

Bedford College

General further education college

Inspection dates		17–21 March 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding-1
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:

- Students' outcomes in a variety of settings and programmes are good.
- The proportion of students who complete qualifications successfully in English and mathematics, has significantly improved and is now high.
- Teachers have excellent links with industry and use these effectively to develop high levels of industry-related skills, which prepare students skilfully for the world of work.
- Many students progress well onto employment or apprenticeships. Progression into higher-level courses both internally and to higher education institutions is high.
- The large majority of teaching is good or better and is particularly strong in the vocational craft subjects.
- Support for students is good; particularly the support teachers and managers provide for vulnerable students.
- The vocational learning experience for students age 14 to 16 is exceptional.
- The college provides an excellent environment for learning and resources are very good.
- Senior managers and governors set a clear strategic direction for the college and staff share their ambition and high expectations.
- Leaders and managers work successfully with employers and external agencies to provide a highly responsive curriculum to meet local and regional needs.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- A small minority of lessons still require improvement and too few are outstanding.
- The proportions of students who complete qualifications successfully while improved is not yet high enough.
- In most curriculum areas teachers do not promote equality and diversity sufficiently.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the range of techniques used in observations of teaching and learning to better capture learning in the vocational settings and identify more clearly what teachers need to do to improve learning and assessment.
- Further improve teaching at the college by:
 - increasing the level of challenge for the more able students in lessons
 - paying greater attention to improving students and apprentices spelling and punctuation in their written assignments
 - promoting and integrating equality and diversity more consistently in the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Students' outcomes in a variety of settings and programmes are good. The proportion of students who complete their qualifications successfully has risen steadily over three years and is good. This is particularly true for students aged 16 to 18. The large cohorts of students on courses in information communication technology for users (ICT), animal care, health and social care, science, hairdressing and beauty therapy and finance are generally successful in achieving their qualifications.
- Success rates for the large majority of students who take level 1 and level 2 functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT are high and have improved significantly over the last three years. Success rates for students studying GCSE English and mathematics are similarly high. While the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C on GCSE English courses is high, it is low on GCSE mathematics.
- Success rates for the small cohort of students training in the workplace have increased and are now high. The proportion of apprentices completing their qualifications in the timescale planned for them is higher than the recent national averages. Success rates for the small classroom and work-based provision delivered by subcontractors and for students aged 14 to 16 are high.
- The college is now particularly successful at retaining the majority of its students, most of whom achieve their qualifications. However, the very small cohort of adult students on entry level and level 1 courses are less successful at achieving their qualifications than their younger peers.
- Students on vocational courses at level 3 and A level make the progress expected of them. They achieve well and the proportion achieving high grades at AS level and on the second year of A-level programmes is good. Students in a small minority of AS level subjects, such as accounting and art and design, do not make the progress expected of them.
- Students value the recent commercial experience of their teachers. Teachers have excellent links with industry and use these effectively to develop high standards of vocationally relevant skills to prepare students for the world of work. Attendance is improving, although it is just below the college target of 90%. Students' punctuality rates are high.
- Teachers and managers have worked hard to reduce the achievement gap of white British male students; they now achieve in line with their peers. However, some very small groups of adult students from minority ethnic heritages achieve less well than their white British counterparts, most notably those from South Asia.
- Teachers and managers are now more accurately identifying additional learning needs for students and provide more effective support arrangements. As a result, students in receipt of

learning support achieve at a slightly higher rate than their peers. Most students who receive personal support from the college, such as those receiving college bursaries, achieve broadly in line with their peers.

