

Stoke-on-Trent College

General further education college

Inspection dates		2–6 December 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
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:

- Learners achieve well, developing good vocational and employability skills, enabling them to progress to higher-level courses, further training or employment.
- The considerable investment in staff development has resulted in significant improvements to teaching, learning and assessment.
- The majority of teaching and learning is good, which ensures learners make good progress in their studies.
- Assessment is good; detailed and regular tutor feedback, including good correction of spelling and grammar errors, helps monitor learners' progress and supports improvement.
- Leaders have established a clear strategic direction and a strong focus on improving teaching, learning and employability.
- Senior managers and governors have a relentless drive for improvement across all aspects of provision.
- The needs and interests of learners and the region are well met.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Building and construction and foundation English require improvement with regard to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners.
- Achievement rates for functional skills at level 1 are too low and there are too few high grades in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Success rates on apprenticeship programmes and completion rates within the planned timescale are too low.
- Too few learners on advanced-level courses achieve high grades.
- The proportion of teaching and learning that is outstanding is too low.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision in building and construction and foundation English by raising tutors' expectations of learners to ensure they are challenged in their learning and make the progress expected of them in order to raise standards and increase success rates.
- Improve achievement rates in functional skills and high grades in GCSE English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that learners are grouped according to ability
 - ensuring that learners join classes early in their courses
 - improving teaching so that it stimulates and engages learners and ensuring that the range of teaching and learning strategies meets the needs of all learners
 - improving attendance and behaviour in the minority of classes where they are an issue.
- Increase the proportion of learners completing their apprenticeships by setting specific and measurable targets for learners, regularly and systematically analysing data to identify causes for non-achievement and rigorously monitoring improvement strategies to assess the impact they have on success rates.
- Ensure staff have high enough expectations of learners and challenge them to attain the high grades they are capable of, and share good practice from curriculum areas that have a high proportion of learners achieving high grades.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning by:
 - rigorously implementing the 'Stoke Approach' framework to course delivery in all curriculum areas
 - sharing good practice within the college to bring consistency across all subject areas
 - sharing good practice of 'Beacon' status staff across all subject areas
 - consolidating the use of questioning techniques to ensure that learning is regularly checked and all learners are sufficiently challenged in their learning.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications has increased significantly over the last three years. Success rates for full-time learners in the vast majority of subject areas are now at or above average for further education colleges. Learners succeed particularly well in public services, information and communication technology and performing and visual arts. However, the proportion of learners achieving high grades is low on many courses.
- The proportion of apprentices achieving their framework is low but improving. A minority of apprentices complete their qualifications within the planned timescale. Improvement strategies have recently been implemented to improve success rates within the planned timescale but it is too soon to measure the impact of these.
- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills through innovative work-experience opportunities and projects that support them in preparing for and gaining employment. For example, learners on foundation-level programmes have set up the 'Enterprise Junction', a shop within the college that sells new and recycled goods, that is effective in supporting learners' communication, English and mathematical skills. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, learners plan and participate in employability events that showcase their skills to employers who then judge the quality of their work. These events result in paid work experience, employment and apprenticeship opportunities for learners.

