

# Central Bedfordshire College

General further education college

<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–4 March 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Senior leaders and managers have forged very strong partnerships with employers and the local enterprise partnership, and use these links well to ensure that the curriculum meets local and regional needs.
- Senior leaders and managers have further improved the quality of provision and staff performance, through the accurate use of data and performance management.
- Teachers and assessors use a broad range of activities and resources which challenge students well, leading to most students making good progress from their starting points.
- Students gain good practical skills and technical knowledge which prepare them well for employment.
- Students show respect for their teachers and each other and improve their levels of confidence. They gain good independent thinking and learning skills and contribute well to group discussions.
- Most students and apprentices progress to further and higher education and/or employment.

### It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Managers and teachers need to have higher expectations around the punctuality of learners and their readiness to work in lessons.
- Achievement rates need to improve on GCSE mathematics courses.
- Employers are not sufficiently involved in the planning of work activities to meet the qualification requirements for a minority of apprentices.
- Too few apprentices complete their qualifications within their agreed timescales.

## **Full report**

### **Information about the provider**

- Central Bedfordshire College is a small general further education college with a main site in the town of Dunstable and two smaller satellite campuses in the local area. The college provides a wide range of vocational further education and training programmes, including study programmes for young people, adult learning programmes, apprenticeships and specialist provision for learners with high needs.
- Central Bedfordshire is a relatively prosperous area, although there are areas of deprivation within the region, and unemployment is below the national average. Around 50% of school leavers gain five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, compared with 59% nationally.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that managers monitor effectively actions set to improve further the quality of the provision, such as actions to improve teaching and learning across all subject areas and provision types, and intervene where required.
- Ensure that students arrive at their classes on time and have with them the necessary equipment ready to learn.
- Increase the proportion of learners who achieve their mathematics qualifications.
- Rapidly improve the apprenticeship provision in line with employer expectations so that more apprentices complete their qualifications in a timely manner.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Governors, senior leaders and managers successfully communicate to staff their strategic focus on their expectations for the quality of learning and the learning experience. New management roles give learning area managers and learning improvement managers clear accountability for improving the quality of learning. As a result, outcomes and the student experience have improved significantly.
- Teachers benefit from well-planned and frequent staff development activities, particularly during twice-yearly conferences. However, managers do not monitor the impact of these improvements rigorously enough to ensure greater consistency of quality across all areas.
- Learning area managers monitor teaching performance carefully, using a good range of accurate data. Following observation of their lessons, most teachers understand what they are expected to do to improve. Learning area managers monitor teachers' progress through learning walks. However, often the actions required describe tasks to undertake rather than skills to develop. This limits learning area managers' ability to monitor how well teachers are able to embed these improvements across the whole range of their work.
- Self-assessment is broadly accurate. Strengths and areas for development identified by managers closely match those found by inspectors, and the consequent interventions in action plans are improving the provision.
- Leaders and managers work particularly productively with the local enterprise partnership and the local councils for Luton and Central Bedfordshire. They align their provision very well with the current and future needs of the area, for example working with engineering companies to provide specific apprenticeship qualifications. Because of this, local employers benefit from managers' responsiveness to their specific needs, and this in turn increases employment opportunities for students.
- Managers monitor students' destinations and progression through levels well, and data show a high rate of progression. A well-qualified careers advice team offer helpful advice during induction and throughout the year to help students find progression routes that suit their abilities and aspirations. Potential students and apprentices receive good advice and information from the careers team to help them take up courses which enhance their employment opportunities.
- Equality of opportunity is well promoted throughout the college. Managers have eliminated achievement gaps between different groups of students through careful monitoring and appropriate interventions.
- Students and staff consistently treat each other's diverse backgrounds and views with respect. The recent initiative to encourage philosophical debate around contentious issues contributes to their understanding and tolerance of each other and to a safe and harmonious atmosphere throughout the college. Through this debate, teachers promote British values well. Managers also respond well to the diversity of students' locations, for example they support the needs of learners in rural areas, and to this end have recently provided an animal care course to meet local needs.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Governance is good. Governors from academia, education, law, finance and business have an extensive understanding of local and national priorities.