- Students develop good practical and technical skills and a sound knowledge of theoretical concepts in many subjects. Increasingly, students gain valuable knowledge of employers' expectations through cross-college and subject area events, provided in conjunction with external partners and employers. Traineeship students have good quality work placements, relevant to their career aspirations. Inspectors identified safe working practices in classrooms and workshops during the week of inspection.
- Standards of students' written work are good. Students enjoy studying at the college and their behaviour is good.
- College staff are highly effective in developing courses to meet the needs of local employers and attract suitable trainees to develop the required skills. Success rates on 'the way to work' programmes for some of the most disadvantaged members of the community and their progression on to higher-level courses are high. Animal care, hairdressing and beauty and engineering subject areas, have a good record of employment after training. Many college students progress to higher-level courses, both internally within the college and to university.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of the learning experience for students and apprentices at the college, in the work place and at providers delivering training on the college's behalf is good. This reflects the improving success rates for all provision and the proportion of students who complete qualifications successfully in English and mathematics at levels 1 and 2.
- Students and apprentices gain knowledge, understanding and capability from good teaching that results in standards of work and skills development that are mostly good and particularly good in vocational craft subjects.
- Teachers, trainers and assessors provide a wide range of assessment and teaching methods that, in the large majority of lessons, workshops and workplace sessions are good. In the very small minority of outstanding teaching sessions, where students and apprentices successfully make products or complete a range of projects, they show confidence in using tools, and in their preparation for and precision in finishing jobs.
- Teachers have high expectations, challenge expertly what students do, analyse why they have made errors, and provide skilful guidance for what they should do next time. This engenders a great deal of self-belief in the students and apprentices to get things right, in their ability to work professionally and make decisions, and to meet customers' and employers' needs independently of their teachers.
- Teachers set high expectations for students aged 14 to 16 and for those students on traineeships. They facilitate stimulating vocational tasks that help students re-engage with learning and provide a strong direction in their lives. Traineeship students have work experience placements highly relevant to their career aspirations.
- Teachers across the college are suitably qualified and in the best teaching sessions use their knowledge and industry experience wisely to elicit the best responses and thinking from students in astutely composed questions and tasks. They are skilled at breaking down concepts and terms and responding to answers in a way that helps students understand. Teachers mostly use technology proficiently and they integrate it successfully as part of their planned learning sessions.
- In the small minority of sessions that are less effective, students finish tasks early, have nothing to do and are often waiting for others to catch up. In too many teaching sessions, teachers do

not always extend the more able students’ knowledge and understanding sufficiently to enable them to reach their full potential.

- The virtual learning environment (VLE) is an extremely useful tool for all curriculum areas and aspects of learning. A minority of teachers already use it creatively for promoting learning between sessions and for providing a picture of individual students’ initial assessments, expectations and progress right through to the completion of their courses. Although a majority of teachers use a variety of existing systems to monitor students’ progress well, a small minority are yet to make full use of the VLE to maximise learning and assessment opportunities for all students.
- Most students and apprentices make good progress towards their qualifications. They demonstrate good development in their knowledge and understanding, and interesting assignment topics test their research and analysis skills comprehensively. Teaching assistants closely monitor the performance of students, which they share with teachers to ensure students make good progress. Feedback to students across the college is good. However, teachers all too often do not identify or correct spelling and punctuation in essays or written work, particularly in vocational subjects.
- The development of students’ and apprentices’ English, mathematics and functional skills is good. They gain the skills necessary through lessons that enable them to improve and achieve. A wide range of support is available to help students progress in their written work and assignments. Teachers effectively integrate the development of English and mathematics into both theory and practical sessions for students aged 14 to 16.
- Guidance and support across the college are good. Teachers are adept at preparing students for progression to further studies or employment. Additional support for students is good, particularly for the most vulnerable students. Tutorials and reviews for students and apprentices are effective.
- Students behave with maturity in lessons and mutual respect exists between teachers and students which results in a productive learning environment. The college is an inclusive place where students enjoy their courses. In the best sessions, teachers plan and use cultural references imaginatively to enrich learning, such as the power of photographic images in advertising campaigns to promote a viewpoint about diversity or age. However, equality and diversity curriculum topics are not planned, developed or evident in all teaching sessions to equip students with knowledge of how to understand society better.

<p>Health and social care and early years and playwork</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment in health and social care, early years and playwork are good as reflected in the very good success rates. Students are very successful in progressing to higher-level courses, university and into employment. The college has excellent partnerships with local employers, which provide the majority of students with work experience in realistic work environments.
- The majority of teachers demonstrate high expectations of their students. They use their expertise to plan and provide challenging lessons that capture students’ interest and as a result, students understand and investigate the realities of working in health and social care and early years well. For example, one group of foundation level health and social care students demonstrated a very good knowledge of the range of care services, when asked to explain the different types of care available for a person with dementia.