- Fourteen per cent of learners enrolling on courses at the college have GCSE English and mathematics at grades A* to C. The vast majority of learners make good progress in their lessons and in developing their personal, technical and employability skills. Learners enjoy their time at college and almost all have positive attitudes towards their learning, showing respect for their tutors and peers. Learners work well together in groups and independently. The high standard of learners’ work successfully demonstrates how they apply learning in the completion of assessments and in-class activities. However, attendance is not consistently high across all departments and courses in the college.
- Learners develop valuable technical skills through practical activities. For example, foundation level hospitality and catering learners skilfully prepared a pasta dish to a very high standard whilst successfully achieving personal technical targets and advanced-level access learners completed practical physics experiments with high levels of precision. In hairdressing, beauty therapy, media make-up, construction, media and information and communication technology, learners have competed in, and won, prestigious regional and national skills competitions.
- Leaders and managers have been successful in closing the gap in achievement between different groups of learners, particularly those of Pakistani heritage. Extensive support for the 42% of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective and these learners subsequently achieve their qualifications better than their peers.
- Learners develop good English and mathematics skills within their vocational courses. However, the proportion of learners who achieve their functional skills qualifications at level 1 or grades A* to C in GCSE English and mathematics is below the average for similar colleges.
- Leaders and managers collect and analyse a range of data and are able to track accurately the destinations of the majority of learners. Most progress to higher-level courses within the college, to further and higher education or into employment. The proportion of learners aged 14 to 16 that attend the college on a part-time basis and progress to full-time courses at age 16 is high.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- The improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been a clear priority with a relentless determination from managers to support staff in providing good learning experiences. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and a higher proportion of learners are successfully achieving their qualifications, developing good employability skills and making good progress.
- The ‘Stoke Approach’ to course delivery provides tutors and other staff who support learners with a well-considered framework for learning activities that clearly focuses on skills and personal development to improve learners’ employment prospects. Lessons are planned well and effectively use tutors’ vocational expertise. The less-effective sessions contain too many activities and not enough opportunity to consolidate learning.
- Learners work well together and in the best lessons there is a sense of fun and excitement frequently linked to high professional standards. Learners complete a good range of well-thought-out learning activities delivered at a good pace. They develop a good understanding of the key concepts, and are able to explore these with their peers through well-managed pair and small group work. However, in too many advanced-level lessons, the depth of understanding and challenge for the more-able learners is too superficial.
- Tutors have high expectations of their learners, many of whom have low levels of prior attainment. They explain ideas clearly, set challenging vocationally-relevant activities that engage and motivate learners to give their best. In practical work learners are often given very realistic job roles and this ensures they are kept on task and their work is productive and purposeful. Learners are encouraged to extend their vocational and employability skills through relevant work experience opportunities and participation is good.
- In a minority of lessons learning materials are uninspiring, the tasks set are mundane and there is an overreliance on individual completion of worksheets. Whilst one-to-one teacher support is

effective in supporting weaker learners the more-able ones have to wait too long to move on to the next task and they become bored. In a couple of lessons in functional skills a few behavioural incidents and low-level disruption impeded learning.

- A good range of regular assessments and skilful teacher questioning techniques ascertain learners' progress and understanding. However, a few tutors do not use probing questions to develop learners' responses. Peer and self-assessment, coaching and mentoring are used well to develop learners' independent thinking and learning.
- Assessment practice is inconsistent for apprentices. Whilst some assessors plan well for assessment, others lack clear learning objectives. The effectiveness of coaching skills used by assessors is mixed. For example, many assessors use their coaching skills well to support independent learning and self-reflection. A few assessors dominate training sessions, resulting in learners having little opportunity for discussion or participation and becoming bored and disinterested.
- Tutors encourage learners to set specific and challenging goals and progress against these is monitored regularly. However, learners have too few opportunities to do extension and high-grade improvement work so that they all achieve their full potential. The electronic monitoring system is effective in tracking the completion of assignments to specified deadlines and enables prompt action when learners start to fall behind.
- The college has invested significantly in staff development to raise teaching standards. The outcomes from internal lesson observations are used well to inform the programme of events. College training days are supplemented with regular drop-in sessions, discussions at team meetings and through technology. Tutors regularly share good practice within and between different subjects.
- Tutors are encouraged to showcase good practice at events and through the staff intranet site. A small number of staff hold 'Beacon Status' and are proud to support tutors and promote a consistent application of the different elements of the improvement strategy. For example, embedding the English marking code, using new technologies to support learning and the use of specific learner targets.
- Assessment of learners' work is now regular and thorough. Tutors' verbal feedback in lessons and practical work is encouraging and helps build learners' confidence and develop good vocational skills. Most feedback on marked written work provides detailed advice on how to improve and there is a good adherence to the correction of spelling, punctuation and grammar errors, except in construction.
- Tutors make highly effective use of technology and industry-standard resources both in and out of lessons to stimulate learners' imagination and widen the scope of their learning. For example, performing arts learners, across a range of courses and levels, worked productively and professionally to design and get the theatre ready for the open-evening 1970s music concert.
- The virtual learning environment (VLE) is used well by learners in most subjects and learners value the innovative resources. Tutors often set background research work for learners to complete for the start of the next lesson and this supports them in making good progress.
- Learners with specific learning disabilities and/or difficulties receive excellent support that they value highly and this helps them develop independence and full integration in practical lessons. Learners who need extra help with literacy, numeracy or study skills are identified quickly. All entry and foundation level classes and many intermediate level classes include a learning support assistant. They work well with vocational tutors and together they use learners' profiles to plan activities that meet the diverse range of learners' needs. Almost half of learners receive support.
- The college has worked hard to embed the development of learners' English and mathematics skills. Learners often complete a range of tasks such as the calculation of costs and wages, use dictionaries and develop a good range of technical vocabulary.
- Advice and guidance are good. Learners receive detailed information on progression opportunities to higher-level courses, apprenticeships, employment and higher education. Good