  - Governors are fully behind the value of putting the quality of students' and apprentices' experience at the heart of all their decision-making. They receive good and accurate information about all aspects of the college and use this well to challenge managers to improve. They support managers well through planned improvements.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Safeguarding arrangements are thorough. All staff, including governors, have completed safeguarding training, and all staff, including regular visitors to college sites, are checked through the disclosure and barring service. Managers use their extensive local knowledge well to protect students from radicalisation and extremism.
  - Students feel safe at the college. Incidents of bullying have reduced following the introduction of in-house security personnel who know students well, keep good order and create a friendly and welcoming environment. Sniffer dogs patrol the college at random times throughout the year to support the policy of zero tolerance to drugs and alcohol.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Progress is good for the vast majority of students in most 16 to 19 study programmes, adult learning, high needs and apprenticeship theory classes. Almost all teachers monitor their students' progress closely using the college online tracking tool. Students and staff review targets frequently and discuss progress and areas for development. Students make good independent use of the online tracking tool and most take a good level of responsibility for their own targets and progress.
- Poor punctuality from a small minority of students disrupts too many lessons. In the worst cases, lessons do not have clear and energising starts, and students who do attend punctually are not able to make adequate progress during the first 10 or 15 minutes of the class.
- In the less successful lessons, teachers do not control the pace of learning activities well. In a small minority of classes, the pace of learning is too slow for the more able-learners. In other classes, teachers make the transition between stages of lessons too quickly, failing to check that all students understand one topic before moving to the next, and not giving students sufficient time to reflect on learning. In a small minority of lessons, students are poorly equipped or prepared for learning.
- Teachers make use of a good range of teaching and learning activities in classes. For example, in practical carpentry classes, the teacher makes very effective use of short demonstrations to show students how to improve jointing, cutting and other techniques. In electrical installation classes, students benefit from demonstrations linked closely to complex theory work on three-phase supply calculations. Students value and benefit from the chance to observe skilled teachers carry out tasks that they can then replicate in their own work.
- Students benefit from, and value highly, the extensive vocational expertise and experience of their teachers. Teachers make frequent constructive references to the ways that theory is applied in a practical vocational context. Teachers give students a good insight into employment opportunities in their vocational areas, for example in access to higher education in nursing and midwifery classes, and in hairdressing and beauty therapy, and health and social care classes. Teachers also share their own extensive vocational experience with students so that they make career choices which are well informed and realistic.
- In most vocational classes, teachers help students to develop and improve their mathematics skills effectively. Because of effective and sustained staff development and training activities during this academic year, teachers have greater confidence in planning and delivering classes in which mathematical concepts and calculations are considered and discussed. Teachers also remind students frequently of the need for good mathematical skills in employment and life.
- In a very few lessons, teachers did not adequately reinforce the need for good English skills. In such classes, teachers failed to correct errors in students' spoken or written work, and in a very small number of cases, handouts and teaching materials contained punctuation or grammatical errors.
- Managers have introduced improved arrangements for observing teaching and learning this year. As well as commenting on individual lessons, observers carry out a thorough review of attendance, progress and attainment for a sample of students in the class. This approach is new but it has already allowed managers to identify areas of strength and weakness on a number of courses.
- A small minority of lessons are overgraded in the current year's revised observation process. Reports on such lessons generally give too much weight to features of teaching and learning that should be the norm in a successful lesson. These reports also focus too much on teaching and teachers' activities, and not enough on students' learning and progress. However, members of the lesson observation team are receiving good levels of mentoring and development, and are quickly adapting to the new arrangements for observation. Reports and grades given by more experienced team members are accurate and focus properly on learning and progress.
- Learning area improvement managers (LIMs) make a strong contribution to improving standards of teaching, learning and assessment across the college. The LIMs support teachers very well, mentoring new or less experienced staff, identifying and sharing good practice and leading on aspects of staff development in their learning areas. Teachers value the support, advice and guidance given by LIMs.
- Students benefit from an extensive six-week induction to the college, which prepares them well for student life and establishes very effectively the culture and ethos of the college. The effective information, advice and guidance students receive during their courses ensure that the vast majority are on the right course, are well prepared for their next steps in learning or are ready to move into apprenticeships or employment.
- Relationships between students and staff are very positive in the vast majority of classes, in other learning spaces and in social areas of the college. Students enjoy their time at college and feel part of a strong community.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** are good