- Teachers use technology skilfully to develop students’ confidence when researching and students use these skills effectively to produce high standards of work. A group of health and social care students demonstrated good levels of technical skills when designing posters of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. In childcare, students develop good skills that meet industry standards of work, when producing their curricula vitae in preparation for applying for placements and work.
- Teachers assess learning effectively in lessons. They use questioning techniques appropriately to challenge the more able students and to develop the confidence levels of the less able. Students develop good reflective skills.
- Teachers and support staff provide effective assessment of individual students’ learning abilities prior to coming on a course. They use this information systematically to plan learning and assessment. Students with additional learning needs such as dyslexia, have appropriate support provided by suitably qualified support staff.
- Students develop good English skills in lessons. Teachers encourage the art of writing relentlessly and introduce students to a wide range of vocational language and definitions. Students develop confidence in speaking and reading aloud and demonstrate effective teamwork. However, teachers do not routinely use naturally occurring opportunities to develop students’ mathematical skills in vocational lessons.
- Students benefit from good levels of advice and guidance from experienced staff when they join the college. Staff correctly use information to place students on the right courses. Students clearly understand the options open to them at the end of their courses, including progression to further and higher learning or employment. Staff effectively support students with personal and welfare issues and with achieving their learning and career goals, during regular tutorials.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers promote equality, diversity and inclusion appropriately and students understand the needs and rights of others. However, teachers do not always use appropriate terminology with students to enable them to develop the confidence for dealing with the diverse range of people in both the community and the workplace.

<p>Animal care and equine</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 which is reflected in the high student success rates. Meaningful work placements and work-related activities, including participation in events, conferences and trips, enable students to develop good levels of self-esteem and confidence. Students develop good employment-related skills such as customer service, stock management, problem solving, business skills, dog grooming, telephony and how to handle complaints.
- Teachers comprehensively plan and facilitate learning. Students develop good technical skills in practical sessions, such as in science experiments to establish the effects of pH and temperature on enzymes. However, in a few sessions the planning and implementation of student’s additional learning activities are repetitive and are not hard enough to challenge students sufficiently.
- Teachers are suitably qualified. They use their skills imaginatively to develop passion and enthusiasm on all courses. Students’ independent learning skills are developed particularly well as a result of using relevant software and the use of specialist mobile phone applications (apps) in the animal care curriculum.
- The Shuttleworth site is set in extensive parkland and provides students with a wide range of facilities and high standard resources. These are effectively used by teachers to provide students with a good learning experience and valuable exposure to handling exotic, rare,

dangerous and endangered species of animals such as Burmese pythons, ringtail lemurs, caiman alligators and tarantulas. The equestrian centre has two indoor arenas and an excellent range of quality horses from 'all-rounders' to a Prix St George dressage horse.

- Students produce good quality work in practical sessions and the standard of their written work is high. Teachers and learners successfully use the online facility to track achievement grades and progress. Students receive good verbal feedback which helps them progress. Teachers provide good written feedback, with spelling and grammar corrected on students' assignment work. Students are clear about what they need to do better to improve the quality of their work. However, in a few sessions teachers rely too much on ineffective group questioning techniques to assess learning. As a result, the quieter, less confident students do not always get the opportunity to participate fully in sessions.
- In equine, teachers provide sessions in English and mathematics to a very high standard. They use relevant vocational examples that motivate students to achieve. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers miss opportunities to integrate and embed functional skills into vocational sessions. For example, when weighing haynets and feed in the practical yard sessions, measuring the variation in canter strides and the distances covered in riding sessions.
- Assessment of students' abilities prior to enrolment is strong and accurately identifies individual students' needs. Students feel safe. Teachers support students well to make good progress and achieve through very good information, advice and guidance. Dedicated personal tutors work effectively with students to set and track targets. Together they create individual learning plans, which inform the planning of learning and assessment.
- Most teachers use naturally occurring opportunities to discuss equality and diversity. These include discussions on blood groups in humans, the Chinese New Year and animal welfare law. However, in a minority of sessions teachers miss opportunities to promote and embed equality and diversity in learning.

