

Central Bedfordshire College

Inspection dates		14–18 October 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement - 3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good - 2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good - 2

General further education college

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- It offers good provision in visual arts, sport, information and communication technology and engineering.
- Effective leadership has brought about positive cultural change and led to curriculum development that better meets the needs of the local and regional community.
- Significant improvements have been made to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Achievement gaps between groups of students, some of which were very significant, have been narrowed or virtually eliminated since the last inspection.
- Support for students, especially the more vulnerable, is excellent.
- The progress some students make from low starting points is very good.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Outcomes for students, especially 16-18 year olds at advanced level are not high enough.
- Insufficient teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding.
- Teachers make too little use of information and communication technology to promote and enliven teaching and learning.
- Curriculum management is not yet fully effective and management information data are not used well by all managers to monitor the performance of students.
- Resources and the standard of accommodation in some areas require development as they do not support good quality teaching, learning and assessment effectively.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students who achieve their vocational courses and qualifications in English and mathematics, especially 16-18 year olds at advanced level by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, progress tracking and target setting.
- Improve the attendance rates of students through regular monitoring and intervention when required, so that it is consistently high, to improve their performance.
- Collect information from all students about their intended destinations when they complete their course at college. Use this information to inform curriculum planning and self-assessment.
- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching that challenges and inspires students, ensuring that lessons enable all students to reach their full potential by ensuring that judgements on the quality of lessons focus exclusively on the extent of students' learning.
- Develop the use of information and learning technology (ILT) to extend the opportunities for learning outside of the classroom and to help students become more independent in their learning.
- Continue to develop the effectiveness and capability of curriculum managers by ensuring that they utilise key management information data effectively to monitor the progress of students and to develop clear and specific actions for quality improvement.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Outcomes for learners require improvement as not enough students achieve their qualification, particularly at advanced level. The proportion of students who achieve their qualification has improved slowly over the past three years and is now around the national average for most groups of students. The proportion of adult students at foundation and intermediate level who achieve their qualifications is high.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their framework has improved considerably over the last three years but remains low. However, the number of apprentices who achieve their framework within planned timescales has risen significantly and is now in line with the national average.
- Most students make at least the progress that would be expected of them, although this varies by subject area. Students who study courses in visual arts and engineering make good progress and are successful in achieving their qualifications at a rate significantly above the national average. Students studying courses in some other subjects, such as construction and information and communication technology (ICT) do not all make the progress of which they are capable and achieve their qualifications at a rate at or below the national average.
- Managers and teachers have worked hard since the last inspection to ensure that there are few significant differences in the proportions of students from different ethnic backgrounds who achieve their qualification. Students with additional learning needs benefit from extra support which enables them to achieve their qualifications at a rate in line with their peers.
- The proportion of students who achieve functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics declined in 2012/13 and is low. The proportion of students who achieve grades A* to C in GCSEs in English and mathematics is very low. Managers do not yet track the progress

students make from foundation level to intermediate level English and mathematics qualifications.

- Students on many courses have the opportunity to undertake complementary courses that enhance their employability chances. For example, students on childcare courses complete qualifications in paediatric first aid, food hygiene and infection control.
- Students on the majority of vocational courses develop good employability skills both through the use of a range of realistic working environments, visits and work placements. For example, students on travel and tourism courses benefit from good links to the local airport, performing arts students stage productions at a local theatre and foundation-level students run a successful coffee shop within the college.
- Students develop good personal and social skills on the vast majority of courses. Through good support provided by teachers and tutors, less confident students improve their self-confidence and self-esteem and enhance their chances of progression to employment or further study. However, attendance is not consistently high enough across all courses and departments.
- Students make satisfactory progress to further education, higher education or employment. However, the information that the college collects on students' progression was incomplete in some subject areas at the time of inspection.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved significantly, particularly over the last year, as a result of a broad range of interventions designed to encourage teachers to reflect on their practice and implement ideas to accelerate students' learning. Most lessons are now good. Although this improvement is not yet reflected fully in students' achievements at the end of their course, current students are making good progress.
- In the vast majority of cases teachers demonstrate that they have high expectations of their students, and the content of lessons is interesting and demanding. Significant investment in staff development helps teachers to broaden their repertoire of techniques designed to ensure that each student makes the best possible progress in lessons. Planning is often meticulous and thoughtful, although too often lesson plans are unnecessarily lengthy and as a consequence detract from identifying the critical features of what will make the lesson successful.
- A small proportion of lessons are outstanding; such lessons are characterised by a collective will between the teacher and the students to enjoy learning, be creative, and work rapidly. For example, in a stunning catering lesson foundation-level students worked with impressive pace and impeccable professional discipline to produce dishes of a high standard, led by teaching that was truly aspirational for the students; they were working at a much higher level than that placed by the demands of the course.
- In the weaker lessons, which constitute a small minority, although teachers are usually enthusiastic they are less adept at providing tasks or activities that promote rapid learning and checking that students have understood. For example, in a few instances teachers fall into the trap of answering their own questions rather than giving students the opportunity to demonstrate and develop their understanding. On other occasions, the work teachers set is too easy, particularly for students of higher ability.
- Arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning are wide-ranging, coherent and effective. Teachers benefit from a thoughtful range of training opportunities, and these are increasingly effective in promoting the sharing of best practice both within and between teaching teams. Teachers are observed both formally and informally; in both instances, the feedback they receive is constructive and supportive.

