

Gloucestershire College

General further education college

Inspection dates		18-22 March 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Outcomes for learners, teaching, learning and assessment, and the effectiveness of leadership and management are all good. Learners achieve their personal goals and the majority make good progress in their learning. They develop valuable vocational, personal and employability skills that prepare them well for their future careers; their progression into further study or employment is good.
- The college has formed and maintained impressive partnerships with employers, schools and other organisations that enable learners to acquire good employability and entrepreneurial skills.
- It provides excellent resources and a wide range of extra opportunities for learners to enhance their learning in a purposeful, attractive and welcoming learning environment.
- Governors, leaders and managers provide an ambitious vision that transfers successfully into high-quality education and training; they use performance management well to accurately identify what is good about the college and what needs to be improved.
- Learners' individual learning and progress are carefully monitored and strongly promoted through good tutorial and work-based review arrangements which enable learners to make good progress.
- The college provides learners with good advice, guidance, personal, academic and learning support from the first contact right through to them moving on from the college.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Teaching, learning and assessment do not ensure that all learners attain good or better outcomes on all courses.
- Too much variability between subject areas remains in the embedding of functional skills and equality and diversity.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the sharing of best practice in teaching, learning and assessment in the areas of:
 - planning to meet the needs of all learners so that they all make appropriate progress in their learning and achieve their learning goals
 - the promotion of equality and diversity.
- Make sure that all teachers know and understand how to prepare for, and teach, functional skills in English and mathematics, so that:
 - learners can apply their knowledge and practise the techniques in the context of their vocational learning
 - learners achieve well and improve their capabilities for gaining employment or progression.
- Apply best practices in monitoring and managing the performance of individual learners, including the use of individual learning plans (ILPs), so that all learners benefit and make good progress.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners make good progress overall in lessons and other learning activities, and develop valuable vocational and personal skills that prepare them well for their next steps into employment or further study. The importance the college places on employability skills is evident in the high standards of learners' practical work, in their development of skills such as problem-solving and communication, and the development of learners' commercial awareness. Live client briefs are an integral feature of work in visual arts, and the whole creative process reflects industry standards. Learners in hospitality and catering have very good opportunities to experience real work at prestigious local events, such as the Cheltenham Festival.
- The proportion of learners completing their courses improved significantly last year, the first full year of the merged college, and was broadly average overall. Learners' success was above average on vocational courses at level 3, a very significant part of the college's work; but weak performance for the small numbers of learners on A levels continued. The college demonstrates that it is tackling successfully its long-standing challenge of ensuring that learners stay to the end of their course.
- Most apprentices complete their programmes, developing valuable commercial skills, and the large majority do so by the planned end date. In workplace learning, the proportion of learners completing their programmes on time is very high. Employers are rightly appreciative of apprentices' contribution to their businesses and the standard of their work. Employers identify very significant gains in learners' abilities to work independently, take decisions and effectively consider customer and company needs. The development of learners' personal and social skills is good. Learners become more confident, more responsible, and better able to work within teams from an early stage in their training. Work-based learners make at least good progress relative to their starting points, and a majority make rapid progress towards their learning goals.
- A high proportion of learners progress to higher level study within the college, irrespective of their starting points. Many learners continue to university or employment at the end of their course. The college's emphasis on developing learners' employability skills is at the heart of its mission to transform lives and support businesses. This is demonstrated in the strength of partnerships it has established with local businesses, schools and other organisations, and in innovative approaches to teaching and learning. For example, learners on information

technology courses at level 2 develop valuable communication and customer care skills in working with their clients. Learners on beauty and holistic therapies at level 3 define their requirements for the development of websites and other promotional materials. Learners interpret the client brief and present a storyboard for the client's approval.