<p>Engineering and motor vehicle</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and training are good which reflects the progress current full-time students and apprentices make. They enjoy learning and their attendance and standard of work are both good.
- In most sessions, teachers check students' understanding accurately and ensure they can apply this knowledge to their activities in the workplace. In one aeronautics practical session, students working on a radius rod installation on an aircraft undercarriage answered challenging questions thoroughly about the stresses and strains the components were likely to undergo. However, in a small minority of theory sessions, as a result of poor direction from the teachers, the more confident students dominate and other students lose interest in learning.
- Students, through skilled teaching, develop good skills, particularly in workshops and through the college's virtual learning environment. Teachers effectively track the progress of students on wall charts in workshops and electronically for classroom-based activities. Tracking is thorough and motivates students to develop skills and complete activities in a timely fashion.
- Support for students and apprentices is good. Employers take a keen interest in apprentices and provide training which adds value to their learning. All motor vehicle students enjoy learning and the large majority complete additional qualifications which develops their personal and social

skills. Students and teachers make good use of well-maintained vehicles, machine tools and equipment.

- Employer resources are of industrial standard providing good opportunities for students to gain valuable skills. Apprentices and students benefit from knowledgeable and experienced staff. Apprentices and students are strongly motivated to achieve their programme aims and objectives. Motor vehicle apprentices gain in confidence and demonstrate a high standard of skills using complex diagnostic equipment in high profile work places. The reinforcement of health and safety in college workshops and on employers' premises by teachers and trainers is good and apprentices adopt safe working practices.
- Initial assessment is thorough with further diagnostic testing, mechanical aptitude tests and interviews with course managers to ensure that potential students and apprentices are correctly placed on a programme that best meets their needs. For the large majority, the assessment of students' and apprentices' work is detailed and thorough. Verbal feedback is clear and helps them to understand how to develop and improve. However, the assessment of motor vehicle apprentices' portfolios and test papers is not consistently good.
- During progress reviews, short-term targets for the technical content of programmes are too generic and do not explain the small steps required to build on and extend learning. However, apprentices work and train on employers' premises alongside skilled craftsmen who help them develop a wide range of skills and the ability to work confidently on their own. Assessors and teachers set clear and precise short-term targets for other activities associated with team working, attendance, punctuality and behaviour, these help the apprentices organise their learning into manageable proportions.
- Assessors and teachers track and monitor both students' and apprentices' performance comprehensively and they make good progress. All apprentices due to complete in this academic year will finish within their planned end date and a few have completed early.
- All apprentices successfully complete their functional skills in English, mathematics and information technology in the first year of their programme. Teachers of functional skills include useful vocational content; students value the improvement of these skills using engineering concepts. Students and apprentices use their mathematical skills effectively in taught sessions and in the workplace. However, teachers and assessors do not routinely correct students' spelling, punctuation and grammar in their written work.
- Information, advice and guidance are thorough. College open days and student experience days provide good opportunities to present the range of engineering programmes to potential applicants. Engineering staff effectively select and help prepare potential apprentices for interview. After selection, they provide a large national manufacturing company with good quality apprentices and manage their learning programmes.
- In taught sessions and progress reviews, teachers insufficiently promote, reinforce and record equality and diversity in students' knowledge and work. . Teachers often miss opportunities to discuss naturally occurring events through local and national issues with their students. However, in a few taught sessions, teachers do take opportunities to improve students' understanding of the impact equality and diversity may have on their personal and working lives.