- Resources for learning are adequate. Although the college does not benefit currently from state-of-the-art facilities in most vocational areas, they are still sufficient for students to develop appropriate practical skills. The potential of ILT to benefit learning is yet to be exploited in most lessons. The content of the college’s virtual learning environment (VLE) is mixed, with very good practice in a minority of areas mirrored by a dearth of materials in others.
- Assessment is satisfactory. In most lessons, teachers use a range of effective techniques to ascertain students’ progress. Feedback on written work is mixed, with voluminous, helpful detail in some cases, but perfunctory comments in others. Arrangements to set students demanding targets and record their progress are variable, and too often teachers set students vague targets. Electronic systems for monitoring progress are in development, but at the time of the inspection, information on individual students was held in several different forms and as a consequence was rather haphazard.
- College managers have responded appropriately to the need to ensure that students improve their English and mathematics, and students benefit both from discrete lessons in these subjects and a focus on improving their skills in vocational lessons. However, the quality of this provision, both in discrete lessons and where it is embedded into vocational lessons, is not yet good enough.
- Students receive very good personal support. Arrangements to ensure students who apply to college are enrolled on the right course are smooth and effective. College staff are assiduous in identifying all those who need extra help and providing such help promptly. Those who are most vulnerable receive particularly good tailored support. Learning mentors are increasingly effective in identifying and supporting students at risk of leaving the college. In a small minority of instances, not enough thought is given to how teaching assistants should be deployed to best effect in lessons.
- College staff promote equality of opportunity well, both across the college as a whole and through the careful attention paid to individual students’ varying needs in most lessons. Although some teachers are confident in taking opportunities to help students to think about, and discuss, the social and cultural differences that surround them, others are less adept at preparing students for the complex, diverse world outside college.

<p>Engineering</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment in engineering are good. Recent improvements in the proportion of students achieving their qualifications are reflective of the college’s drive to increase the progress and quality of learning in this subject. Standards of work are good with students developing effective study skills with files and notes that are clear and well organised. Students work safely and rapidly to improve their practical engineering skills, for example, the accurate use of measuring and test equipment in both industrial and domestic settings.
- Students benefit from the well-focused guidance and support from teachers that enables them to make significant progress. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject and this inspires students. Teachers set high standards and provide consistent constructive feedback and encouragement to help students improve. Students enjoy their lessons and acquire the confidence and skills to achieve and to work independently.
- Teachers use their expertise in better lessons to develop a range of interesting and effective activities that constantly challenge students to learn by doing, thinking and evaluating. For example, in electronics lessons students work carefully with test equipment to check circuits

and domestic installations for resistance, conductivity and safety. Students are encouraged throughout to compare their findings with component values such as resistors and cables, and perform quick calculations to confirm values. Students explain differences in theoretical and actual performance, and take it upon themselves to correct faults as they identify them and restore circuits to safe working order.

