

Hartlepool College of Further Education

General further education college

Inspection dates		28 April–2 May 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
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:

- Overall the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the college has reached a good level since the previous inspection.
- The management of and support for the large number of apprentices is good, leading to high success rates.
- Attendance and retention are high in the current year, and students' good behaviour is contributing to a harmonious learning environment.
- All levels of staff, motivated by supportive managers, are willingly putting in place improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Self-assessment and quality arrangements are now good.
- Close work with employers and other agencies ensure that the college provides courses that help students and the local community.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The proportion of students who achieve their main qualification has yet to reach consistently good levels.
- In the key areas of foundation mathematics and English the teaching, learning and assessment require improvement.
- Learning strategies that take into account an individual student's needs and start points, are not yet consistently applied across the college.
- Small but irritating problems with the college's new information technology (IT) systems and slow growth in the use of aspects of learning technology have impacted on students' ability to make the most of their learning.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- In instances where the attendance, retention and in-year achievement of students falls away, take prompt action to ensure that a higher proportion of students achieve their qualification.
- To help students achieve well in foundation English and mathematics further increase the staff development and support and ensure that individual students, particularly in functional skills classes, are clearer on what they need to do to
- Fully implement the procedures that are aimed at encouraging students to achieve their aspirational grades, and in GCSE English and mathematics courses make the achievement of an A* to C grade an absolute priority.
- Implement the improvements to the college's IT systems planned for summer 2014 and then, with a more reliable system, renew the drive to enable and encourage staff to use appropriate technology to support and extend students' knowledge.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Outcomes for students on courses in 2012/13 improved from the inadequate position noted at the inspection at the mid-point of that year and the very low position in 2011/12 but at the end of the year they were still at a level that required further improvement.▪ The success rates on most functional skills English and mathematics courses were low in 2012/13. Examination passes to date show that changes are having an impact in those areas, but rates still remain too low. Passes at A* to C grade in GCSE mathematics and English were very low in 2012/13.▪ The success rates for those who were on long courses in 2012/13 were too low, although short courses had results that ranged from satisfactory to good. The inconsistencies in performance noted at the March 2013 inspection had not been corrected by the end of the year.▪ In the current year, much attention has been paid to attendance, monitoring of performance and then providing support for students who are believed to be under-performing. The impact of this work is seen in improved rates for attendance to a very good level as well as high retention rates but this has not yet resulted in improvements in formal outcomes.▪ The very large majority of current students are progressing well on their main courses and are achieving or exceeding their target grades.▪ Success rates for nearly all apprenticeship programmes were good in 2012/13. The one weak area, property services, related to subcontracted provision that has been discontinued. Workplace learning rates were very good. Over three-quarters of the way through the current year an extremely high proportion of the substantial number of apprentices are successfully completing their qualification.▪ Students' behaviour and attitude towards learning are very good, which contributes to the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Students' confidence blossoms in this welcoming college, for instance, with hairdressing where level 1 students improve social skills, or in sport where natural confidence is well channelled into personal development.▪ Carefully designed courses, close work with employers, good industry standard resources and a carefully planned programme of extra events linked with potential employment all contribute to the improvement of students' employability skills. Programmes such as heritage construction or aeronautical engineering have been carefully developed with employers or qualification awarding bodies to offer students skills relevant to the local area and employment opportunities.	