links with local employers provide detailed information on job vacancies; an increasing number of learners successfully achieve a permanent post following work experience.

- Equality and diversity are promoted well in many lessons. A minority of examples to develop learners' understanding are not linked to the industry and are too superficial. Throughout this inclusive college, there are high levels of respect across a wide range of cultures and abilities.

Health, social care and childcare

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Success rates, although slightly below the average for similar colleges, are improving as a result of close monitoring, which has resulted in consistent improvements in retention and learners' achievements.
- Tutors have high expectations of learners, the majority of whom are progressing well. A significant proportion of learners successfully progress to higher-level programmes or into employment.
- Well-qualified tutors use their subject knowledge and professional expertise well to enliven learning and develop learners' skills, enabling them to demonstrate their learning in practical activities and work placement. In one lesson, learners were able to use their learning, supported by workplace experience, to identify types of support for clients with dementia living in care homes.
- Tutors plan teaching and learning well, using learner profiles and results of initial assessment. Consequently, the majority of lessons ensure that learners are actively involved in insightful activities such as the giving and receiving of constructive feedback from child observations. Tutors use purposeful activities that effectively challenge most learners. However, tutors pay too little attention to meeting the needs of all learners in the group and rely too much on open questioning, resulting in the most able not being challenged sufficiently.
- Good use is made of the VLE with many learners gaining access to resources and participating in online forums with peers and staff to share ideas and resources. Learners use the VLE well to develop independent study skills and are confident in uploading resources to share with their peers. For example, learners uploaded instructional videos on blood spatter patterns to support learning of this topic.
- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills is good. Learners routinely use dictionaries, vocabulary books and focus on technical spelling to support their work in the health and social care sector. Learners practise their mathematical skills in a range of contexts, for example, calculating staffing figures in a specialised area of the health sector.
- Tutors provide clear and detailed verbal and written feedback which helps learners to improve the standard of their work, their practical skills and their knowledge of the sector. Advanced-level learners receive specific feedback on essay construction and referencing to help them develop skills for study at a higher level.
- Information, advice and guidance are good, with regular reviews and frequent use of electronic individual learning plans ensuring learners are clear about their targets and the progress they are making towards them. Pre-course taster sessions help learners make decisions about the suitability of courses.
- Support for learners is good. Learners benefit from good quality learning environments which support learning well. Health and safety and safeguarding are integral components of courses, learners feel safe in college and their work placements and understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, when dealing with hazardous waste in work placement.

- Equality and diversity are promoted through inclusivity, for example, using case studies relating to Hinduism, the needs of children on the autistic spectrum and accessing music for people with a hearing impairment. However, this is inconsistently applied across topics.