- Teachers challenge students to think about what they are doing and how they can do it better. Students are moved onto more complex tasks as soon as they are ready and are given more responsibility within the learning environment. Those students who rapidly develop good workshop skills act as team leaders to support and guide those who are less experienced or confident to ensure best practice is shared with their peers and assure that risks are minimised.
- Teachers do not have the equipment or the confidence to use computers, interactive whiteboards and training software routinely to create more memorable learning activities. The use of the college virtual learning environment is limited to storing and retrieving documents, rather than encouraging students to extend their studies outside the classroom.
- Teachers assess students’ progress frequently in lessons and discuss assessments with them to agree how well they are doing and what they need to do improve and progress. Teachers use a range of procedures to monitor individual progress and support students to achieve but the impact of these are inconsistent. Students benefit from timely and effective intervention to help them overcome barriers to learning both inside and outside classes.
- The arrangements for monitoring students’ progress through the tutorial programme are weak and require improvement. For example, teachers do not provide advanced-level students with sufficient guidance on what they need to do to develop their research, evaluative and creative skills further. Targets are imprecise and are seldom revisited or signed off as completed.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers use computer aided design, assembly drawings, measuring and test instruments to develop this well. Students appreciate the importance of these skills in diagnostic work and producing work and readings within tolerances. Development of English skills requires improvement. Teachers pay insufficient attention to correcting students’ spelling and grammatical errors in lessons and during assessment, and to developing their technical report writing skills.
- Advice, guidance and support provide good motivation to do well and students make the connection between developing new skills, completing qualifications and their employment prospects. Teachers know their students well and use information from their initial skills assessment to plan effective learning. An increasing number of students are successful in going onto higher education and into apprenticeships through the improving links with employers.
- Teachers are responsive in tackling issues faced by some students in their everyday lives and appreciate the difficulties they face. The learning area provides a safe working environment and teachers manage behaviours and diverse attitudes well. As a result, students gain in confidence and self-esteem and adapt well to working in a wide range of situations, which prepares them well for employment.

Information and communication technology	
16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in the proportions of students achieving their qualifications and the good progress that students make. Students are clear about the progress they are making and what they need to do to achieve their goals. Teachers assess students’ work thoroughly and include detailed feedback to support improvements in ICT

skills and standards of English. Many students also work towards functional skills qualifications. However, the embedding of English and mathematics in lessons is insufficiently developed.

- Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. They plan the effective delivery of theory and technical knowledge. They use their expert vocational knowledge and enthusiasm to facilitate the development of the curriculum offer and resources to support teaching, learning and assessment effectively, utilising information technology. For example an interactive 'Who wants to be a millionaire' quiz is used to recap learning and reinforce the development of English and mathematics.
- Students enjoy their learning and participate with enthusiasm, develop high levels of independence and apply their acquired knowledge and skills well, for example, in programming and website design. Students recognise and appreciate the benefits of the breadth of topics included in their programme that supports the development of their vocational skills and employment chances.
- Teachers have established a separate network to enable students to develop skills in network architecture, management and programming. They make good use of a range of free software, that is supported by major software suppliers and universities, for functions such as scripting and programming.
- Teachers set high expectations of their students. The VLE provides access to all of the teaching, learning and assessment resources that are used effectively to facilitate classroom delivery and independent study. Students benefit from and particularly value the opportunity to catch up on work missed or to prepare materials in advance of lessons. Parents are also able to contact teachers via the VLE to discuss students' progress and work collaboratively to address poor attendance, punctuality or progress.
- Enrichment activities for the curriculum area are good. They include sport and an enterprise programme to develop students' employability and social skills. Through the enterprise programme a student won an award for a project to develop the college VLE, where the project provided a realistic opportunity to support the wider development and application of tools and resources on the VLE.
- Support for students requiring additional support to achieve their potential is effective. Learning support assistants make good use of diagnostic assessment outcomes to inform support plans. In the better sessions teachers identify and plan the support requirements for individual students in advance.
- Initial assessment is adequate and is used to develop student profiles. Teachers negotiate targets with students and these are recorded in students' electronic plans. The deployment of the system is in its infancy, and the quality of the targets set is insufficiently consistent and robust.
- Care, guidance and support for students are good. Students receive appropriate and effective guidance when joining their programmes. They benefit greatly from the support they are given on their course. Students receive accurate and detailed guidance about the progression routes available after the end of their course. The courses and pathways offered meet the needs of students well and many go on to study further ICT courses at university or into jobs where they use their acquired knowledge and skills.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is adequate. However, planning for the promotion of diversity topics to support wider understanding and application, such as accessibility in written text when preparing user guides, is insufficiently developed.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. Although the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications has declined to below the national average on significant programmes, current students are making satisfactory progress. Foundation-level students are now making good progress.
- Teachers are well qualified and use their up-to-date knowledge and experience to support students well in practical lessons. In the better lessons students are enthusiastic and demonstrate their creative hairdressing and professional beauty skills well. Students achieve high practical standards, preparing them well for employment. Lessons move at a good pace and teachers use a wide variety of activities to interest, motivate and challenge students. Effective use is made of directed questioning to assess students' understanding and build confidence. Students written assignments are well presented, demonstrating good theoretical knowledge.
- Less effective lessons are insufficiently well planned to ensure all students are fully involved and make the progress of which they are capable. Teachers rely too much on worksheets for both learning activities and to assess learning. These fail to inspire and motivate students. Teachers do not direct questions to individuals to ensure all students are included. Too often the more able students call out the answers. Students rely too heavily on teachers' direction and are not encouraged to work independently.
- Students are making sufficient progress in the development of their practical skills. However foundation-level hairdressing students demonstrate good skills and are on track to complete early. One student in 2012/13 won a national barbering competition for two consecutive years. Students display a professional image and attitude when working in training salons. In the better lessons teachers set high standards of work preparing students well for employment. However, in a small number of hairdressing practical lessons, teachers did not routinely correct students' sterilization and housekeeping practices.
- Students have good opportunities to practice their practical and customer care skills whilst undertaking assessments in the Saturday commercial salons. However, not all students are able to access these sessions at the same time which delays some from completing their assessments at the same pace as others.
- Practical resources require improvement. Salons are dated and fail to reflect a modern commercial environment. Students have sufficient equipment to allow them to work individually, but there are too few beauty couches for all students to treat clients at the same time, which slows their progress. Access to ICT is limited, particularly in the salons, restricting students' access to the most modern creative techniques to support them in their practical skills development. However, new salons are planned to be built in 2014.
- Initial assessment, advice and guidance require improvement. Hairdressing students are inappropriately enrolled on foundation programmes regardless of their initial assessment and GCSE results, as college staff identify. Students who need extra help with learning are identified at the start of the course, but at the time of the inspection support had yet to be implemented. However, data show that students who have previously received learning support achieve their qualifications at the same rate as their peers.
- Teachers inform students of their progress and students are encouraged to identify their own targets. However, these targets are insufficiently challenging. Students benefit from regular

reviews to keep them on track. Tracking systems are robust and allow teachers to see easily the progress individual students are making. Students are aware of progression opportunities in their specialist subject. Many students progress from foundation to intermediate courses and advanced-level students have a very high rate of progression into employment.

- Students receive clear feedback from teachers on written assessments that explains what they did well and what they need to do to improve. Teachers give extensive verbal feedback on practical assessments but they do not routinely give written feedback to support students in future reflection and improvement.
- Students benefit from good planning to improve their English and mathematics in most vocational lessons. In one theory lesson on head lice, students were encouraged to calculate the mean and average lifecycle of head lice. However, in functional skills lessons teachers make insufficient links to the specialist subject to embed understanding and identify relevance.
- Students are respectful and supportive of each other and work well together. Hair and media make-up students complete assignments on application of make-up on a range of skin types. However there are limited resources in hairdressing to allow students the opportunity to experience working with different hair types.

Sport

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. However, recent improvements to teaching, learning and assessment have yet to impact on the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications. While the proportion of students who achieved their qualifications on many courses was below the national average in 2012/13, progression to further study and relevant employment was good. Managers have now taken firm action to ensure that students are enrolled on the correct level and type of course. Students now attend regularly, are punctual and make good progress as a result.
- In the better lessons, teachers plan well and provide a creative range of active learning approaches that inspire students, maintain interest and support progress. Teachers question students frequently to assess learning, using additional questions to encourage students to develop a deeper and broader understanding of the topic. Teachers use a variety of good quality learning resources in lessons. For example, students used life size skeletal models to identify and learn about anatomy and the principles of movement. Students demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of key sports and scientific concepts and how they are applied in a sporting environment.
- Class management is good. Students work productively in small groups, collaborating well to achieve the task outcomes. Students develop good reflective skills and teachers use sports analogies well to stress the benefits of effective team work. Teachers challenge students to work quickly and effectively to make efficient use of time. Teachers frequently check for and reinforce high standards of written and spoken English and this has improved standards. Practical football coaching sessions are of a high quality and reflect good professional practice.
- Opportunities for students to carry out independent research and peer assessment are less frequent, resulting in a high dependency on the teacher for information and direction. The most able students often find the work set too easy and teachers do not set them harder tasks. Student use of technology in lessons is underdeveloped, reducing wider and enhanced learning opportunities; however, staff and students use the VLE effectively outside lessons to reinforce learning, read more about specific topics of interest and source information for further research.