- Progression of students is monitored well, with the curriculum carefully adjusted to meet their changing needs. A high proportion of students progress to other further education courses.
- No sustained or significant difference between the performance of differing groups of students is apparent. However, the college is properly examining a slowly growing gap in performance between young males and females, and underperformance by a small number of students of an African background.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching and learning and assessment have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are now good across the college, not just in the apprenticeship provision. This is influencing the college's improving retention and students' in-year progress and is beginning to have a positive impact on the achievement of qualifications.
- Staffs' high expectation of students' attendance, punctuality and achievement of most targets is aiding students' progress and achievement. Swift interventions resulting from students' non-attendance include text messages to parents or carers, good personal and academic support and closer monitoring. A sound process of observing and evaluating professional practice together with good professional development is helping teachers improve their skills.
- College staff effectively record students' individual learning characteristics, previous achievements and career aims. A large minority of teachers use this information well to plan learning that benefits their students. However, in too many lessons this detailed profiling is not used effectively to plan and meet the needs of individual students.
- Motivated and enthusiastic students work conscientiously and benefit from well-considered learning activities such as directed research, case studies, topical (and at times emotive) discussions. Tutors and employers collaboratively plan workplace activities that effectively aid the development of apprentices' occupational skills. Questioning is used routinely to check students' learning but the use of more probing questioning is not consistently used to extend students' understanding, to develop their ability to reflect, or make connections or form hypotheses.
- The new college building is a good environment for learning. However, managers are having to spend significant money to overcome deficiencies in the IT systems that reduced some staff enthusiasm for fully exploiting the potential of the technology and gave a few students difficulties in completing their work. In engineering and art and design courses technology, including the college virtual learning environment (VLE), is used imaginatively to enhance and promote independent learning. In other subjects technology is not as extensively used to give students the same variety and interest in their work, or in the case of apprenticeships to reduce some of the administrative effort allowing them to focus better on their skill development.
- Teachers across all areas are well qualified and their occupational experience and knowledge provides students with interesting learning activities and good vocational role models. For example, in an advanced art and design lesson, students explored how imagery can create emotional reactions and raise awareness of controversial and humanitarian issues.
- Assessment practice is sufficiently rigorous and varied. In lessons, the good use of peer assessments, share and compare, and continued analysis are effective in developing students' evaluative skills, which they then transfer to their own work. Assignments are annotated with useful comments some of which are particularly detailed. The summaries are used well by most students as they work towards improving their grades. English and mathematics functional skills students receive good verbal feedback but too often written feedback lacks details on how work can be improved.
- Programmes of study are suitably planned to extend progression opportunities for students. Students benefit from additional vocational subjects, planned enrichment and workshops that improve their curriculum vitae and interview techniques.

- Students’ experience is further extended by a wide range of varied cross-college activities, for instance, computer football games that are enhancing numeracy skills as well as topics such as personal health, multiculturalism and multi-media projects. Early years and hairdressing and beauty therapy students combined their skills when they invited primary school pupils into the college for a Halloween make-over. Themed events raise students’ awareness of topical issues such as a Workers’ Memorial Service for those injured and killed in the workplace.
- Effective and timely initial assessment arrangements lead to ‘learner passports’ detailing students’ starting point. The monitoring of students’ and apprentices’ work is frequent and thorough. The college’s review process is highly effective at monitoring attendance and achievement but too many students’ and apprentices’ development targets are no more than a direction to complete tasks or assessments. In a minority of cases progress in English and mathematics is not systematically shared with vocational teachers and planning to support students’ development of specific topics is restricted.
- The specialist teaching of English and mathematics, although improved, requires further improvement. English and mathematics are adequately embedded into vocational teaching. For instance, students in a foundation English as a second language lesson not only speak numbers, but complete simple mathematical problems before they focus on pronouncing the numbers. However, that sort of example is not seen consistently across the college
- Good advice and guidance helps students choose appropriate courses and progress onto further education and employment. The college careers staff work closely with National Careers Service staff, also based in the college, to provide a good range of information. Academic and personal support is particularly good. Students have access to a wide range of external agencies. Additional learning support in lessons is suitably unobtrusive with specialist staff helping students become more independent and self-reliant.
- The support for students with low attendance or those falling behind target is particularly good and rightly involves parents and carers. Senior managers, programme leaders, and the college’s support services join with programme tutors to ensure the students make improvements through regular contact, changes to timetables, additional study sessions, help with personal issues and finance. Many students whose attendance fell within the first months of joining college are now good attenders and progressing well.
- The college has created a culture of inclusion and respect. The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons and during apprentice progress reviews appropriately expands students’ awareness and understanding. GCSE sociology students worked confidently as they developed case studies on racism in primary school. Students recognise the importance of individual differences and exhibit good and supportive characteristics when working in groups.

Health and social care and early years and playwork

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good; the significantly improved retention and progress of current students on all programmes shows a stronger picture than seen at the end of 2012/13. Students gain in self-confidence and are reflective practitioners. They are able to solve problems whilst gaining the knowledge, skills and attitudes essential for work in this sector.
- Students enjoy their studies and make good progress. A majority progress to further study or relevant employment. Students on the Access to health programme and an increasing number of health and care students progress to higher education.
- The standard of students’ work is good. Most work is well presented and set out in a logical order. Level 3 students in particular carry out wider reading and research. Students make good use of all resources including the VLE. The standard of wall displays by childcare students is

good, a skill valued by employers. However, these students have limited opportunity to gain confidence and competence in the use of the interactive white boards used widely in the childcare sector.