- The college has been successful in eliminating an achievement gap between male and female learners. Learners who receive additional learning support complete their qualifications successfully at a level at least in line with their peers. Learners often demonstrate good skills in English and mathematics in lessons; however, this skills development is not always reflected in formal qualifications in these subjects, in particular at level 2.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- All campuses provide inclusive and purposeful learning environments which help foster positive attitudes to study. A developing culture of personalised learning, in which learners are supported to regularly review their own progress and set themselves new targets, reflects the high expectations for learners. Grade targets, both expected and more ambitious, are in place where appropriate. All learners are strongly encouraged and supported to succeed.
- Consistently good, and still improving, teaching and learning across work-based learning programmes and most college-based courses, are now extending the progress made by learners and increasing success rates. The college has a detailed and accurate understanding of the quality of its teaching and learning and the further improvements needed. Off-the-job training for the large majority of apprentices is well planned, relevant and suitably paced to develop their skills and on-the-job capability.
- The large majority of lessons are good or better. Most teachers plan and manage learning well. They ensure learners understand the lesson's objectives, regularly check understanding through directed questioning, and provide a good variety of learning activities to keep learners interested and motivated to succeed. Teachers successfully encourage independent learning and the ability to work well in groups. In the best lessons, teachers maintain a good pace, use open questions skilfully to extend learners' understanding, reserve time for learners to evaluate the lesson and are willing to take risks.
- In the minority of lessons that are weaker, teachers talk too much and learners remain passive for too long. Teachers pitch the entire lesson at the same level and make little effort to meet the range of different learning needs through varying objectives, activities or questioning. Teachers know their learners well, but too few exploit the potential of useful class profiles to shape the planning and management of individual learning. The wide variety of lesson planning tools available does not secure enough consistency in the standard of certain key components of lessons.
- Teachers use their expertise and relevant experience well to develop learners' understanding and skills. Good communications between college staff and employers ensure that work-based learners develop and rehearse their vocational skills effectively, both at work and during day or block release. Teachers and learners use information and learning technology (ILT) extensively and creatively inside and outside the classroom. Most courses provide a good range of materials for learners to use during and after lessons through the college's virtual learning environment (VLE), but this needs further development to benefit work-based learners. Outside lessons, many learners make constructive use of the college's libraries and resources.
- Learners' support needs are checked from first contact onwards. Initial assessment, often supplemented by free writing and course-specific assessments, is effective at identifying initial learning support needs. Outcomes inform teachers' class profiles but are not always shared with learners. More precise diagnostic testing determines each learner's functional skills level.
- A highly individualised tutorial system focuses strongly on managing the learning performance of learners. Arrangements are extremely effective where dedicated personal tutors and work-based learning training coordinators have a good understanding of the learners' curriculum and regularly review progress and agree stretching goals with each learner. Different arrangements

work well for AS- and A-level learners at the Royal Forest of Dean campus, but are less effective at the Cheltenham campus. Personal tutors and training coordinators monitor attendance, behaviour and performance closely, especially for learners at risk of not completing their courses. This enables timely and tailored interventions which usually keep learners on track.

- As with lesson planning, there are many variations in the format and use of individual learning plans (ILPs). In the best practice, learners review their own progress and develop their own short-term targets with their teachers on a weekly, or even daily, basis. Learners generally know their short-term targets for improvement and assessment; however, the use of ILPs and the quality of target setting is not always sufficiently comprehensive or precise to add value.
- In work-based learning, training coordinators ensure that apprentices play an active part in target setting and discuss progress and further training needs with employers. However, learners do not always record short-term targets agreed at college and share them with employers; equally, employers do not always share their specific skills needs with college staff.
- Assessment is good. Teachers and work-based assessors use a wide range of methods; assessment briefs are mostly clear and detailed and frequent use is made of live project opportunities. Feedback normally provides helpful guidance on what and how learners could improve. In a few areas, learners wait too long before getting their work back. Teachers increasingly use peer and self-assessment to extend learning. Off the job, teachers question apprentices effectively to test knowledge and deepen understanding.
- Most teachers focus well on the development of learners' employability and enterprise skills, including their competency in English and mathematics. The quality of functional skills lessons is good, with close attention to individual needs. However, not all functional skills teachers are linked sufficiently to their learners' vocational courses to be well enough informed about individual issues and to contextualise their teaching of English or mathematics. Functional skills development is well embedded in areas such as art, hairdressing and beauty therapy and most apprenticeship programmes, but not in all curriculum areas.
- Good initial advice and guidance lead to the overwhelming majority of learners starting the right course at the right level and leave learners feeling well cared for. In some AS subjects, insufficient rigour in the application of entry requirements has contributed to low success rates. Induction programmes are effective in helping learners settle into the college and quickly develop a good understanding of their course.
- The range and quality of support for learners is very good. Support services are accessible and welcoming. More vulnerable groups of learners are particularly well cared for and monitored. Additional learning support and dedicated support for learners with specific needs are well resourced and deployed. Guidance on progression to higher education, employment or further training is good.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good in several curriculum areas, including care, visual arts and independent living, but is underdeveloped in others and on work-based learning programmes, where reviews do not encourage learners to consider and discuss wider diversity topics sufficiently as they relate to vocational areas.

Health and social care and early years

Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, which ensures outcomes for current learners are good. The college has taken successful action to rectify a three-year trend of low success rates by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers have high expectations for learners and use a good variety of interesting and engaging lesson

activities to motivate them. Lessons are planned thoroughly, which ensures the individual needs and interests of learners are met.