- Teachers’ assessment of students’ written work is thorough and provides comprehensive feedback to enable students to improve their performance and achieve the challenging targets set for them. Written work is of a good standard; teachers highlight errors in spelling and grammar and students are asked to correct them.
- Teachers use group tutorials to promote better awareness of diversity topics and the subject area raises many opportunities for students to discuss relevant issues on their course. However, teachers do not always take advantage when opportunities arise in lessons to explore cultural and other diversity issues further.
- Students make good progress and benefit from the support they receive. They are clear about what teachers expect of them and the progression opportunities available after they complete their course. They understand clearly what they need to do to progress and how to improve. Classroom and practical activities develop their critical evaluative skills so they can improve their own sports performance and that of others. Students also use these skills to appraise their own learning progress.
- Students respond appropriately to the high expectations that staff have of them in terms of attendance, commitment to the course and standards of work. Students gain confidence particularly through developing good personal and social skills and understanding how much better prepared they are to get a job.
- Partnerships enhance learning opportunities for students. Links with professional football clubs expose students to the standards and expectations of high performance centres and enable them to train to a high standard. At the start of their course many students have a limited awareness of their employment prospects and teachers work hard to improve their employability skills and succeed in widening their horizons. Students are now better informed of the opportunities available to them and talk more confidently of different career pathways of interest to them.
- Students on the football development programme develop their employability skills through a Football Association coach award. Links with a training provider enable students who are not in employment, education or training to gain valuable qualifications and progress into full-time study. An exciting programme, in conjunction with Sport England, leads to excellent voluntary work for students that develops practical organisational and coaching skills. The programme enables all college students to participate in a wide range of sports and achieve sports coaching qualifications. Not all sports students, however, have additional short vocational qualifications included in their programme of study.

<p>Visual Arts</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. On virtually all courses, nearly all students complete successfully. Standards of students’ work are now very high. However a small minority of the most able students do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- The majority of students’ work is good and demonstrates a clear understanding of complex visual arts techniques and skills. Students acquire the skills of lino printing to create bold designs developed from sketchbook studies of organic forms. Students on advanced-level sugar craft win national awards for cake decoration. Examples of students’ completed work are displayed throughout the college, providing stimulation and encouragement to current students. Students enjoy their lessons and are able to describe the development of their work using visual language and terminology with confidence.