- Teachers are well qualified, vocationally experienced and enthusiastically use their experiences well to enhance learning. Learning is well planned and executed, except that not all teachers make best use of detailed group profiles to help design activities and assessment to meet all students’ needs. In the most effective sessions teachers adopt a variety of strategies to check learning such as using small whiteboards, electronic quizzes or pre-prepared questions. In less-effective sessions students are not encouraged to justify their answers to develop breadth and depth of understanding.
- Students enjoy and benefit from opportunities to work in pairs and small groups sharing life and work experiences relating to the topic. For example, in a lesson for level 3 health and social care, students confirmed their understanding of the all-inclusive needs of people with one of four types of dementia. Students enthusiastically discussed and recorded ideas onto a ‘tablecloth’ before moving to the next three tables to add ideas and check spelling. Mobile phones were used to photograph the completed ‘tablecloths’ before being posted to the VLE for future reference.
- Assessment is well planned and thorough. Students have a timetable encouraging them to manage their time effectively. Students value the supportive verbal and written feedback enabling them to improve their work and grade. A sound tracking system and robust internal moderation monitors progress and maintains quality well.
- Initial advice and guidance and induction are now robust, ensuring students are on the correct level and pathway. Diagnostic assessment of functional skills and learning needs identifies appropriate intervention early in the programme. In-class support or drop-in sessions enable weaker students to stay on their course and achieve. Vocational teachers reinforce the importance of English and mathematics for work in the care sector, which motivates students to succeed.
- Academic and personal support for students is very good. Students are encouraged to set realistic and challenging personal and learning targets to achieve the requirements for progression into their career choice. Regular tutorials motivate students to take responsibility for their learning and to monitor their progress to achieve or exceed target grades. Support for those with personal or health problems is good, for example, support using email was provided for a student with health problems who is keen to maintain her learning.
- Students recognise the importance of valuing and respecting individual differences, identifying how this will inform their later professional practice. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and those they are to care for safe.

<p>Engineering</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Good teaching, learning and assessment are contributing to students’ improving success rates. College strategies to improve retention, and hence success rates, are taking effect and in-year retention is now high. Students’ progression to a higher level of study and to employment is good.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge and extensive industrial experience effectively to enhance students’ understanding and awareness. Teachers draw on their own experiences in the industry to illustrate key points in lessons. For example, when leading a session on computer numerical control (CNC) machines, the teacher emphasised the need to manufacture engineering components using CNC machines more competitively. He demonstrated effectively

the industry practice of changing several parameters on CNC machines to achieve the required objectives.

- In practical sessions students work independently, productively and safely. Most students produce a good standard of work. They make good progress and develop appropriate occupational skills. In a lesson in fabrication and welding students produced a variety of high-quality engineering components. In the minority of lessons, teachers pay insufficient attention to developing students' underpinning knowledge. For example, in a lesson on turning, several students were unable to state the type of material they were using. In another lesson, a few students did not know how the engineering products that they were manufacturing would be used.
- Teachers use directed and probing questions skilfully in theory lessons to engage students and to check their knowledge and understanding. However, most teachers do not use students' profiles and the results of their initial assessment to plan the support needed for individual students, reducing the effectiveness of sessions for all students.
- The well-equipped and laid-out classrooms and the good workshop resources support teaching and learning very well. Students benefit from being in a realistic working environment. Teachers and students make good use of learning technology, including the use of specialist computer software, to support their work and to enrich their experience. Aeronautical engineering students have access to a good flight simulator, which helps them better understand the theory of flight. Students use the good engineering resources on the college's VLE extensively to help them with their assignments and to develop their independent learning skills.
- Teachers encourage students to participate in competitions to enhance their practical skills, increase their confidence, aid their personal and social development and prepare them well for future employment. Engineering students have a good record of success in local and regional competitions and awards.
- Teachers and workshop technicians support students very well, both in and outside of lessons. Teachers set students realistic targets for improvement and monitor their progress regularly. They use comprehensive tracking sheets to record students' achievement.
- Assessment practices are good. Assignment briefs and tasks have clearly defined criteria that specify what students need to do to achieve. The quality of students' written work, particularly at level 3, is good. Teachers' written feedback is variable and ranges from sufficiently detailed and helpful to cursory. In practical lessons, teachers provide constructive verbal feedback to students and outline what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.
- Teaching in vocational lessons supports the development of students' English and mathematics skills well. Students use precision engineering instruments ably to measure and record data. They use engineering formulae and equations competently and carry out accurate calculations to support their tasks and to develop their mathematics skills. Teachers introduce appropriate technical vocabulary and engineering terminology in their lessons to develop students' English skills. The routine correction of students' grammatical and spelling mistakes helps their more general employment skills.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Students value the good advice and guidance they receive from their teachers and college staff on career and progression pathways.
- Equality and diversity are appropriately promoted and understood well by teachers and students. Students are attentive in lessons and behave very well; mutual respect between teachers and students is good. As a result of specific recruitment activities the proportion of female students in aeronautical engineering and in fabrication and welding is increasing. Teachers and students pay good attention to safe working practices.