- Teachers have very good levels of vocational knowledge and experience which they use creatively and effectively to bring learning to life. Examples observed include health and social care learners attending a progress review session organised as a mock health clinic where they received a 'health check' with performance charts and a 'prescription' for improvement. In all lessons, learners receive up-to-date information from both research and practice in the care and early years sectors.
- Teachers make sure learners understand the relevance of theory in practical care settings, such as how social learning theory can be used to explain how children's development and behaviour can be influenced as they play in groups and observe adults. This inspires learners, helping them to develop greater awareness of the principles and values which underpin effective work with children. Teachers and learners use technology successfully to illustrate key learning points in lessons.
- Initial assessment is thorough and is used well to set individual targets which challenge the vast majority of learners. Teachers and managers understand learners' needs well and they ensure close monitoring of learners' progress. Teachers respond quickly with further support as and when concerns are identified. Tutorial arrangements are good because they provide a clear focus on progress and achievement. However, learners do not always receive their marked work quickly enough, so they do not always know soon enough how well they are doing or what needs to be improved.
- The college provides a good range of relevant and stimulating opportunities for learners to visit employers and take part in community and charitable enterprises. This has included a trip to a maggot farm to observe how live maggots are used in the manufacture of sterile dressings, and fundraising and volunteering to work in an orphanage in Kenya. Learners' behaviour is good and the learners display mature attitudes and an eagerness to learn and improve.
- Teachers integrate English and mathematics well in the majority of lessons. Examples observed include calculations of the amount of nappies used each week in childcare settings, and the correct spelling of key words such as 'confidentiality'. Teachers make sure learners combine this learning with their work-placement experience and this improves their skills, confidence and knowledge. The standard of learners' work is good, but arrangements to capture and attribute this progress towards functional skills qualifications are not fully developed.
- Services to provide information, advice and guidance are good. Staff provide good individual care and support for learners and this has fostered a positive environment with good attendance. Learners like coming to college and value their learning and development, with many already considering themselves as part of the sector workforce. Teachers promote equality and diversity well and learners demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of these in providing effective health, care and early years services, shown in the discussion of the links between low income, poor diet and reduced quality of life.

Science and mathematics

Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment in science and mathematics require improvement. Although outcomes have mostly been average in A-level science courses and above average in access to higher education science, they have been low in mathematics and on most AS-level courses. Learners' progress is uneven between subjects and has been low in mathematics; low success rates at AS level have resulted in too few learners progressing to A-level courses. Learners have a range of prior levels of attainment, but the college has only recently ensured that rigorous initial advice and guidance have been applied to make sure learners have the relevant entry

criteria to start the courses. In-year college data show that this action is starting to have an impact, with retention, achievement and attendance now improving in most subjects.

- In the better lessons, teachers use questions effectively and regularly to check understanding and encourage learners to participate actively in their own learning. Most teachers plan lessons to include a range of activities, and a significant proportion of lessons are enlivened by very good use of collaborative learning, peer assessment, and active group work. For example, in one class, learners used 'flipped learning' techniques effectively to collaborate and teach each other the structure and function of plant tissues.
- Most teachers use learners' GCSE results as the basis for assessing what learners can do and for giving them clear targets to progress, but this lacks consistency across the college and tracking and monitoring systems are still being developed. Too few lessons include planning for the range of learning abilities in the group, and in a significant minority of lessons all the learners do the same work. This results in insufficient challenge or support for learners of different abilities, and some learners with lower prior attainment still fail to pass examinations.
- The development of research, practical, analytical and evaluative skills in lessons is mostly adequate and very good in a few cases. Learners develop their mathematical skills well and receive numeracy or literacy support from teachers during most lessons, but on a few occasions mathematical errors are not always corrected. A number of learners study free-standing mathematics, bridging mathematics and GCSE mathematics, but achievement on these courses requires improvement and initial assessment is not yet used routinely to develop functional skills for all learners.
- Most teachers ensure that learners keep an individual record of progress made and areas for improvement. These are referred to regularly and learners find them useful in helping them to make further progress. A series of regular assignments and assessments enables progress tracking effectively. Learners value the verbal and written feedback they receive from teachers and find this helpful. Most written feedback contains constructive comments indicating how learners may improve. Learners also value the availability of teachers outside lessons for extra support.
- The resources in laboratories are good, and learners find the materials available on the VLE, such as past papers, applications and links to websites, useful. Learners use it as an interactive learning resource to develop their independent learning or to provide themselves with activities that challenge them and extend their learning. Teachers make good use of ILT resources such as laptops, interactive whiteboards and animations to engage learners, for example to illustrate how a mass spectrometer is used to produce line spectra of organic compounds.
- Learners receive health and safety briefings to ensure they are able to implement the necessary precautions in practical settings, for example when working collaboratively to measure the Young's modulus of a copper wire.
- Teachers are sensitive to learners' individual personal needs, and usually take this into account when planning lessons, but the promotion of equality and diversity is underdeveloped and is not usually considered when planning lessons.
- Learners participate in a variety of enrichment activities. These include both local and international visits, such as trips to Peru and Iceland. Although progression from AS to A level has been low, a significant proportion of learners who do complete A level courses progress to further study at university, and learners are actively encouraged to explore progression opportunities.