- Teachers have high expectations of their students in lessons and set demanding targets. Students make good progress in lessons and over time when compared to their starting points. Monitoring of current progress indicates that many students are on track to meet or exceed their expected grades. Students from many areas of the college showcase their talents to publicise, produce and record the end of year fashion show. Subject specific learning support assistants provide good support for students.
- Teachers plan lessons well to develop students' creative and technical skills to their full potential. The best sessions are well structured, maintain a fast pace of learning, have a variety of teaching and learning strategies and make effective use of ILT. Portable media devices, such as tablet computers, help students to access colour versions of their research in class. In a few weaker lessons, teachers do not keep all students focused during group activities or question and answer sessions. Not all teachers systematically check students' understanding of tasks.
- All teachers are fully qualified and freelance practitioners. They use their experiences and skills to develop a range of challenging activities and live project briefs. The vocational relevance of these assignments create real or simulated work experience that enable students to gain a clear understanding of the expectations and requirements of creative industries. For example, graphic design students developed ideas to re-brand the college refectory and the route of the new Luton to Dunstable bus way is lined with impressive sculptures created by art and design students.
- Teachers' assessment of students' work is accurate and fair. Teachers provide prompt feedback that is constructive and enables students to identify where and how improvements can be made to achieve higher grades. Students receive on-going feedback and encouragement from teachers in lessons and through peer critiques that take place in all areas.
- Group tutorials focus on personal and social development themes in the context of the students' main area of study. Subject specific tutorials are effective and timely, particularly for reviewing student progress and preparing for higher education applications. Group profiles contain comprehensive information about individual students and what support they will need to help them learn. However lesson plans lack detail of how teaching will take account of this and ensure all students achieve their potential.
- The development of English and mathematics is satisfactory and in the main is carried out in discrete classes. While most course documentation identifies how practical activities will support the development of English and mathematics skills, these skills are not consistently developed or accredited in lessons.
- Initial advice and guidance ensure students are enrolled onto the right course. All students attend an interview to assess their levels of interest and ability. Visits to local schools, Saturday Art Club and the end of year exhibitions give prospective students a good understanding of what is required to study visual arts at the college.
- Students feel safe and enjoy the respectful atmosphere of the college. A group of photography students chose to create a narrative about bullying demonstrating their understanding of personal and collective responsibilities. In the vast majority of cases students work safely, using safe working practices that they will encounter in the work place.
- The promotion of diversity is effectively incorporated into coursework briefs and assignments that encourage students to acquire a wider understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural beliefs and influences. All students attend contextual studies sessions and research styles of individual artists as well as art and design movements to influence their own work. Fashion and clothing students at the Luton campus staged a stimulating catwalk show of individual garments created by bringing together the richness of their diverse cultures.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement as they are not sufficiently effective to bring about consistent improvement in students' English skills. The proportion of students who achieve GCSE English at A* to C grade and functional skills English qualifications is very low. Students, particularly the more able, do not all make the progress of which they are capable in lessons.
- Teachers have realistic expectations of students and an encouraging and friendly approach that helps students feel at ease and motivates the majority of them to participate. Students enjoy their learning and the self-confidence and self-esteem that their attendance at college brings.
- In functional skills mixed ability classes, teaching and learning activities for weaker students are challenging and help them to make good progress. However, more able students find the pace slow, lose interest and need to be kept on task. In GCSE classes, students can identify and articulate differences between facts and opinions in more complex text. Overall, the majority of students make reasonable progress in the development of their use of English in lessons and through written work.
- Lesson planning requires improvement. Students who need additional support are identified in the planning stage but teaching is not adapted appropriately for these students. For example, in one session, a number of students with dyslexia had a requirement for adapted handouts, however, these adaptations had not been made. Teachers make good use of support workers to help students, many of whom have multiple barriers to learning.
- Classrooms at the Dunstable campus are well equipped with interactive white boards that most teachers use; however, they are not always used to their full capability to stimulate learning. Other resources, such as handouts and worksheets, are frequently outdated and uninspiring. In functional English classes, teachers make insufficient links to the students' vocational area and to employment. However a small number of functional English teachers now liaise with vocational teachers and where this takes place, student motivation has improved.
- In GCSE lessons, students are well prepared for the planned activities, usually through discussion. In most functional skills lessons, ILT is used effectively, with students using the internet to carry out online activities to support their learning. However, opportunities to encourage students to use the internet outside of the classroom environment and move towards more independent learning are not identified.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory, with teachers using the results of initial and diagnostic assessments to place students on appropriate programmes. However, the results of initial assessment do not lead to any target setting and therefore students are not aware of the progress they need to make early on in their course.
- Teachers provide frequent and encouraging verbal feedback on student progress. Teachers and assessors mark students' work carefully, correcting grammar and spelling. Written feedback to students is supportive, gives praise and offers suggestions for improvement. Review sessions identify strengths and areas for development, but do not provide sufficient support to help the students to achieve. Teachers do not tackle poor punctuality effectively.
- The promotion of diversity is satisfactory. Teachers create a safe and inclusive learning environment for the diverse groups of students who attend sessions. They know their students well and peer support is encouraged.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since its first inspection by Ofsted in 2002, the college has never been judged to be better than satisfactory. The Principal, aided by the highly skilled governing body, has exhibited exemplary leadership to transform the ethos of the college and give greater accountability and clearer responsibilities for staff. Following the new organisational management structure, leaders and managers are successfully raising the expectations of students and staff. Staff and students now benefit from a more professional and exciting atmosphere. Communication within the college is very good and staff morale is high.
- Governors have a broad range of skills and knowledge. They provide high levels of scrutiny, support and challenge to senior management. Detailed reports inform decision making. Clerking is very effective.
- Performance management for all staff now takes place regularly, although this was not the case in previous years. Staff agree performance targets that are derived appropriately from the overall college's strategic targets. Close links between the observation of teaching and learning, staff training and performance management processes are having a positive impact and are driving the evident improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Staff are improving their teaching skills through the comprehensive staff training programme and they receive good support from managers to do this.
- Quality assurance procedures are improved, but have not yet made sufficient impact to increase students' outcomes. In particular, the achievements of advanced-level students aged 16 to 18 are not improving and are below that of similar providers. The performance of courses is monitored rigorously by senior managers and governors. The self-assessment process is largely accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses, but too many of the actions identified in curriculum improvement plans lack specificity.
- The Principal and senior managers consult with staff and students well. Staff seek students' views through many avenues and this feedback is valued and acted upon wherever possible. For example, when photography students felt they had insufficient computers, more were supplied. However, the views of students do not feature strongly in self-assessment documents.
- The college's comprehensive curriculum strategy takes full account of government priorities and the local economy. The college has rightly decided to cease offering A-level courses and to focus on vocational provision. Curriculum managers have reviewed their provision recently and amended programmes to better meet local needs. Good partnership working has extended opportunities for the local community and employers. Building on the region's history of engineering manufacturing, the college is developing an innovative curriculum for the renewable and sustainable energy industries.
- The study programme has extended the range of provision for full-time students. It is managed innovatively with students from different programme areas grouped together to learn common topics, such as sport and health and social care students studying anatomy lessons together. However, provision in English and mathematics requires improvement.
- Most curriculum managers are relatively new to their post and, despite training, not all are fully effective in their role. Management information is largely accurate, but it is not used effectively by all staff, for example in the monitoring of current attendance rates.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is an important part of college life. A friendly and welcoming atmosphere is prevalent on the main campus. The college is very effective at widening participation for groups facing barriers to entering education and training. The Luton campus provides programmes almost exclusively for Asian females, many of whom would not attend a larger and more cosmopolitan site. Cultural events are celebrated and planned for, but inspectors observed few instances of equality and diversity issues being discussed in lessons.