- Teaching, learning and assessment in hairdressing and beauty therapy are good, as reflected in the good progress that current students are making and improvements in outcomes for several courses in 2012/13. Most students' work is of a good quality and students display high levels of professionalism and client care in practical salon sessions in the college. Students benefit from regular practice and assessment on a generous supply and variety of clients which the department successfully attracts through effective marketing and promotions. Current in-year retention and attendance is high. Progression from level 1 to level 2 courses is high; however, progression for hairdressing students to level 3 courses is too low.
- Teaching and learning are good because teachers support students well to develop skills to a good standard. Students make rapid progress and build their confidence, partly because they work on a variety of clients from an early stage in their courses. Teachers constantly reinforce the link between students' work to good industry practices.
- A strong focus on ensuring that students provide good client care and consultations results in clients becoming regular users of the services the college offers. Teachers keep their skills up-to-date through effective professional development, which they use well to provide interesting, engaging lessons. Teachers ensure practical sessions are well planned and purposeful. Students are encouraged to work independently, making decisions about product and colour choice in practical sessions.
- Students enjoy their theory lessons and develop their knowledge and understanding well because teachers break learning up into small elements with a regular change of activity and reinforcement of knowledge. Teachers develop effective relationships with their students. Although lesson planning does not consistently reflect the information available in group profiles teachers are adept at responding well to meet students' needs in lessons, in particular by involving those who are more reluctant to participate. However, in a minority of sessions, the work is not sufficiently challenging for the more able students and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers raise students' aspirations through an improving enrichment programme including external visits and the opportunity to participate in internal and external competitions. Work placement is encouraged. However, only a minority of students participate and benefit from the opportunity to experience a real work environment with a small number gaining employment.
- Teachers focus well on the development of students' spoken and written skills including the development and regular reinforcement of technical language. Teachers use peer assessment effectively in lessons. For instance, students enthusiastically highlight incorrect spellings in written work, and in salon sessions, give useful feedback to their colleagues when they act as models for treatments such as body massage.
- Pre-course information has been strengthened as one approach to dealing with the previously low retention of students on their courses. Early indications suggest that fewer students are leaving their courses early because they have chosen the right pathway in hairdressing or beauty therapy. However, too many hairdressing students who demonstrate a good level of skill and ability and are capable of progression are enrolled inappropriately onto level 1 courses.
- Students' additional learning and social needs are identified early in their courses and effective support, including support in lessons, ensures students are able to learn well. Good use is made of a student 'passport' to monitor students' progress and identify those at risk of non-attendance. Students are clear about the broad qualification targets they are working towards and teachers and students make good use of tracking systems displayed prominently on salon walls. Reviews and target-setting in lessons, covering an individual student's preceding learning and progress, require improvement.
- Teachers create a safe and supportive atmosphere to which students respond well. Students exhibit positive behaviour and this promotes harmony in lessons. In a minority of lessons teachers plan activities which raise students' awareness of equality and diversity topics well; for example, the choice of makeup and colour for different skin types. But students' full and deep understanding of how they would be expected to meet clients' diverse needs is under-developed.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Foundation English teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. This is seen in the mixed picture of 2012/13 success rates, with long courses in functional skills English at satisfactory levels but improvement needed in short courses in functional skills English and in the achievement of grades A* to C in GCSE English. In-year attendance is below the college's target level and it is not clear from in-year results if a declining trend in outcomes has been reversed.
- Students enjoy their learning, improve their skills, and make good progress in lessons. Teachers have consistently high expectations of all their student. Behaviour and attitude are good. Students on GCSE English courses need further encouragement and guidance to set their targets and aspirations at a level to ensure that they achieve high grades.
- Classroom activities are well structured and students enjoy a range of activities that are stimulating and varied, keeping them motivated and engaged. The curriculum is well planned and good resources are available in class, supplemented through the VLE. Most teachers use learning technology well in the delivery of the English curriculum.
- The use of skilful questioning techniques ensures that most students are involved and effectively challenged. Sometimes, however, teachers move on too quickly without checking the understanding of all their students. A lack of differentiated materials or extension activities means that a few of the more able students are not challenged sufficiently.
- Good levels of support in lessons help students progress; this ranges from direct help from teachers to additional workshop sessions for English GCSE students. Additional learning support needs are identified at an early stage, starting at school then through enrolment and in initial assessment. Effective plans are in place to offer appropriate support, provided by the well-qualified additional learning support team.
- Most staff are experienced, appropriately qualified and extremely committed to achieving success for their students and for the community of Hartlepool. Staff know their students very well. Specialist English staff deliver GCSE English and nearly all functional skills English programmes. In a very small number of cases, vocational staff deliver functional skills English. This works well on the whole; where vocational staff need additional support and the opportunity to develop their expertise in English this is made available through professional development.
- Assessment of learning is good. The recent introduction of a student 'passport' has enabled careful monitoring of students' progress. Verbal feedback to students is particularly good and very supportive. Written feedback on assignments is usually careful and evaluative but often with an insufficient focus on what students can do to improve.
- Recent developments in initial and diagnostic assessment ensure that students' starting points are accurately identified. In GCSE English, teachers devise an individual learning plan which has clear and measurable targets across a range of learning outcomes; this is carefully monitored and regularly reviewed. In functional skills English programmes the initial assessment of learning needs has not yet resulted in individualised plans, with specific targets for improvement set within the session for each student, reducing the ability of teachers to monitor progress.
- Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory, and are particularly effective at the start of the programme when staff provide students and their parents with clear information about what choices are available. Following the significant dip in the achievement of English GCSE high grades in 2012/13 guidance strategies and entry criteria have been developed to ensure that students are directed onto the most appropriate English course to meet their needs.