Engineering and motor vehicle 16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners' achievements are better in engineering than motor vehicle. However, underperforming courses in motor vehicle have now been replaced by new and more practical courses that develop learners' vocational skills better and which are highly valued by employers.
- Tutors have high expectations of learners and are passionate about raising their achievements. They use their good subject knowledge and industrial experience well to link learning to future employment. Tutors use learners' profiles and their initial assessment effectively to plan group work and to provide individual support for learners. They use a good variety of teaching and learning methods to interest and motivate learners, which results in them making good progress.
- Learners develop good occupational skills. They work safely and productively and produce work that meets industry standards. In one lesson, mechanical engineering, learners interpreted scaled drawings correctly, measured, cut and shaped low carbon steel plates to specified dimensional tolerances and manufactured good quality steel hoppers.
- In theory lessons, tutors develop learners' underpinning knowledge of engineering principles well. In one lesson, learners developed a good understanding of hydraulic and cable-operated car clutch mechanisms. However, tutors do not use directed questions to engage all learners, to check their knowledge and understanding, and to extend the knowledge of the more-able learners.
- Engineering and motor vehicle learners develop good business awareness. In one lesson, learners identified vehicle body damage, estimated and priced accurately the repair costs.
- Tutors make good use of information and learning technology to enliven lessons. The extent to which tutors upload course resources onto the college's VLE varies across the provision. The VLE is better resourced in motor vehicle and used well by learners in this area to develop their independent study and to help them with their assignment work.
- Support for learners is good. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively to ensure learners requiring help understand the lessons and make good progress. The college's electronic monitoring system is a useful tool to monitor learners' progress but the targets set for learners are imprecise.
- Tutors assess learners' work accurately and frequently. A minority of tutors involve learners actively in peer assessment. Most learners write brief but good narratives describing their practical tasks. They illustrate the written work by good sketches and diagrams. Tutors write constructive feedback, which enables learners to improve the quality of their work.
- The development of learners' mathematics skills is good. In one lesson, learners used electrical testing equipment competently and measured and recorded accurately the voltages across a range of power sources. The development of learners' English skills requires improvement. A minority of tutors use technical vocabulary and engineering terminology effectively to develop learners' English skills. Few tutors correct learners' grammatical and spelling mistakes.
- Tutors provide learners with good information, advice and guidance. A significant number of learners progress to higher-level courses or to employment.