Hospitality and catering

Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Current teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes for learners in hospitality and catering are good, but this is not reflected in the recent success rates that were below national averages. Learners work hard developing good practical cookery skills and most have a good understanding of classical terminology. They demonstrate confidence when preparing and cooking food to a high standard in production kitchens, and when working at prestigious external events in front-of-house and back-of-house areas.
- Learners develop good independent thinking and critical analysis skills and are able to evaluate clearly the quality of the dishes they prepare. They are able to discuss confidently the actions they would take when preparing dishes again by altering flavours, textures and consistencies. Most learners are encouraged to identify their own solutions to problems and are given time to make their own decisions.
- Learners develop good employability skills. They are confident, communicate well with their peers and customers and most work to high professional standards in kitchens and food service areas.
- In food production sessions, learners work with commercial speed and use their creative skills well to develop their own dishes using a wide range of ingredients. Learners are encouraged to be innovative and experiment with the presentation of dishes. In one session a learner used his imagination well to ensure that desserts were presented attractively, paying particular attention to colour and textures.
- Experienced and knowledgeable teachers prepare sessions well. In most sessions they make good use of questioning and discussions to extend learners' understanding of cooking methods. However, in a few sessions, they are less successful in developing learners' knowledge and understanding. For example, demonstrations in practical cookery sessions enable learners to understand how to portion raw chickens, but teachers do not always check sufficiently the development of learners' skills when the learners are working unaided.
- Learners do not always follow the high professional standards reinforced in sessions and, in a few instances, fail to follow recipes and instructions with sufficient accuracy. Learners' skills in mathematics are evident in some sessions, but too few teachers plan to develop learners' English and mathematics skills during practical sessions.
- Learners are fully involved in assessment of their skills. Learners at the Royal Forest of Dean Campus are particularly well involved in driving their own progress and identify when they are ready for assessment. Assessment of these learners' skills is rigorous.
- Learners receive timely, constructive verbal and written feedback on their work, which helps them improve and make good progress. Learners on vocationally-related qualifications programmes are encouraged to obtain higher grades on their assignments and many do so following supportive and constructive feedback.
- Good use of resources at the three college sites, and at external events, gives learners appropriate opportunities in which to develop their skills and provide good assessment opportunities. However, learners on the intensive professional cookery programme do not always have sufficient opportunities to practise their skills or time to consolidate fully their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Tutors identify learners' needs accurately. Vocational and pastoral tutors monitor their progress rigorously. Careful monitoring of attendance leads to timely and appropriate actions when learners are absent. Learners are involved well in reviewing their progress and agree targets to improve their behaviour, attendance and performance. Staff's use of the college's learner disciplinary procedures is effective in supporting the improvement of learners' behaviour and achievement.
- A revised and improved induction programme ensures learners follow the most appropriate programme. During induction, precise assessment of learners' practical and written skills identifies their support needs and career aspirations.

- Learners develop a good understanding and awareness of cultural influences in catering through the creation of a range of dishes. They develop a good understanding of how to meet customers' dietary requirements and meet the needs of customers with physical disabilities well.

Visual arts

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in creative arts is outstanding, which reflects the excellent outcomes for all learners, the high proportion achieving high grades, and the high levels of progression into further studies.
- Teaching by professionally-skilled teachers is inspirational, carefully planned and provides very positive challenge for all learners. Learners respond enthusiastically, produce work of a very high standard and make good and better progress in their learning. The sharply-focused attention to the whole creative process from conception, through research, design and development, to final pieces is valued by both teachers and learners.
- The development of learners' technical skills and knowledge is excellent. Learners experience a broad range of techniques and genres within each assignment and follow safe working practices. Clever embedding and underpinning of learning programmes with art history and essential techniques, such as still-life drawing on graphics courses, support learners to develop firm artistic foundations, equipping them well for employability and progression into further study.
- Teachers successfully develop activities which interest and motivate learners of all abilities; they encourage learners to experiment freely and take risks within their assignments. Teachers set activities for learners either as individuals or as part of a group. Learners are encouraged and supported to become independent learners, whilst also gaining essential team working skills.
- Development of work skills and their use in creative industries is good. Innovative industry-style briefs are skilfully designed and communicated to learners. Learners are expected to include commercial art research into their design development stages and produce final pieces to industry standards. Professionally-practising teaching staff, extension activities which provide live briefs for learners and an artist in residence programme further support and extend learning well beyond the classroom environment.
- High-quality teaching resources support learning very well and contribute to the quality of the work learners produce and their rapid progress. Accommodation is excellent and learners benefit from access to professional studio environments and a wide range of current technical, paper-based and ILT resources which they utilise well. Technicians provide excellent support for both teachers and learners. They are all qualified in art disciplines and many have teaching qualifications, which enable them to interpret the support needs of sessions very effectively.
- Teachers use a wide range of assessment methods which motivate learners and support progress and progression. Initial assessment is comprehensive and includes learners completing a short visual arts brief for the first four weeks of their course. This ensures that learners fully understand the expectations of the course, including the emphasis on the whole creative process and the importance of critical evaluation.
- Peer assessment extends knowledge and develops learners' critical analysis skills very effectively. Learners respect each other's feedback and respond to it positively. Learners, in addition, develop valuable communication skills and can articulate effectively their own evaluations and judgements in relation to artistic works.
- Learners benefit greatly from high-quality immediate feedback about their current work or ideas. Much feedback is informal and creates further challenge for learners to develop their ideas and critical thinking. This, coupled with formal individual reviews and tutorials, where

targets are reviewed and reset to support the achievement of higher grades, is valued by learners and supports their progress very well.