- The college provides students with an excellent and inclusive learning environment, resulting in a strong culture of mutual respect between students and between students and staff. Students feel safe.

Foundation mathematics

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in foundation mathematics requires improvement. Success rates in GCSE mathematics are improving but success rates in functional skills, where the number of students is higher, require improvement, as does the achievement of grades A* to C in GCSE. However, current students are making improved progress in comparison to previous years because of changes to staffing and better organisation of classes according to student ability.
- In most instances the majority of students satisfactorily improve their mathematical knowledge, but a small minority of functional skills students are not sufficiently challenged in their learning; for example, students complete tasks in areas where they already understand the majority of mathematical concepts. When their learning is less challenging or the pace of learning is slow, students' level of motivation and progress is poor.
- A stronger feature of this area is the intensive extra support that teachers and other learning support staff provide to students to develop their understanding of mathematics when they have poor background knowledge. All students benefit from in-class support, however, GCSE students particularly value the extra sessions that are available to them outside of timetabled classes to develop or consolidate any areas of weakness.
- The majority of teachers help most students effectively to develop a range of mathematical skills which prepare them for relevant assessment and progression. For example, in one session, automotive students developed their skills in interpreting measurements using micrometer readings.
- In the more engaging functional skills lessons teachers have the skills to be able to contextualise learning so that students benefit from engaging activities. For example, during a data handling session, sport and public services students watched a rugby video clip on a tablet computer and completed a tally of tackles and passes.
- In good sessions teachers are very experienced in teaching mathematics and have good subject expertise. An advanced practitioner group meets monthly, with training, good practice and resources being shared; the group now also supports professional development for all foundation mathematics staff so that students have a positive learning experience.
- Initial and diagnostic assessment processes are good and are consistently carried out for all students. GCSE students particularly benefit from an extended period of diagnostic assessment activity to ensure that they are on the course which is most suited to their learning needs. Monitoring of attendance is now a priority for staff with a robust system in place to ensure that all vocational students attend their mathematics classes. Communication with and support from parents is sought through text messages, letters and, if necessary, meetings.
- Assessment of learning requires improvement in many functional skills sessions but is good in GCSE lessons. Functional skills teachers often provide verbal feedback in class but GCSE teachers provide detailed written feedback, which better supports independent learning. As a result GCSE students use online lessons and activities to help them to improve their grades and study. Functional skills teachers often use questions to check learning, which ensures that most students continue to participate and remain engaged in learning, but this is not always used to check the detail of everyone's learning.
- Advice and guidance in foundation mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. Students have a better understanding of course entry requirements for progression in their

learning. However, individual students rarely have specific learning targets for their mathematical skill development. In a few sessions teachers then do not match work precisely to a student's individual needs so students do not make consistently good progress.