- Tutors promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity well. In lessons, learners behave well and there is a high level of respect between tutors and learners. Where relevant, tutors include equality and diversity topics in their lessons. For example, in motor vehicle lessons, tutors discuss how motor vehicles are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Building and construction
16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement; this is reflected in low attendance and punctuality that has a negative impact on learners' progress. In 2012/13 success rates improved for learners aged 16 to 18 to the national average, but too many adult learners leave without completing their qualification, and achievement on short courses is poor.
- Learners develop good practical skills in workshops and produce work to a high standard. For example, foundation-level brickwork learners constructed a Flemish bond wall accurately. Whilst teachers set high expectations they do not check sufficiently the learners' job cards and targets for the practical session to ensure that they are realistic and sufficiently demanding.
- Teaching and learning in theory sessions require improvement. Tutors have good subject knowledge and in the better lessons they develop activities that challenge learners to create solutions to real work-related problems. For example, a group of advanced level electro-technical learners were developing wiring diagrams for a commercial building.
- Whilst most theory sessions are planned well the learning outcomes are not always clear enough to enable learners to understand what they are expected to achieve in the session. They are over-reliant on the tutor's input, the pace is slow and learners spend too much time sitting and listening. Tutors rely too much on open questions and do not sufficiently check individual understanding and reinforce learning.
- The development of learners' mathematical skills in lessons is good but spelling, punctuation and grammar are not systematically checked and corrected. Learners develop good employability skills and participate in internal and prestigious external competitions.
- Initial assessment accurately identifies learners' starting points and their additional support needs. Individual support, particularly in practical lessons, is good. The electronic individual learning plan effectively monitors learners' achievements and enables good communication between vocational and pastoral tutors to support their progress.
- Assessment of learners is good in practical sessions. In brickwork and carpentry and joinery, learners' portfolios are well developed with contextualised embedding of mathematical skills. In one brickwork session, learners assessed their own performance before carrying out an agreed summative assessment with the tutor. Teachers' written feedback is not sufficiently detailed to help learners know what they need to do to improve. The correction of grammar is minimal and does not focus on the correct spelling of key terms.
- Although improving, the use of the college's VLE is too variable and many learners do not access it at all. Resources for plumbing and wood-machining courses include useful extension activities but primarily they are a repository for lesson notes to support learners' preparation for tests and to catch up on missed work.
- Advice and guidance for learners are effective. Learners are suitably prepared for employment. A number of initiatives with local employers include good work-experience opportunities and master classes to develop higher-level skills.
- The learning environment is clean and well resourced to support skills development across all areas. Health and safety are promoted by tutors and adhered to by learners at all times. Workshops and classrooms are well equipped with industry standard equipment.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners have a basic awareness of equality and diversity which is reinforced but not consistently extended in lessons or tutorials. For example, in a painting and decorating session a discussion on the structure of the colour wheel to develop learners’ awareness of the symbolic nature of colours in different countries, for example, yellow symbolises joy in the USA and death in Mexico, was under-developed. Lessons are inclusive but opportunities to discuss the needs of individuals with disabilities are not fully explored.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy 16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected in the increase in retention and success rates. Highly-motivated tutors support learners well in developing vocational skills of an industry standard. For example, hairdressing learners competently demonstrate skills when cutting and colouring hair and beauty therapy learners work confidently and professionally when completing back massages and manicures.
- Regular events at the college, attended by employers and suppliers, showcase learners’ technical skills. A recent event resulted in a range of opportunities for learners to gain paid work experience and employment. Partnerships with an employment agency that specialises in developing learners’ employability skills and an effective work-experience programme further enhance learners’ employability prospects.
- In theory lessons, the majority of which are good, tutors develop learners’ skills well through a range of stimulating and innovative activities including interactive quizzes to check knowledge and understanding and to extend the learning of the more-able learners.
- Learners develop good practical skills which are supported by tutors’ good subject knowledge and industry experience. Tutors develop realistic and challenging working environments. For example, tutors use one-to-one coaching well to develop learners’ skills as they section hair in preparation for haircutting.
- Whilst most practical sessions are well planned, learners, particularly in complementary therapies, are not challenged sufficiently to develop their technical and employability skills. In too many lessons, learners practise their skills on their peers rather than on clients resulting in insufficiently developed interpersonal skills when dealing with external clients.
- The development of learners’ mathematical skills in lessons is good. In one lesson, learners were able to assess business viability through the income stylists earn from clients in salons. The development of learners’ English skills is effective and contextualised. Learners use technical terms proficiently and are able to relate them well to industry.
- Support for learners is good. Learning support needs are identified quickly and a comprehensive range of support strategies implemented to ensure that learners make good progress and successfully complete their course.
- Clear and challenging targets, set by tutors and agreed with learners, support the good progress that learners make in their lessons, and are regularly reviewed during one-to-one tutorials.
- Learners actively participate in a range of enrichment activities to support their learning. They attend trade exhibitions, competitions and demonstrations, and have successfully competed in local and national hairdressing and beauty therapy competitions. Specialist resources are good and hairdressing learners benefit from, and improve their skills through, demonstrations from a high-profile celebrity hairdresser.

- Assessment of learners is good. Feedback is clear and detailed; learners understand the criteria for assessment and tutors’ written feedback helps learners to understand what they need to do to improve.
- Advice and guidance for learners are effective. Taster sessions provide learners with an opportunity to sample their chosen course before committing to a programme of study. A significant number of learners progress to higher-level courses, employment or to apprenticeships.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well in the majority of lessons. For example, during client consultations tutors effectively question learners on how they might adapt their techniques when working with different hair and skin types. However, in a minority of lessons, tutors use examples that are insufficiently linked to the subject area.