Information communication technology

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes
Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The proportion of students who complete their skills successfully has improved and is now at the national average. Student attendance and punctuality rates are high. The majority of students progress to higher-level courses, university or employment. Students demonstrate good standards of work and are highly productive in lessons. Apprentices make good progress. Teachers and managers have maintained the recent improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Teachers and assessors use their vocational expertise to plan lessons creatively and provide activities that enable students and apprentices to develop good practical skills that meet industry standards of work. Teachers provide innovative learning activities that focus on commercial activity.
- Students undertake 'live briefs' from clients to design and create web-sites. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to use industry standard software that provides them with the skills and practical experience required in commercial settings. For example, students work in well-equipped networking labs and complete commercially recognised industry specific qualifications. Students and apprentices use current industry standard software and hardware well, both in college and at work. They create multi-page web sites and use software simulations to build circuit boards. They produce good standards of work.
- Students make good use of the abundant resources on the virtual learning environment (VLE), to reinforce and undertake learning outside of lessons and to make good progress. In class, teachers use skilful questioning techniques to capture students' interest and check on their understanding. However, in a small minority of lessons, they use questions less effectively. Teachers do not always engage the less confident students and occasionally fail to measure the progress made by all learners.
- Assessments are systematically organised and timely. Teachers give clear feedback on students' work, they provide supportive comments and areas for development that enable students to make good progress and work towards achieving higher grades. Peer mentors and learning support staff provide teachers and students with effective support in the classroom; as a result, students make good progress. Teachers design assignments carefully to develop a wide range of students' skills. However, in a small number of lessons teachers set work that is too easy for the more able students.
- Pre-course advice and guidance has improved, and potential students now have the opportunity to experience lessons through taster days to help them make the right choice of course. Early indications note improvement in the proportion of students that complete their courses. Staff effectively assesses students' prior learning and support needs early on in the course. However, teachers do not always make sufficient use of this information in lesson planning.
- Students develop good English and mathematics skills. Teachers routinely check spelling and grammatical errors in students' work. Teachers integrate mathematics thoughtfully into vocational lessons and many students demonstrate good levels of competence when undertaking complex mathematical functions. For example, when calculating Pi using string codes; the effective use of technical terms and their application. Students produce written work to a high standard and demonstrate good levels of practical application.
- Tutorials provide good pastoral support. Teachers closely monitor the tracking of student progress using detailed reviews and effective target setting. Students are fully aware of what

they need to do to improve their work to complete their course and attain high grades. Assessors complete comprehensive reviews that systematically include all aspects of the apprenticeship framework and students' personal development. Employers provide comprehensive feedback to assessors on students' work-related progress. Assessors use this effectively in student reviews.

- Teachers create a respectful learning environment where the promotion of equality and diversity is good. Students feel safe, are respectful of one another and behave exceptionally well. Students consider the needs of their audience when creating web pages and documents and adjust their product accordingly. For example, students amend the screen resolution for mobile phone applications (apps) or change the background colour of web pages for those who have a visual impairment.

Foundation English 16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which reflects the high success rates in functional skills English and the significant number of high grades achieved in English GCSE. Success rates are particularly high for adult students on functional skills English programmes. All students make good progress in developing their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills. Most students' work is of a good quality and attendance is good.
- Students achieve well and recognise the need for good English skills to support their progression to work or further study. The college gives particular emphasis to the importance and relevance of developing functional skills and teachers promote these to students and expect them to succeed. As a result, students regard the development of these skills as a priority.
- Teachers are suitably qualified and motivate students with their enthusiastic and friendly approaches. Students benefit from well-structured, interesting lessons that promote good learning, with activities closely linked to topics they find relevant. For example, in one functional skills lesson, students become highly engaged in an activity using current newspaper articles to analyse fact and opinion from the texts; in another, childcare students composed texts suitable for a child's book. In a small number of lessons, teachers are too keen to move students to the next activity without allowing time for them to reflect on their learning.
- Functional skills lessons take place within vocational programme areas, providing continuity in learning for students. Learning resources are satisfactory, although in a few lessons teachers rely too heavily on the use of worksheets to support learning activities, which some students find repetitive. A few teachers do not always use information technology to enhance learning by providing a variety of different formats for students.
- In a minority lessons, teachers do not always set work that fully meets all individual students' learning needs. In these cases, students generally complete identical tasks at the same pace without an opportunity for more able students to extend their skills through more complex work. The college has recognised this as an area to improve.
- Assessment is thorough and provides students with accurate information about their progress. Assessment provides students with detailed verbal feedback about their progress. GCSE students receive good written feedback, which provides strategies to support ongoing progress, but in functional skills lessons, written feedback is often too brief to help students to reflect, modify and improve their work. Target setting is effective in supporting students' progress. They understand their overall and short-term learning goals well.
- Students receive good information, advice and guidance at enrolment and initial assessment processes to assess students' abilities and skills prior to coming on courses are effective in

allocating students to the correct programme. Support staff provide good and effective in-class support to the large majority of students with additional support needs.