- The development of the use of English within sessions, in particular speaking and listening, is highly effective. The use of wider imaginative language in descriptive work and evaluations is encouraged at all times. The successful development of learners' skills in mathematics is evident within technical tasks, for example proportions in still-life drawing sessions or measurement and calculation in photography.
- Teachers skilfully broaden learners' understanding of diversity within topics. Teachers encourage the discussion of art in its broadest sense, and pose searching questions, such as 'Is it art?', which elicit very good discussion. The use of wide-ranging art research tasks or challenging questions to open and explore cultural issues successfully widens learners' thinking in relation to diversity, and challenges stereotypes.

Independent living

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good in the independent living subject area, leading to high-quality outcomes for learners. All learners develop the skills they need for work and everyday life very well and this is reflected in the very high success rates that learners achieve at entry level. Teaching is purposeful and teachers are skilled and knowledgeable. Teachers maintain a strong focus on learners' success, and the majority of learners progress to higher level courses.
- Learners develop their personal confidence and social skills well and, as a result, enjoy new friendships and actively engage in volunteering, work experience and sporting activities. Teachers maintain a good focus on the skills learners need in everyday life and promote successfully learners' independence. Learners with profound and multiple disabilities (PMLD) are enthusiastic in their ability to communicate with others through dance and music.
- In the majority of lessons, learners enjoy lively, interesting and well-paced activities. Learners become confident in their abilities and take pride in their work. All teachers use discussions well to encourage learners to express their views and exchange ideas. Teachers are skilful in capturing the interest of those learners with challenging behaviours. In weaker lessons, tasks are completed routinely to cover the syllabus and learners are not challenged sufficiently.
- Lessons have a strong focus on the development of employability and work skills within real work environments. In a cooking lesson, learners were purposefully engaged in making a variety of dishes for sale in the college restaurant. Learners were skilled and confident in food preparation and teachers' good integration of mathematics had improved learners' understanding of ratio and proportion.
- In all lessons learners use information technology well. Learners are confident in using the internet, using word processing and spreadsheet software. Most teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively, illustrating learning points. Accommodation is good across all sites, with good access for all learners. Specialist resources, including accommodation for independent living and life skills and a sensory room for those with PMLD, are very good.
- The provision of work experience and volunteering opportunities is outstanding. Learners are very well prepared and supported and work is carefully tailored to the needs of the individual. Learners benefit from a wide variety of work and volunteering options developed through excellent partnership working; feedback from learners and employers is very positive.
- Teachers' initial assessment of all aspects of learners' personal, social and learning needs is good and the learners' transition from school to college life is excellent. Targets on learners' individual learning plans (ILPs) are detailed and learning targets are generally clear. However,

the majority of learning targets in English and mathematics are not written clearly in words which learners understand. Targets are too vague and lack challenge, particularly for learners at intermediate level. A target for a learner to improve paragraph structure, for example, gave no indications of the actions needed in order to achieve this. The skills learners need to acquire to meet learning targets are not routinely taught in lessons.

- The college provides outstanding support for learners. All classes enjoy the support of a permanent teaching assistant and well-directed additional support is provided to those individuals who require specialist personal support. Learners value the support they receive and support staff are skilled in ensuring learners are encouraged to work independently, giving encouragement and instilling confidence.
- Learners and staff work within an ethos of mutual respect and teachers promote a safe and comfortable working environment. Learners are confident the college listens to their needs and concerns. Learning is inclusive; teachers promote equality and diversity well in lessons, but they do not always demonstrate this in their planning.