<p>Sport and public services</p> <p>16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good; this is reflected in learners’ good achievement on the majority of courses. Action has been taken for the few underperforming courses, resulting in increased retention and achievement.
- Learners develop good practical and employability skills through very effective communication skills, increasing confidence and a willingness to contribute in lessons, discussions and presentations. Strong and productive links with local organisations, including Sir Stanley Matthews Foundation for work experience and the Army Careers Service successfully prepare learners for employment.
- Tutors are enthusiastic and have high expectations of their learners. They use their good expertise and subject knowledge and information about learners’ starting points to motivate and engage learners in all aspects of their course. In the best lessons, learners’ knowledge and understanding of topics are developed and extended well through a range of effective and interactive learning activities. In these lessons, tutors successfully involve all learners and provide demanding extension activities for the more able.
- In a minority of lessons teachers talk for long periods of time, dominating the lesson rather than giving learners the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their understanding of the topic.
- Assessment of learners’ work is robust. Learners receive good, detailed feedback with clear reference to criteria met and how to improve their work. In the best lessons a range of assessment activities are used to meet the differing abilities of learners. In one lesson, learners used a scale of confidence as a self-assessment tool to gauge their own progress.
- The development of English and mathematics in lessons is mostly good. For example, learners act as spelling referees and spelling judges to check, discuss and correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Information and learning technology is mostly used well. For example, using mobile technology to capture lesson notes to support an assignment on police powers.
- Good use is made of high quality indoor facilities, including a brand new sports academy and innovative learning resources to develop learners’ understanding of sport and public services. Learners make good use of the VLE, using specialist resources to support independent learning. Consequently, they make good progress.
- Support for learners is good. Additional support through mentors, progress tutors and one-to-one sessions meet individual learners’ needs well. Learners particularly value the availability and approachability of staff outside lessons through text, email or the VLE for help and advice to support their progress.

- Extensive opportunities for voluntary work within the college and local schools benefit learners and support their personal development. Learners on sports courses work with local primary and secondary schools in sports coaching activities. Additional courses and qualifications enable learners to achieve industry specific qualifications that are much valued by employers.
- Enrichment opportunities in sport are comprehensive and diverse. Participation has increased substantially and learners regularly compete in British Colleges' league fixtures.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Examples in lessons using diverse images including paralympic athletes to promote discussion effectively challenge stereotypes. Learners have a sound understanding of issues relating to equality and diversity; however, topics are not consistently developed to reinforce or extend knowledge and understanding.

Teaching and lecturing

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and reflect the good success rates for most education and training courses. Trainees benefit from well-planned sessions, delivered by knowledgeable tutors who use a wide range of strategies to provide an engaging and stimulating learning environment. Trainees develop good teaching and support skills that are at or above programme requirements. Where trainees have not participated in a training programme for a considerable period, tutors ensure they quickly develop the skills and knowledge needed to succeed.
- Taught sessions are good or better. They allow trainees to model and replicate a stimulating and productive learning environment that meets their learners' needs. Sessions are effective in ensuring trainees share good practice and respond to specific development needs. For example, tutors have provided sessions, facilitated by information technology specialists, to allow trainees to develop their use of information and learning technology resources. Trainees develop good independent learning skills and use the VLE well to participate in learning at a time of their choosing.
- Trainees make good or better progress in lessons and develop a useful range of critical analysis skills that allows for effective personal evaluation of their teaching. They usually demonstrate a sound understanding of educational theory used in evaluating the effectiveness of personal work practices and utilise appropriate terminology to define the implications of their analysis in enhancing personal professional practice. For example, a group of trainees effectively reflected on how lesson planning could promote inclusive learning and were able to identify relevant improvement actions.
- Trainees receive a thorough initial assessment of needs, which tutors effectively use to inform session planning. Targets set for trainees are appropriately individualised, inspiring and promote a good pace of development, particularly within tutorials. Following observation of teaching sessions, established improvement targets are usually challenging and ensure trainees have a good understanding of progress made and how to improve.
- During taught sessions, tutors use a good range of verbal assessment methods to check trainees' understanding of topics and reinforce learning. However, not all trainees use the demonstrated techniques well enough in their own teaching. Trainees receive detailed and useful written feedback and value the feedback and support they receive from mentors.
- Tutors ensure that trainees develop an appropriately high standard of English and mathematics. Tutors rigorously check and correct trainees' assessed work. The college has removed barriers to trainees' progress, due to inexperience in the use of research material, through the introduction of new learning resources, as part of a strategy to improve the standard of academic reading skills.