- Spelling and punctuation are improving for the large majority of students and teachers regularly remind them to use a dictionary to check independently spellings and definitions of words. Functional skills students demonstrate a good knowledge of sentence structure, comprehension of text passages and improved use of good and correct grammar. GCSE students learn well about the impact of specific language styles on an audience. The majority of teachers, correct students’ written work accurately, however, a few do not give this sufficient attention. Progression is good with functional skills English students progressing from lower to higher-level English programmes.
- Teachers create a safe and supportive atmosphere within lessons, which promotes trust and harmony between diverse groups of students. A small minority of teachers make good use of topics within lessons to develop students’ wider knowledge of diversity issues. For example in one functional skills lesson, visual representation of an Indian wedding promoted discussion about celebrations of marriage within different cultures. The reinforcement of equality and diversity through lesson content is inconsistent across English programmes.

<p>Accounting, finance and administration</p> <p>16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall, and outstanding in the small work-based learning provision in business administration. This is reflected in the high proportion of students who achieve their qualifications and progress into further and higher education, or work.
- Teachers and assessors are very well qualified and most remain current industry practitioners, which benefits students well. Students make good progress as a result of the high expectations set. In work-based learning, many students make very good progress and demonstrate high standards of work. Students develop useful vocational skills that meet industry standards of work and wider skills such as increased confidence levels.
- Teachers and assessors use questioning widely and effectively for developing and checking students’ understanding and knowledge levels. Individual students benefit from probing and challenging questions, which allow them to consolidate their thoughts and deepen their evaluative skills. However, in a minority of cases teachers do not always use specific or targeted questioning enough to develop the more able students’ wider knowledge, particularly on the level 2 accountancy qualification.
- Teachers plan good lessons and use a variety of learning strategies to capture the interest of students and to set a good pace of learning. Teachers make good links between theory and practice; for example, in an accountancy lesson the teacher used the outcomes of the recent budget to compare the impact of personal allowances on income.
- Teachers’ assessment of students’ written work is frequent, detailed and accurate. They provide students with verbal feedback that clearly outlines improvements to support achievement. Students are aware of the criteria on which their work or competence is assessed. Students produce assignments and written work to a good standard. Staff assessment of the business administration students’ work is highly effective and inclusive. Staff use a wide range of assessment methods effectively to assess student progress over time.
- College staff meet with students very frequently and provide very good advice and guidance. In addition, they provide students with excellent levels of support. On accountancy courses,

teachers are very effective at supporting students in one-to-one tutorials. Student reviews and target setting are very effective; for example, they clearly focus on progress and factors that might affect student achievement. Students trust all staff and are able to discuss any concerns they have about their vocational and personal development.

- Employers participate well in supporting curriculum developments for students and apprentices. They provide valuable input, such as promoting the use of a specialist application in accountancy, in addition to the use of commercial accountancy software.
- Students develop good literacy and numeracy skills. They receive positive encouragement and praise from staff regarding the high standards of work produced. Students typically develop good literacy skills in their written work. Students make good progress in the improvement of literacy and numeracy skills as part of their vocational work. However, in work-based learning, information technology functional skills provision takes place too late in the course.
- Teachers create an inclusive and respectful learning environment, which students respond to very positively. Working relationships between staff and students are good and a culture of mutual respect is evident on all courses. In work-based learning assessors help students understand equality and diversity effectively, using naturally occurring opportunities. For example, by highlighting and improving students' awareness of diversity when working with colleagues and customers.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The Principal and governors have established a clear mission for the college and have high aspirations for their students. The mission is ambitious, reflecting the college's aim to broaden participation and improve outcomes for all students. Communication across the college's numerous sites is good and staff have good opportunities to express their views and contribute to developments. Managers and teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning and to responding to the needs of each learner. Clear values adopted by all staff, foster an inclusive environment for all students.
- Governors know the college well and benefit from carefully prepared reports, which increasingly present information and data in a readily accessible manner. They bring considerable expertise to the college and take an active part in curriculum development events. They are progressively involved in overseeing the quality of teaching and learning and attend college meetings to monitor targets. They use their skills effectively in self-assessment and strategic planning.
- Senior leaders and governors manage finances meticulously, enabling investment to improve facilities and resources for learning. Major projects have been very well managed by senior leaders. All growth is predicated on extensive research, wise investment and always with a view to benefiting the local community. The transfer of Shuttleworth campus to Bedford College was planned and managed thoughtfully and sound investment has provided excellent facilities. Alongside this, managers have been successful in raising standards and increasing the rate of improvement from previous years.
- Managers use labour market information accurately to develop a new curriculum and expand the existing curriculum; for example, the development of the Bedford Sixth Form Centre and the targeted growth of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college offers a broad curriculum with progression routes from pre-entry level to higher education in most areas of learning. Senior leaders have been bold in their approach to developing strategies to deliver English, mathematics and functional skills to students. This increasing emphasis on developing students' English, mathematical and employability skills across the curriculum has resulted in excellent progression rates to employment and higher education. Effective partnership work with schools, the local authority and the voluntary sector is broadening

