work is good and this leads to improvements. On the A level media course at one centre, staff have developed and pooled resources for teaching and learning and all staff in the team use them to good effect with learners. In some sessions, however, there is lack of stretch for the more able and questioning is underdeveloped.
- Assessment and feedback on progress to learners aged 16 to 18 are good. Project work is generally marked regularly and interim and final feedbacks are very detailed, targeted, specific and understood by learners. There is plentiful verbal feedback in practical sessions which encourages learners to improve. However, on some full-time adult courses, there is insufficient marking and feedback to learners.
- Resources are good. There are high quality specialist art, design and media studios at the recently built Hillsborough College. Learners at Norton benefit from state of the art digital equipment and industry standard software. An excellent professionally equipped TV production studio with digital editing and capture equipment is available to learners. At Norton College, the décor of some rooms is tired and in need of decoration.
- There is a very broad range of courses offered including most of the major arts disciplines for full-time learners. All full-time applicants are interviewed, although some learners felt that some general interview staff were not equipped to give detailed course information. Many full-time learners benefit from a range of curriculum enrichment which broadens their understanding of their chosen path.
- Care and support for learners are satisfactory overall. Tutorials are programmed for all full-time learners and run by curriculum staff who understand their specific requirements well. Advice for preparation for higher education is well organised, but in some areas there is less support for those learners who may wish to enter employment.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Many recent initiatives have been introduced and there is evidence that some of these are beginning to have an impact. There is improved target setting, monitoring of performance and co-ordination of teaching staff. Sector managers are raising expectations of achievement. The staff feel supported by the new management team and by their line managers.
- Sharing of good practice across college sites is underdeveloped. Many individuals and teams have developed high quality resources to use with learners. In photography courses at Norton College a wealth of material has been placed on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and shared with staff. Media staff at Hillsborough have developed similar resources, but there has been little opportunity to develop these for use across the college as a whole.
- Quality assurance processes are satisfactory. There is a clear implementation of a college-wide quality review system. Detailed action plans are drawn up to inform the quality improvement plans. There is a process of observation of quality of teaching and learning in place, but this gives an inflated view. The

self-assessment process is sufficiently detailed and largely accurate in identifying course outcomes and strategies for improvement.

What does The Sheffield College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on underperforming courses by improving pre-entry information, closely monitoring learner progress and implementing timely support systems to assist learners who are falling behind with their work. Regularly review the effect this is having on those minority groups who are identified as underachieving.
- Improve teaching and learning by developing opportunities to share good practice across college sites. Extend the use of the VLE to allow staff from all sites to understand and use the learning resources that have been developed. Use college-wide training events to further extend the development of teaching resources.
- Improve attendance in classes by close monitoring and effective actions for improvement. Monitor curriculum timetables to target actions better at those areas most affected.

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 3

Context

41. Nearly 5,000 learners follow Skills for Life programmes across the college. There are 2,042 learners aged 16 to 18 and 2,957 adults. Provision is on each of the main sites, in the community and in partnership with employers. Learners follow a range of part-time courses and full-time courses from entry level to intermediate level. The majority of learners are enrolled on year-long programmes. About 15% of Skills for Life learners are enrolled on short programmes.

Key findings

- Success rates are inadequate. There has been a significant decline in retention rates and achievement rates across all levels, falling well below national average in many courses in 2009. The college recognises that outcomes for large numbers of learners are unsatisfactory and intervention strategies have been put in place to support learners 'at risk'. College data show recent improvements in retention and in-year success rates.
- There are good success rates on employment-related programmes and Train to Gain courses. Learners develop good employability skills and work-related literacy and numeracy. The majority of unemployed learners progress into employment or further learning. This is showing an improving trend.
- Learners on foundation programmes and level 1 courses grow in confidence and make good progress in developing personal and social skills. Many entry level and foundation level learners make good progress in developing communication skills.
- Oral assessment is good. Teachers give supportive feedback throughout the lesson which supports progress. Assessment of written work is unsatisfactory. Work is badly organised and difficult to follow for reference purposes. There is a lack of constructive written feedback from tutors. The standard of work is good. Learners often work collaboratively on activities and complete tasks successfully.
- Learners feel safe and secure and have a good understanding of procedures and systems in place. They know how to access support if required. Classroom behaviour is good and most learners have a positive attitude to work. They enjoy their classes.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some examples of very good practice. The majority of lessons are well planned and teaching is lively, well paced and learners make good progress. Attention is given to learners' preferred teaching styles, personal circumstances and particular needs. However, this is not always the case. There is a lack of contextualised learning materials to add interest to learning. Teachers give good personal support to learners.

- Initial diagnostic assessment is satisfactory and used in all programmes to inform individual learning plans. In a minority of lessons, there is inconsistency in the use of individual learning plans which are not always used effectively to set targets and to monitor progress. In some cases, too much emphasis is placed on the recording of progress against tasks and activities rather than progress against the development of skills.
- The range of provision allows good progression opportunities for learners from pre-entry level to intermediate level. The college's foundation programme has literacy and numeracy at its core and successfully supports the most vulnerable of learners.
- Some teaching staff do not hold relevant Skills for Life qualifications. This impacts on the learning experience as teaching methods and learning resources are not always sufficiently varied to meet the needs of learners. Strategies are in place to address this through a targeted programme of professional development, monitored through appraisal and informed by observation of teaching and learning.
- Good partnerships and workplace initiatives are used to productively meet learners' needs. Train to Gain courses enhance opportunities for employed learners and good employer links provide progression opportunities for the unemployed. The college is proactive in supporting the worklessness agenda and in gaining job outcomes for learners.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership is good and senior managers have a clear understanding of Skills for Life and drive and support its development. They are aware of the need to raise levels of success and have prioritised this. A new management structure is in place to support a whole organisational approach, but there is a lack of coordination at curriculum management level.
- Quality assurance systems are satisfactory. A new internal lesson observation process is in place, but current judgements give an artificially high grade profile for teaching and learning. The self-assessment report is accurate and forms the basis of quality improvement. There is well considered planning for improvement and change. Managers have a strong sense of responsibility for improvement. However, many initiatives are still in the early stages of implementation.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good and evident throughout the college. There is a culture and ethos of integration, respect and social inclusion. Learners' work of all levels is displayed throughout the college and team effort is encouraged and celebrated.

What does The Sheffield College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success for all learners by ensuring that learners have clear targets for their learning that meet their individual needs more fully.

- Improve the rigour of the observation of lesson process and ensure it identifies skills gaps and training needs of staff clearly.
- Support teachers through an effective programme of staff development with a strong focus on teaching and learning. Increase the amount of training in the use of differentiated teaching and learning strategies to address individual needs of learners.
- Strengthen curriculum leadership and adopt a coordinated management approach to further support developments in teaching and learning.

Information about the inspection

42. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's director of planning and performance, 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 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.
43. 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)
The Sheffield 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	6611	29	5301	1281	
Full-time learners	9965	315	527	6941	2182
Part-time learners					
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3	2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	3	3	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				
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	3				
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	3				
Quality of provision	3	3	3	3	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
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?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	3	3	3	3	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	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?	3				
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?	3				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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