Business

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as reflected in learners' variable outcomes. Current in-year retention is high, demonstrating that the college is meeting with success in ensuring that more learners complete their programmes. Teaching is of inconsistent quality and learners are not all sufficiently challenged to achieve their full potential. Many learners make good personal and social progress, which also helps them to improve their employability skills.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about current business practice. They relate topics to employment opportunities well and successfully develop learners' confidence. Teachers plan and prepare meaningful and interesting lessons. For example, in a very good level 1 business lesson dealing with customers in offices, learners talked about difficulties they had encountered themselves as customers and prepared role play activities to demonstrate this with their peers. In vocational business programmes, learners prepare well for work by actively developing entrepreneurial and marketing skills. A level 3 business group successfully entered their marketing ideas and proposals on designing and launching new products into a national competition.
- In weaker lessons, teachers do not consider learners' individual needs adequately. They talk too much and learners are passive for too long. Teachers rush explanations and learners are not always clear about the aims of the lesson or what they should be doing. Learners do not have enough time to reflect or fully discuss matters in depth and few are challenged enough to make rapid progress. For instance, in one lesson, the teacher moved learners from one topic and activity to another very abruptly, and without clear reason, leaving learners perplexed. In other less fulfilling lessons, teachers do not provide enough variation in learning activities with learners working for too long on one single task. In an accounting lesson, learners were expected to work on individual tasks without change for most of a three-hour period. Learners become uninspired and are not motivated to achieve their full potential.
- Assessment is generally satisfactory. Teachers frequently check knowledge and understanding in lessons, mostly by questions and observation. The verbal feedback that learners receive during lessons is supportive and encouraging, although more exact and precise direction on how to improve is not always demonstrated. Questions do not always challenge learners' deeper analytical skills. Teachers also monitor learners' understanding and knowledge through on-line activities. Learners receive insufficient time to discuss progress with each other. Learners are clear about assessment requirements and deadlines. Most teachers provide good,

detailed and helpful written feedback on learners' work, but this is not always returned to learners quickly enough to help them improve.

- The development of learners' mathematical skills is effective, especially in accounting and finance lessons, but opportunities for learners to analyse, present and explain their work in tables, graphs, charts and other visual ways are limited. The development of English is satisfactory. Most learners use specialist language competently, especially on more advanced courses in business and A levels where they use complex terminology well as part of their feedback during classroom activities.
- Most learners receive good, and improved, advice and guidance and are placed on GCE A-level, business, accounting and professional courses which suit their individual needs well. The tutoring system for learners in business is good, enabling tutors to record and monitor the progress of individual learners effectively. Learners' performance targets are mostly clear and appropriate, although a minority are too general. Tutors monitor targets frequently and they help learners to improve. Teachers and college support staff provide good pastoral advice on a wide range of matters. Learners with specialist needs and requirements are supported effectively.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Most learners gain a good understanding of diversity matters which are assessed within particular units of their courses. However, teachers sometimes fail to develop learners' further understanding when opportunities to do so arise in lessons. Learning takes place in a supportive and sensitive atmosphere which respects and values everyone's contributions.

Construction crafts	Good
Apprenticeships	
Other work based learning	

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and are reflected in good outcomes for learners. Staff share their industry experience to increase the skills and attainment of the large majority of apprentices to good levels. Most apprentices make good progress from their starting points, resulting in early completion for those that stay on programme. However, a significant minority of apprentices only makes expected progress, and a few do not complete their frameworks.
- Apprentices benefit from well-planned theory and practical workshops and from skills development in the workplace. Good lesson planning, developed from profiles, effectively engages apprentices in participative learning that caters successfully for their individual needs and development. As a result, apprentices demonstrate good theoretical, practical, and employability skills. For example, apprentice plumbers bend, fix, thread and pressure-test pipes of different diameters accurately. Electricians fix components securely, work out mathematical current loads before wiring circuits and test continuity to professional standards. Carpenters or joiners use well-developed manual skills to cut wood to accurate angles; they also create a variety of tight, well-glued joints. Bricklayers can plumb, gauge, level and point their work to high standards.
- Apprentices liaise, communicate, present and explain their work confidently to their teachers, assessors and employers, resulting in them gaining increased responsibilities or promotion at their places of work. However, for a smaller number of learners, newly attained technical competence skills developed within the college are not always communicated in a timely way to employers. This has hampered the development of extended learning activities for a few apprentices in their workplaces.
- Apprentices undertake precise initial assessments to measure their attainment at the start of the programme. Learners requiring additional support are identified quickly and they benefit from effective one-to-one support that enhances their learning.

- Portfolio building sessions are well planned and effective. In these sessions, teachers break down National Vocational Qualifications unit criteria for individual apprentices to understand and plan precisely mid- to long-term steps to achievement. However, short-term skills needs are not always recorded fully or communicated between college staff and employers. As a result, these apprentices are often set the same mid- to long-term targets several times before problems are rectified.
- Assessment is good. Assessors make skilful use of direct, probing questions to ensure learning has taken place and record answers well. Work-based assessments by observation are very detailed in their recording of where competencies are met or require further vocational development.
- Verbal feedback is good. Apprentices receive clear, well-structured and encouraging feedback on ways that they should meet awarding body standards. Targets developed from verbal assessment sufficiently identify what apprentices need do to improve to these standards. However, written feedback does not always capture the targets discussed with apprentices. As a result, a small number of apprentices do not make progress to their full potential.
- Learners benefit from their formal functional skills qualifications which are completed early within the programme. Applied mathematical skills continue to be developed well throughout lessons, practical workshop or workplace settings. Employers value the process and apprentices' growth in confidence. However, English skills across the provision are under developed and there is insufficient attention to improving apprentices' spelling, punctuation or grammar.
- Apprentices' attendance is good and employers appreciate the college's effective attendance management. Learners are aware of their progression routes and receive clear, timely information on their potential next steps for progression into employment or further study. Apprentices remain employed once they have achieved their qualifications.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Apprentices are able to identify some equality and diversity themes, but too many show a limited understanding. Learners show respect to peers, teachers, assessors and colleagues. However, there are many missed opportunities in lessons, progress reviews and workplace assessments to involve apprentices in the discussion of wider naturally-occurring themes affecting the workplace.