- Information, advice and guidance are good. Tutors have a good knowledge of the available progression opportunities and appropriately refer trainees to these or specialists for more in-depth advice. The performance of trainees employed by the college is tracked and indicates an improving trend in the quality of teaching following programme completion.
- Tutors promote trainees’ understanding of equality and diversity well within taught sessions. For example, a division of class activity resulted in two groups consisting of either males or females. The lively discussion that ensued focused on how well this met the requirements of an inclusive learning environment. However, not all trainees demonstrate sufficient confidence in transferring this learning to their own taught sessions.

<p>Foundation English</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Foundation English requires improvement. This is reflected in outcomes which are below the average for further education colleges for level 1, but at the average for level 2 and at entry level. There are significant variations across vocational subject areas; success rates at level 2 are particularly low for learners following programmes in construction, and hair and beauty, but good in motor vehicle engineering, business, technology and computing, and media and performing arts.
- In better lessons, tutors use good assessment strategies such as ‘traffic light’ cards to engage learners in self-assessment. Teaching is lively and imaginative, for example, using a till receipt from a weekly shop as evidence to describe an imaginary family. Tutors question learners frequently to assess learning and ensure that most contribute. In a minority of sessions where teaching is weak, tutors rely on a limited range of approaches and tutor talking tends to dominate, meaning learners are insufficiently involved or challenged, which results in them losing interest in the lesson and in some cases causing minor disruption.
- Additional learning support is sensitively deployed, learners’ profiles are comprehensive and detailed, demonstrating commitment to making appropriate adjustments to support learners to achieve and progress. Learning support assistants and teachers work well together in classes, using learners’ profiles to good effect to target support effectively.
- The college’s approach to lesson planning and schemes of work is evident in most sessions, promoting a clear structure and path through the planned learning. In better lessons, starter activities are relevant and purposeful, for example, making new words from ‘employability’ which in turn links to the theme of the lesson. However, in most classes there are too many learners with different functional skills levels in one class, from entry to level 2, which hinders progress. Tutors do not pitch lessons appropriately to meet the needs of all learners in the class, and rely too much on worksheets to differentiate learning, which fails to inspire learners.
- Attendance and behaviour are poor in a minority of functional skills English sessions, in particular in areas where success rates are low. In these sessions, teaching fails to engage and motivate learners, who go on to make inadequate progress.
- A minority of learners with GCSE at grade D do not join a taught English class at the start of the year. Instead they choose to work on personalised targets online through the college’s VLE. However, these learners struggle with independent study, then join classes late, hindering their progress towards gaining a meaningful qualification at the earliest opportunity.
- GCSE English teaching for adults is good. Learners are encouraged to assess their own progress, using an individual learning plan to record improvement and set targets. Targets are personalised, subject specific and time-bound, and are set and owned by the learner.
- Information, advice and guidance services support learners well. Learners speak highly of support services in the college, citing counselling and financial advice in particular.

- Equality and diversity are well promoted. For example, health and childcare learners demonstrated good understanding of equality and diversity issues when planning a promotional leaflet for their college course. In most functional skills sessions, good levels of support ensure that learners with learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported to make progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- Leadership and management are good. Expectations are high. The college has a clearly articulated and ambitious vision and strategic direction. Appropriately challenging targets are set within business planning and are cascaded to curriculum areas. The curriculum arm of the college's vision is articulated clearly in the 'Stoke Approach' to the development of vocational and wider employability skills, an approach which is informing teaching and learning, quality improvement and professional development well. Swift and robust action is being taken to address under-performance. As a result the college has responded well to the areas for improvement noted at the last inspection, and success rates and curriculum quality have improved markedly. Nevertheless, as the self-assessment report identifies, some areas for improvement remain, such as functional skills and apprenticeship work.
- The governing body has an impressive membership which provides a wealth of appropriate knowledge, skills and experience, and is well informed. Governors contribute well to the establishment of the strategic direction, monitor college performance closely and discharge their statutory duties systematically. They provide well-informed challenge to senior managers and understand their roles well. They are highly committed; attendance is high and they undertake appropriate activities in their linked curriculum areas. They are mindful of, and fully understand, their role as governors not managers.
- Performance is monitored systematically and rigorously at all levels. Areas causing concern receive thorough attention, which usually results in improvement. For example, the performing arts curriculum area has improved markedly and 90% of the teaching which is graded less than good has improved rapidly. However, strategies to improve work-based learning are at an early stage of implementation. Data to support improvement are timely, accurate and focused. The appraisal process is linked closely to business planning and performance. At senior management levels the process is robust and helpful. At tutor level it is focused on compliance and not enough on quality and its improvement.
- Quality assurance policies and procedures are well developed. Aspect, area and course self-assessment reports identify strengths and areas for improvement accurately, although in a few cases not enough attention is given to teaching, learning, the development of skills and the causes of low outcomes. Moderation is systematic. Quality improvement plans reflect areas for improvement accurately and their implementation is monitored closely. The record of improvement is impressive. The quality assurance of subcontracted provision is robust and helpful to the subcontractor.
- Professional development is responsive to need and focused strongly on improving teaching and learning. Good use is made of external expertise and of the college's tutors deemed outstanding to share good practice and support improvement. The college's financial position has improved, allowing it to invest heavily in improving its estate. Accommodation and learning resources are good.
- The college responds very well to the needs of learners, employers and the region. Its curriculum policy is aligned well with government strategy and informs teaching well. Each curriculum area reviews its provision against labour market information and the provision is wide ranging, well aligned to need and provides good opportunities for progression.
- The college's response to disadvantaged young people and adults is good. Representatives of Jobcentre Plus and the prison and probation services were highly positive about their work with the college. Work for employers is responsive and wide ranging. Full-cost work is extensive and a wide range of apprenticeships is available. External organisations speak very highly of the way