- Managers regularly monitor the performance of different groups. Good progress has been made to reduce previous discrepancies in achievement between groups of students and in 2012/13 there were no significant gaps. Many vulnerable students, and those receiving additional learning support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are more successful than other students.
- Senior managers have worked hard to improve safeguarding procedures and the college meets its statutory requirements. Site security at the main campus is much improved since the previous inspection and students feel very safe at college. Effective training has raised awareness of the complex needs of vulnerable students for all staff and governors and they are supported well. However, administrative arrangements for safe recruitment practices need to be tightened further, with more rigorous recording of staff references required. Health and safety procedures are robust.
- The college has had outstanding financial health for several years. Accommodation that is shabby currently will be refurbished through the college's ambitious new building programmes.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Central Bedfordshire College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Engineering	2
ICT for practitioners	2
ICT for users	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Sport	2
Visual Arts	2
Foundation English	3

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16-18, 19+

Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1,614
	Part-time: 2,178
Principal/CEO	Ali Hadawi CBE
Date of previous inspection	November 2011
Website address	ww.centralbeds.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	252	46	296	89	642	360	20	4
Part-time	398	758	120	590	66	454	3	93
Number of traineeships								
	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age								
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	30	43	35	58	N/A	N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16								
	106							
Full-time								
	N/A							
Part-time								
	106							
Number of community learners								
	137							
Number of employability learners								
	N/A							
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"> ■ Al Hikmah ■ Business Management Training School ■ Bedford Training Group ■ Bear Town Training & Education ■ Central Beds Council ■ Focus School. 							

Contextual information

Central Bedfordshire College, which appointed a new principal in January 2011, is a small general further education college with a main site in the town of Dunstable, and several satellite campuses in the local area. Approximately one third of students are aged 16 to 18. The number of students

from a minority ethnic background is higher than the proportion in the local area. The proportion of the local population who hold no qualification is at the national average and about three quarters have achieved intermediate level qualifications. In 2012, the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs at A*-C, including English and mathematics, was slightly below the national average. Central Bedfordshire is a relatively prosperous area, although there are areas of greater deprivation within the region and unemployment is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Richard Pemble HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the assistant principal of learning improvement and enterprise 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 students' 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 students 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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