Administration	Good
Apprenticeships	
Other work based learning	

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, reflecting that work-based learners make significant progress in developing workplace and personal skills. They enjoy their learning and become highly motivated, independent learners. A high standard of work is demonstrated in their portfolios. Apprentices have a good understanding of their progress and their targets, which ensures they succeed and complete their apprenticeship in good time. The provision has grown considerably since the previous inspection without a reduction in quality. Many learners progress well into higher courses or employment; for instance, one intermediate-level apprentice has gained employment with a company who will sponsor him to become a chartered company secretary.
- Training, learning and assessment are good overall in the workplace. Learners understand their programmes well as a result of detailed induction, which they value. New apprentices undertake effective numeracy and literacy assessments and a self-assessment of their additional needs. This initial assessment is used effectively to plan additional learning support where required.
- Apprentices develop professional business knowledge and occupational skills through the well-organised opportunities planned by assessors and employers. Learners successfully extend their understanding through assessors' effective questioning, observation and discussion. For example, a learner had implemented better security practice for personal information as a result

of identifiable learning about data protection. Off-the-job training requires improvement for a small minority of intermediate apprentices. Actions to improve are well conceived, but it is too soon to evaluate their impact.

- Assessment is strong. Learners are engaged and confidently involved in assessment planning. However, planning does not always sufficiently challenge learners to meet their full potential. Detailed plans are negotiated and logged in the comprehensive e-portfolio system which records attainment and calculates progress. This system provides the basis for good online communication between learners and staff. Apprentices provide and upload evidence from a wide range of sources to demonstrate the skills they have developed. For example, one learner resolved a complex problem relating to the amendment of a company’s registration through a highly professional conversation with Companies House. Verbal and written feedback from assessors is extensive, constructive and prompt; this motivates learners and helps them to improve.
- Frequent reviews are helpful and inclusive; training coordinators are successful in promoting discussion with the learner and employer. Together, they develop realistic targets which are monitored effectively. For example, one employer requested that a finance apprentice become involved in preparing the company’s next VAT return.
- Assessment decisions are clear, fair and consistent across subsidiaries, subcontractors and the college as a result of well-organised internal verification. Records are detailed and held in well-managed systems. Observation of assessors provides them with constructive feedback.
- A small number of learners benefit from additional learning online or through mobile phone ‘apps’. A virtual learning environment is in development to support flexible and independent learning.
- Care, guidance and support arrangements provided by assessors, training coordinators and managers are very good. Apprentices receive every encouragement to succeed, because all team members are highly supportive. Frequent reviews are supportive and cover progress in all areas. Frequent monitoring ensures that apprentices maintain their progress. Advice and guidance are successful in ensuring apprentices are enrolled on the correct programmes and that they understand progression routes.
- Programmes support the job roles of the learners well and meet the needs of employers very well. Apprentices have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity through discussion during their reviews. However, good understanding is evident in learners’ working practices. For instance, one apprentice studying management demonstrated very good awareness of the need to recognise and respect customer needs in different circumstances.
- Apprentices have a clear focus on safe working practices. They demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of health and safety especially in their application to their working environment.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- Leadership and management are good. Governors and leaders have a clear vision and direction for the college that raises expectations of staff and the ambitions of learners. This is reinforced by good communication and a supportive ethos. Leaders and managers are always available and give positive encouragement to staff; they hold regular meetings with learners that lead to improvement.
- Leaders and managers have been very successful in implementing a clear vision for the sustained growth of work-based learning. During the past three years, numbers of learners have increased four-fold; success rates remain above national averages, and employer and learner satisfaction is very high.
- The curriculum is well planned and involves learners actively in the decisions about their courses and the college. A good range of mechanisms gather and use their views, leading to

improvements in many areas including teaching and learning. Learners, through direct contact with senior leaders, have contributed to improvements in staffing and teaching.