the college works in partnership and delivers good quality provision. The college works well with organisations who work to improve social cohesion and increase social harmony.

- The management arrangements for and the promotion of equality and diversity are strong. Equality and diversity feature well in key college documentation and quality assurance processes. They are promoted well throughout the learners' journey through induction, tutorials and cross-college enrichment. Gaps in performance between different groups are analysed closely and effective action taken to reduce them. There are now no significant gaps. The self-assessment report does not do full justice to the range and quality of the provision to promote equality and diversity.
- Arrangements for safeguarding and health and safety are excellent. Staff are trained and updated appropriately and the college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Staff who interview new staff are trained in safer recruitment. Learners receive information on what to do if they need to disclose information and are fully aware of the need for e-safety.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Stoke-on-Trent College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Early years and playwork	2
Engineering	2
Motor Vehicle	2
Building and construction	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Sport	2
Public Services	2
Teaching and lecturing	2

Training to provide learning support	2
Foundation English	3

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	Select from list							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 2,550							
	Part-time: 7,689							
Principal/CEO	Ms Sarah Robinson							
Date of previous inspection	May 2012							
Website address	www.stokecoll.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	586	140	607	162	624	203	0	0
Part-time	51	1405	37	1,262	8	241	0	30
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	248	633	143	404	0	18		
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	49							
Part-time	224							
Number of community learners	524							
Number of employability learners	598							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							

At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:

- Gateway Training Solutions Limited
- The Modern Trades Academy
- Vindex Training and Licensing Consultancy Limited
- Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire YMCA Foyer
- LETS Academy (Sangam)
- Staffordshire Football Association Limited
- Steelworks Academy
- Blackfriars School
- Stephen Miller
- Pendersons Limited
- The West Midlands Creative Alliance
- Gary Williams Hairdressing

Contextual information

Stoke-on-Trent College is a large further education college that offers a broad range of vocational courses and apprenticeship programmes across its two main sites in Shelton and Burslem and in the community. The proportion of pupils who leave school with five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C including English and mathematics in Staffordshire is 51.8%, well below the national average. The proportion of learners attending the college from minority ethnic heritage backgrounds reflects the local population. The main source of employment in Stoke-on-Trent is service industries including education, health, hotel and restaurant work and distribution. Employment in the town is lower than the midlands average. The proportion of adults with an intermediate level qualification is significantly lower than the national average. Around 19% of the local population have no recognised qualifications compared to 10% nationally.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones, Her Majesty's Inspector

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the deputy chief executive 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.

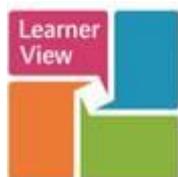
What inspection judgements mean

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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