opportunities for adults, young people who are disengaged at school and those who are not in education, employment or training.

- Senior staff have a very strong focus on teaching, learning and assessment, and its improvement. A robust lesson observation system provides reasonably accurate assessments of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, in a minority of cases observers do not identify rigorously enough the learning that is taking place. Advanced practitioners support teachers to improve their practice when they have received an observation grade, which is less than good. Teachers who do not improve are appropriately supported through the college's capability procedures. Performance management at the college is good and effectively eradicates weak teaching. However, more needs to be done to equip teachers to provide outstanding lessons.
- Self-assessment arrangements are good. Teachers and managers use data and different sources of evidence well, including the views of students, to contribute to self-assessment. Quality improvement plans are accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Managers identify and review underperforming courses thoroughly. Senior leaders then monitor these effectively and governors receive a regular quality intervention report. Quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted provision are similarly robust and effective. Managers closely monitor and support subcontractors through all stages of the students' programme.
- Governors, senior leaders and managers thoroughly promote equality and diversity across the college. Students have respect for one another, and for staff. They demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and across the college campuses. Despite recent training focusing on promoting equality and diversity through the curriculum and in the classroom, impact has been uneven. Staff and managers have successfully reduced the gaps in success rates between different groups of students by more focused and timely interventions. In addition those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, whose numbers have recently significantly increased, receive good support to achieve.
- Senior managers and governors place a strong emphasis on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students. The college tutorial programme promotes safety and staff across the campuses respond promptly to any incidents. The college complies with statutory requirements for safeguarding. All staff have undertaken relevant training with regular updating. Staff receive good guidance when they have concerns about students' welfare. The college enjoys good links with local authority care services, other agencies and local safeguarding children's boards.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Bedford College						
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	2	1	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	1	2	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	1	2	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	1	2	2	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and Social Care	2
Early Years and Playwork	2
Animal care	2
Equine Studies	2
Engineering	2
Motor vehicle	2
Information and Communication Technology	2
Foundation English	2
Accounting and Finance	2
Administration	2

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 3,837							
	Part-time: 4,897							
Principal/CEO	Mr. Ian Pryce							
Date of previous inspection	January 2009							
Website address	http://www.bedford.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	522	36	938	122	1,616	321	0	2
Part-time	69	1,712	178	474	87	380	17	96
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	10		1		11			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	171	145	334	149	6	16		
Number of learners aged 14-16	397							
Full-time	5							
Part-time	392							
Number of community learners	145							
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"> ▪ Edudo ▪ Aspire, Achieve, Advance ▪ BLS ▪ LEAD ▪ TESS ▪ Free2Learn ▪ YMCA ▪ ABA. 							

Contextual information

Bedford College is a large general further education college located in Bedfordshire. The majority of students are over 19 years of age. The college has three main campuses, two of which are in Bedford. The college offers academic and vocational courses to students aged from 14 upwards and The Bedford Sixth Form offers academic courses to students aged 16 to 19. Shuttleworth College offers land-based provision to students aged from 14 upwards. Bedford ranks near the middle of authorities on deprivation rates with 11% of residents living in wards which are within the 10% most deprived wards in the England. Unemployment rates are 4.4% overall. The number of pupils in the area attaining five GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, increased last year but remains below the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Denise Olander HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and ten additional inspectors, assisted by the director of quality, performance and standards 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 relevant 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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