- In the majority of sessions equality and diversity are evident through the good relations that exist. In only a minority of sessions do staff actively promote equality through, for example, the use of real data on contentious issues, as a vehicle to explore concepts of diversity.

Administration

Good

Apprenticeships

- For administration apprentices teaching, learning and assessment are good, which leads to the very large majority of apprentices successfully completing their frameworks. A good proportion of apprentices complete their programme within their planned timescales. Current business administration apprentices are making very good progress.
- Assessors are committed to their apprentices and have high expectations of their standard of work. Assessors work as an effective team to support learning both on- and off- the-job. A good standard of work is evident in the majority of apprentices' portfolios, although the volume of material is potentially in excess of the requirements of the programme.
- Apprentices develop highly relevant personal and vocational skills to complement their role and responsibilities in, for example, in improving negotiation skills with customers, presentation skills with work colleagues as well as and team working. Employers recognise and value these skills. On successful completion of their frameworks the majority of apprentices progress to full-time employment or promotion.
- Professional, competent assessors provide well-planned learning, using their knowledge and experience effectively to motivate apprentices to learn and improve their skills. Apprentices participate enthusiastically in activity based and vocationally focused sessions, where theory and practice are linked in a meaningful way to promote understanding of a subject. For example, imaginative use of product images were used to stimulate apprentices into describing what they meant to them. Apprentices then used this same process of personal description to help them build their own curriculum vitae content.
- The pace of delivery of sessions is good and apprentices, through questions, answers and professional discussions, respond well to an enthusiastic approach to illustrate and extend their depth of learning. Independent learning is strongly encouraged for both intermediate and advanced apprentices, partly through an exercise of cross referencing their own portfolio evidence to the awarding body standards and research activity. Good directed learning and differentiated activities support apprentices in meeting their individual needs.
- Observations and assessments of practice are particularly effective in contributing to the apprentices' knowledge, skill development and improvements in practice, for example, in delivering high-quality customer service. Assessment planning is good and feedback very helpful in motivating and identifying how apprentices can make further improvements. Apprentices are clear on how and why they are expected to complete planned work before the next visit. Very good monitoring of progress ensures apprentices are on track, and early identification of those at risk of not achieving results in prompt action being taken.
- Good communication between the assessors, apprentices and employers helps everyone understand what needs to be done to achieve the qualification. Employers are supportive of their apprentices and understand the types of activities they need to be completing in the workplace to progress and meet the standards; for example, in handling confidential documents appropriately while balancing customer' needs against organisational demands. Assessors provide academic and personal support that is valued by apprentices, and are very responsive in meeting individual needs during planned visits to the workplace and college.