- The system for improving teaching and learning by observations and other strategies, such as peer review, is well considered and leads to better teaching; this includes observing advice and guidance interviews. It is closely aligned to a good programme of performance review and continuous professional development that encourages teachers to try out fresh strategies to enable learners to be more effective learners. Examples of innovations to improve teaching and learning are 'flip teaching' and 'Take a Risk' initiatives, but it is too early to judge whether these have had an impact on outcomes.
- Improvements from the last inspection have been made diligently, sensitively and with care. For example, the merger with another college was completed in a collaborative way in which staff learned from each other and readily shared good practices in teaching and learning, especially in using information and learning technology.
- Governors are actively involved in evaluating performance and outcomes for learners. Through the quality and curriculum committee and full governing body, they know the priorities for improving teaching, learning and assessment which they regularly monitor within supportive and insightful reviews.
- Involvement of middle managers in the process of self-assessment is good and helps staff to make improvements in their areas. They are well supported by senior leaders and further encouraged by an effective formal training programme for middle managers to improve the provision.
- The self-assessment report is accurate and identifies clearly the areas for improvement and what the college does well. The process is well established and understood by staff. The quality improvement plans are appropriate and identify suitable targets and actions for improvement and how to make them in timely way. These are based on accurate data that staff obtain easily and understand.
- The management of subcontractors is highly effective and arrangements for quality assuring and improving outcomes for learners are thorough and based on very sound assessment of risk and opportunities; they have resulted in high standards during a period of considerable growth. The self-assessment of work-based learning is accurate and evaluative but it does not feature prominently enough in the overall self-assessment report, undermining its significance in the range of the college's work.
- Strategies to meet local and regional training needs are outstanding. Very close engagement with individual employers and business sector groups has resulted in improvements to existing training and the development of new programmes. The college has worked particularly well with employers to develop bespoke provision in areas where training has not previously existed. For example, a new apprenticeship in security systems training has been developed, meeting needs both within the county and in neighbouring regions.
- The college has several effective mechanisms for collecting and using learners' views, and making improvements as a result of what they say. This is done through tutorials; focus groups; 'Talkback'; learner representatives and the student union, as well as direct meetings with the Principal.
- The college has excellent resources and the range and quality are well matched to each curriculum area; they are up to date and their use contributes well to improving teaching and learning. Prompt improvements are made when issues arise.
- Excellent partnerships have been developed involving universities, local schools and businesses. For example, an initiative between the college and three local schools has resulted in an excellent, well-equipped and state-of-the-art facility for vocational learning, Launchpad. Learners eagerly take up these good opportunities that help them to improve their skills and knowledge and assist them onto the next steps. Through enterprise programmes, such as Gazelle, providing learning in commercial and social enterprises, they gain good personal, business and entrepreneurial capabilities. Transition arrangements into college are good, and include, for example, autistic learners or learners with disabilities or learning difficulties.

- The promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity are good and reinforced by a well-planned and comprehensive staff training programme and through schemes of work in the majority of curriculum areas. However, teachers do not optimise the opportunities for understanding diversity consistently and imaginatively enough in lessons. The college has taken swift and well-thought-out action to close the small difference in outcomes between learners from minority ethnic backgrounds and other learners. In work-based learning, learners understand very well how their behaviour contributes to customers' and colleagues' experiences.
- Safeguarding meets government requirements; it is robust, well planned, and covers all staff and governors. There is regular and up-to-date training that is both comprehensive and thorough. Learners feel safe within a harmonious and inclusive atmosphere. Measures to secure learners' safety and well-being are good throughout work-based learning.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Gloucestershire College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work-based learning
	Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Early years and playwork	2
Science	3
Mathematics and statistics	3
Hospitality and catering	2
Visual Arts	1
Independent living and leisure skills	2
Business	3
Construction crafts	2
Administration	2

Provider details

Gloucestershire College	
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 3956
	Part-time: 3534
Principal/CEO	Dr Greg Smith
Date of previous inspection	June 2008
Website address	www.gloscol.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	319	264	537	814	361	1661	0	0
Part-time	27	1384	66	1440	9	427	0	181
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	361	352	185	286	11	19		
Number of learners aged 14-16	680							
Number of community learners	2942							
Number of employability learners	869							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Betaris ■ Balena ■ Independent Training ■ PATA ■ BGH Ltd ■ JTS (Leicester) Ltd ■ Phoenix Training ■ Liga Ltd 							

Additional socio-economic information

Gloucestershire College is a very large general further education college with three main campuses in Cheltenham, Gloucester, and, as a result of a college merger in February 2011, in the Royal Forest of Dean. An initiative between the college and three local schools has resulted in Launchpad, a specialist vocational centre in Tewkesbury for learners aged 14 to 16. Provision ranges from entry to degree level, includes vocational and A-level provision, and very large numbers of apprenticeships and other workplace learning. Gloucestershire is a largely affluent county, but some of the wards served by the college suffer from high levels of socio-economic deprivation. The schools in Cheltenham and Gloucester have sixth forms and so the college faces significant competition for learners at the end of their GCSE courses. Competition is less fierce in the Forest of Dean. Learners attending the college have much lower prior attainment than school leavers in Gloucestershire overall. GCSE results in the county are above the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Russell Jordan HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal for curriculum and quality as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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