- Students, adult learners, apprentices and those with high needs enjoy their learning, take pride in their work and increase their confidence levels as a result of their time at the college. The good behaviour in lessons and in the college's communal areas contributes to the good progress that the vast majority of students make. Attendance has improved and is now good. However, a small minority of students do not arrive at their lessons on time or are not prepared for their learning sessions.
- Students and apprentices benefit from gaining good practical skills which are also valued by employers, for example in motor vehicle, hospitality, and health and social care. Adults seeking employment gain crucial skills well matched to local and regional needs. A very large majority of students and apprentices gain employment or progress to a higher level of study on completion of their course.
- Teachers have adopted an approach which gives students the confidence to develop further their thinking and reasoning skills and to become more independent in their learning. Because of this, students are open and willing to discuss diversity and British values confidently.
- Managers and teachers ensure that students are well prepared for employment. Teachers use the intended destinations of students well to determine their work-related activity. As a result, a much larger proportion of students undertake relevant work experience as part of their study programmes and almost all have their learning related to their employment goals.
- High-needs learners benefit substantially from comprehensive and varied provision and gain valuable life and independent living skills. They improve their skills and confidence through working in the college shop and restaurants, and a small minority progress to higher-level courses.
- Students benefit from comprehensive careers advice and guidance throughout their time at the college, which prepares them well to make informed choices about their next steps into employment or further study. They participate well in events to promote positive personal, social and employability skills, including employer visits, guest speakers, well-being initiatives, volunteering opportunities and entry to competitions and events.

## **Outcomes for learners** are good

- The proportion of students and adult learners who complete their vocational qualifications has improved in almost all vocational subject areas and is in line with similar providers. The large majority of students on study programmes and adult learners achieve their intended outcomes at all levels and most progress to the next level of study or gain employment.
- The proportion of students who achieve GCSE English has improved significantly. Pass rates at grades A\* to C in English have improved significantly and are good. A large majority of adult learners achieve their English and mathematical qualifications. However, the proportion of students on study programmes who achieve in mathematics requires improvement and success rates are below those of similar providers.
- In most lessons, teachers are adept at integrating and helping students to improve their mathematical skills by making mathematics relevant to the work and course context. For example, students in motor vehicle accurately calculated workshop areas by estimating and converting measurements.
- Last year, a high proportion of apprentices in engineering and health and social care completed their studies and achieved their intended outcomes. Conversely, too few apprentices in other areas completed their apprenticeship outcomes. However, current apprentices are making good progress in most areas, and gain good practical skills valued by employers.
- Current 16 to 19 students, adult learners and apprentices make good progress with their studies and the standard of their work is high. For example, students in sport interact well with members of the public in the gym by providing help and fitness advice as part of their coaching qualifications.
- A very high proportion of students have a positive destination and almost all progress to either further study or employment. Good, well-thought-out career pathways are in place in a large majority of curriculum areas. For example, students in health and social care and media studies have good progression routes into higher education and employment. Just over a quarter of level 3 students progress to higher education either at the college or at universities.
- There are no significant achievement gaps between different groups of learners across all levels and qualifications. Senior leaders, managers and staff monitor different groups very effectively to ensure that all have the same opportunity to succeed.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The college provides study programmes for around 1,200 young people with the large majority on level 2 and level 3 programmes. Students benefit from a good range of provision, including health and social care, engineering, construction, media and business.
- Students benefit from teachers' good use of a range of activities, including the use of computers, video and photographs to illustrate key points. For example, in theatrical make-up, video demonstrations are used well to stimulate discussion in student groups and students are able to emulate the processes in their own practice.
- Students have good access to work-related learning activities which include in-college and external placements, visiting speakers, trips and visits. For example, catering students have opportunities to work in Michelin-starred restaurants and local tourist attractions. Students value the links made with employers. They are confident to share their new knowledge and experience with others once back in the classroom. For example, level 3 childcare students talk confidently about books used in their workplace settings.
- Students gain high-level professional skills in real working environments, such as in animation in media where students complete live briefs or projects on behalf of employers and other external organisations. Students develop good practical skills in vocational courses, for example cutting skills in catering and beauty treatments in salons. They gain confidence and are able to discuss and develop these skills to a high degree.
- Learning support is well planned and the needs of all students are met effectively through activities which allow them to make expected progress. For example, teachers make clear links to targets and goals which students are working towards in class.
- Teachers plan the very large majority of lessons well and make good links to learning that took place earlier. Teachers check learning and progress well in lessons, particularly through the use of starter activities. For example, in information technology, level 3 students recalled previous learning well through challenging extension questions. However, in a few lessons, teachers' use of questioning does not fully include all students and only the more dominant respond.
- Teachers across all aspects of students' study programmes, including English, mathematics and work experience, contribute to good target-setting for students. Students know their achievement targets and use electronic software well to review and check their intended progress and outcomes. Students monitor their own progression very effectively and develop independent learning techniques well.
- Students are clear about their future progression pathways to higher levels at the college and on to university and employment. They have good access to drop-in careers support and value this service.