- Initial assessment is used well to ensure apprentices are on the right programme at the right level, and for planning differentiated learning. Support for functional skills and GCSEs is good and effective in helping apprentices achieve their frameworks. Assessors support apprentices well to improve their spelling and grammar. However, this practice is not consistent and this means a small minority of apprentices produce documentation that employers would judge as inappropriate for external use.
- Good practical help, guidance and support prepare apprentices for their framework from the beginning through to a successful end. All apprentices are aware of the requirements of the frameworks and understand how to succeed in a timely way. However, target-setting is not always sufficiently detailed, and is focused too much on meeting unit outcomes rather than more personal and individualised learning goals to support progress. Information and advice, including careers advice, is particularly effective in supporting progression.
- Resources to support learning and skill development are good and varied. Students value the VLE, which provides a detailed source of information and an effective communication and assessment tool. However, assessors do not make best use of other technology to broaden learning.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well, with apprentices valuing individual differences and speaking confidently about cultural differences, respect and the impact on business and customer-service practices. Apprentices understand clearly the importance of working safely.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- The college's new Principal, along with senior managers, has devised a highly ambitious and motivational strategic vision to achieve outstanding status over the next two academic years. The strategy has been articulated and communicated well to staff at all levels and is the foundation of the college's comprehensive approach to improving the provision. Teaching staff and managers generally welcome and embrace the strategy with confidence. Staff morale in the college appears high.
- Since the previous inspection the college's senior managers have meticulously evaluated every element of the provision and identified a wide and coherent range of fundamental improvement actions, particularly to improve teaching and learning and students' outcomes.
- Managers and teaching staff now demonstrate a relentless focus on improvement and much has been achieved in a short period in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and in higher rates of attendance and retention. However, much is still work in progress and the implementation and impact of improvement actions are not yet consistently good in all curriculum areas; the college recognises improvements that are required in non-inspected areas. College staff have used careful analysis of data to predict that students' success rates in the current year will, in most curriculum areas, be substantially higher than in the previous year. However, these success rates cannot be confirmed until after the end of the academic year.
- The quality, reliability, breadth and range of performance data are good and much improved; managers analyse and monitor these data particularly well. Data are readily accessible to managers and teaching staff and presented in an understandable format. All managers are well informed about the impact of all improvement actions and respond quickly if problems become apparent. Data are detailed and allow for the performance and attendance of individual students to be monitored closely by teaching staff and, where needed, timely support or interventions take place.
- College governance arrangements are strong. A dedicated and skilled board of governors, including two active student governors, challenges and holds the Principal and senior management team closely to account. Governors are very well informed about the college's performance; senior managers produce very clear and concise board briefing papers supported by good quality data.

- Managers and curriculum staff are also held to close account for the achievement of their own clear and challenging targets through regular performance-review meetings. Senior managers have recently harnessed the skills of the college's best teachers to disseminate and support improvement in teaching and learning practice. Extensive resources have also been developed to support teachers' and tutors' professional development. Together these have led to measurable improvements in the lesson observation grades awarded to teaching staff. Good practice in teaching, learning and assessment is identified and shared well with teaching staff.
- The large apprenticeship provision is well managed. Arrangements for supporting apprentices differ between the various schools in the college; however, the somewhat complex arrangements are monitored closely at a senior level and high standards and outcomes are maintained across the provision.
- The most recent self-assessment process has been particularly rigorous and effective. The college listens well to, and takes note of, the views of students and other stakeholders. The self-assessment report is highly evaluative, crisply analytical and exceptionally critical. The college's overall quality improvement arrangements are now comprehensive and very effective and include very sound action planning, specific and time-bound target-setting and close monitoring and reporting. The very small subcontracted provision is subject to appropriate scrutiny and improvement activity.
- The curriculum is particularly well planned and developed. It meets the employment and employability needs of employers, students and parents locally and regionally. The college plays a pivotal role in the education and skills development of the local community and an increasingly influential role in local, regional and national strategic initiatives. The college works very well with a wide range of local and national employers to secure new apprenticeship opportunities. The vast majority of advanced apprentices gain long-term employment on completion of their qualification.
- The college's strategy to implement study programmes has been reviewed and is now comprehensive and very well considered. However, improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and students' outcomes on functional skills English and mathematics programmes lag behind other curriculum areas.
- The college is open and inclusive and students feel safe. The promotion and management of equality and diversity are much improved, particularly in the context of teaching sessions. The college's 'Respect' programme has successfully helped to increase students' broad awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues, but the programme is not linked sufficiently closely to every curriculum area.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding all students. Safeguarding arrangements have been recently reviewed and strengthened further.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Hartlepool College of Further Education

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Early years and playwork	2
Engineering	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Foundation English	3
Foundation mathematics	3
Administration (apprenticeships)	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	6,803							
Principal/CEO	Mr Darren Hankey							
Date of previous inspection	March 2013							
Website address	http://www.hartlepoolfe.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+
	315	1,370	538	881	784	581	4	59
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	297	146	257	319	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	6							
Number of community learners	455							
Number of employability learners	709							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Heritage Craft Alliance ■ DO Consultancy Ltd ■ Fine Industries 							

Contextual information

Hartlepool College is a medium-sized further education college in the North East of England. It has one main site, in the centre of town, which has been completely rebuilt with the new building opened in September 2011. Additional sports facilities are located in a nearby community facility. The town also has a sixth-form college and a campus of an art and design college. The area is one of high social and economic deprivation. Many students come from wards that are among the most deprived in England. Unemployment is much higher than national levels. The percentage of pupils in school in the local authority gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and mathematics was 11 percentage points lower than the national figure in 2012.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Andy Harris HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's Assistant Principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all 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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