### Adult learning programmes

are good

- Around 850 adult learners are on courses at the college. The large majority benefit from the wide variety of provision at the college and mix very well with students on study programmes. The smaller minority access provision in conjunction with external partners in order to gain employment. Courses are provided at times to suit learners in the community. The proportion of students remaining in learning is high and most make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Students benefit from good advice and guidance. Teachers work well with students to ensure that they are well prepared for their next steps. For example, those on access to higher education courses complete good quality applications and a high proportion gain a place at the university of their choice. Students completing courses to prepare them for employment use an online curriculum vitae template well to apply for jobs.
- Students make good progress in developing professional, work-related skills in practical sessions; for example using acrylic products in nail technology. Students benefit from good teaching that helps build self-confidence, English and mathematical skills and subject knowledge. Detailed feedback helps students to improve their performance and good demonstrations by vocational teachers enable students to emulate good work-related practice.
- Leaders and managers work well with a variety of local partners to provide a comprehensive range of courses for adults. Unemployed adults benefit from training programmes offered across the community,

conveniently placed for the ease of access. Students benefit from good resources and teaching in subject areas such as plumbing and carpentry.

- Students gain good communication skills in their lessons and teachers encourage them to extend their understanding through effective questioning techniques. Teachers are adept at including adult learners well and they use their maturity effectively to support younger learners in their studies.
- In a very small minority of lessons, particularly English and mathematics, the pace was too slow to keep students active and motivated. In these lessons student progress was slow.

## **Apprenticeships**

## **require improvement**

- The college provides a range of apprenticeships in health and social care, engineering, business administration, hospitality, beauty therapy and hairdressing, and information communication technology. There are 279 apprentices currently in training and 167 are on advanced-level programmes.
- Most current apprentices are making good and, in a minority of cases, rapid progress towards the completion of their qualifications. However, the planning of learning for a minority of apprentices is not effective. Teachers plan too many aspects to be completed together, which does not help apprentices build their knowledge and understanding in a structured manner. For example, the completion of the main qualification has the same end-date as the English and mathematics qualifications. Not all apprentices have access to, or up-to-date, learning plans. Consequently, too few apprentices have short-term targets or milestones to monitor and measure their own progress and take control of their own training.
- A large majority of apprentices' progress reviews do not involve employers sufficiently to ensure that they have a detailed understanding of the apprenticeship programme and progress made. Assessors fail to set clear targets for apprentices to help them plan their learning and gather evidence. Assessors do not discuss equality or diversity themes in sufficient detail during reviews to improve apprentices' understanding and the impact of these in the workplace. Managers do not monitor the review process sufficiently to identify where assessors have not undertaken these in a timely manner.
- Apprentices develop good work-related and personal and social skills. Employers value these operational workplace skills; for example, two apprentices worked very effectively together with a minimum of supervision to produce a high standard of food and service to a range of customers in a café setting.
- Teachers and assessors are experienced practitioners with good occupational knowledge in their subject areas that they use well in coaching apprentices to understand concepts that underpin practice, for example how and why it is important to maintain a high standard of hygiene in care settings.
- Assessors do not plan and link effectively the training delivered by employers with teaching and learning at the college. A majority of employers do not have sufficient information about the apprentices' programme of learning. Assessors make insufficient use of technology to support and develop learning and assessment in the workplace.
- A large majority of apprentices' ongoing development of English, mathematics and information communication technology requires improvement. Those apprentices who complete their qualifications in English and mathematics do not gain any further qualifications or understanding routinely to improve their skills. Too few achieve these qualifications at a higher level than their apprenticeship requirements. The very small minority of learners who do not attend college receive insufficient support to ensure that they develop the required levels of English, mathematics and information communication technology. Assessors do not correct spelling and grammatical errors in learners' work routinely.
- Managers work very effectively with an extensive range of external partners and employers to ensure that the apprenticeships offered meet local, regional and employer needs. This effective partnership work has resulted in two competing engineering employers joining together with the college to offer a specialist and bespoke apprenticeship in engineering.

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	General further education college
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	3,319
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mr Ali Hadawi CBE
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.centralbeds.ac.uk">www.centralbeds.ac.uk</a>

## 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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	239	176	416	475	556	219	N/A	N/A
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	41	79	71	88	N/A	N/A		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	0							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	Central Bedfordshire Council Trading name: Bedfordshire Adult Skills & Community Learning Priory House Monks Walk Chicksands Shefford SG17 5TQ							

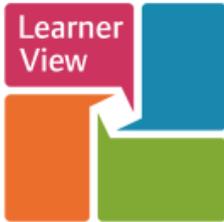
## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Stephen Hunsley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Beynon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Pauline Hawkesford	Ofsted Inspector
Dr Catherine Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Jackie Watt	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Masterson	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the vice principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to [www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk)



Employer View is a new website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too.

To find out more go to [www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2016

