

Tresham College of Further and Higher Education

General further education college

Inspection dates	7–10 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- The principles of study programmes are not being met and apprenticeship provision is inadequate.
- Achievement rates on study programmes are low and have been in decline for the past three years.
- Too many students fail to achieve the grades of which they are capable.
- Target setting for apprentices and for students on study programmes is poor.
- The development of students' English and mathematics skills requires improvement.
- Too much variability exists in the quality of teaching, especially on study programmes.
- Quality improvement processes have not halted the three-year decline in standards.
- Governance requires improvement.
- Governors are not currently subject to college recruitment and vetting procedures.

The provider has the following strengths

- Students on adult learning programmes benefit from good provision.
- Students, especially the most vulnerable, receive good support to help them achieve.
- College managers work closely with local enterprise partnerships to provide a curriculum that meets local needs.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Tresham College provides learning for around 4,000 students and 700 apprentices from its main site in Kettering and a campus in Wellingborough. It has three smaller centres located in Corby and one in Silverstone, which provides specialist training in motor sports. The college provides study programmes and adult learning provision in 11 subject areas and apprenticeships in seven. At the time of inspection, study programmes accounted for nearly 80% of the provision with the remainder split between adult programmes and apprenticeships.
- Deprivation in the borough is lower than the national average, but many residents live in some of the most deprived wards nationally. Most residents are of white ethnicity, but the district is more ethnically diverse in the younger age group. The proportion of school pupils taking GCSE examinations and achieving five or more grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, is below the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that all members of the governing body are subject to the college's otherwise strict procedures for recruitment and vetting.
- Ensure that study programmes meet the principles for these programmes. Specifically, leaders should ensure as a matter of urgency that all students entitled to a work placement benefit from a good-quality external work placement as part of their studies.
- Improve overall achievement rates for students on study programmes and for apprentices by:
 - ensuring that all teaching staff plan and use activities that meet students' and apprentices' needs and challenge them to make good progress so they achieve or exceed their targets
 - making sure that targets are more precise, time-constrained and realistic
 - improving the arrangements for assessing and reviewing apprentices' progress, so that they make rapid progress and achieve their qualification frameworks on time.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on all programmes, including apprenticeships, by:
 - ensuring that managers use information about students' progress and the outcomes of lesson observations to identify accurately what individual teachers and trainers need to do to improve their performance
 - putting in place relevant high-quality training and development that improves the practice of all teaching staff, and particularly those whose performance has been judged to be weak
 - ensuring that teachers monitor closely the progress of their students and apprentices and give helpful and constructive advice that helps them to improve.
- Improve English and mathematics provision, including attendance at lessons by ensuring that teachers:
 - support students and apprentices to develop fluent writing skills so that they can produce written work of a high standard
 - set challenging targets and provide detailed feedback that extends students' and apprentices' English and mathematics skills
 - promote effectively the application of English and mathematics skills in the workplace and in everyday life.
- Carry out a review of college governance arrangements so that governors improve their knowledge of the college's performance and hold senior managers to account more robustly when performance drops below acceptable standards.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- The make-up of the college leadership group has undergone significant change over the past two years. Senior managers appointed during the course of this year have started to introduce well thought out new procedures to improve the provision and to raise aspirations. However, these actions have not yet had sufficient impact to improve outcomes. Achievement rates for students aged 16 to 18 on study programmes are too low and have declined steadily over the past three years. They are particularly low on A-level programmes. Too few apprentices succeed within the planned period.
- Managers' efforts to improve retention in 2015/16 have been largely successful. They monitor data on retention well through regular and detailed reports. The monitoring of data in respect of other aspects of students' outcomes is insufficiently rigorous. Managers' predictions for much improved pass rates this year are based on insufficiently detailed evaluations of students' progress. They are unclear about how many students are likely to achieve their minimum target grades. On courses at level 3, predictions show that too few students are likely to achieve the minimum grade of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers have sought to develop and sustain an ambitious culture in a very short time, introducing significant policies and procedures to rectify the poor performance in 2014/15. However, not all of these have had sufficient impact. For example, meetings often focus too much on the reporting of data or the introduction of new systems, and not enough on their impact on students.
- Study programmes are inadequate. Too few students have the opportunity to undertake work placements. Attendance at discrete English and mathematics classes is too low. The arrangements put in place this year for the management of English and mathematics within each of the schools are well considered, but have yet to show a consistent impact across all the curriculum areas.
- The management of the apprenticeship provision is inadequate. While some improvement in overall achievement in 2014/15 was evident, far too many apprentices fail to achieve by their planned end date and current apprentices' progress is slow. Managers have not responded sufficiently quickly to the serious weaknesses in this provision.
- The management of A-level provision is also inadequate. Frequent changes in both teaching staff and managers have led to considerable dissatisfaction among students, and attendance has declined markedly throughout this year. Senior leaders have decided to cease new AS-level courses for 2016/17.
- The apprenticeship provision is improving through a number of effective actions introduced by managers, but these have not had sufficient impact. Managers do not yet focus sufficiently on those aspects of apprentices' training and assessment that have most impact on their experiences at work and in training at college.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are improving too slowly. Reviews of teaching, learning and assessment did not take place sufficiently early in the year, particularly for those curriculum areas that performed badly in 2014/15. In most cases, reviews are insufficiently specific about the strengths and areas for improvement in each of the schools. Where reviews have been highly critical of classroom practice, follow-up visits to check progress against the areas for development have not taken place.
- Performance management of teachers through formal appraisals does not focus sufficiently on how they can improve classroom practice. Managers do not use the evidence from observations of lessons to assess accurately teachers' strengths and areas for development, or what they need to do to improve.
- The introduction of individual staff action plans arising from visits to classrooms by advanced practitioners is starting to help managers focus in detail on each teacher's practice. However, this process does not link to the appraisal system. Leaders' and managers' analysis of the impact of continuing professional development and the improvements it brings to classroom practice is insufficient.
- The college's detailed strategic plan sets out a clear vision for future growth in provision. Combined with managers' good knowledge of the needs of employers and the local communities, this is starting to bring about changes to the curriculum, which reflect the priorities of the two local enterprise partnerships with which the college works. Relationships with employers have improved rapidly and are now good.
- Self-assessment judgements are broadly accurate, although the grades in the most recent self-assessment report are too generous. Nevertheless, the self-assessment report is concise, evaluative and, for the most part, transparent in assessing the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on students' outcomes. The very active student union has been instrumental in bringing about positive changes to students' experiences at the college.

■ The governance of the provider

- Governance requires improvement. The governing body has striven hard to improve the way in which it holds the principal and the college leadership group to account, although this has not had sufficient impact on the quality of provision.
- In the past, governors focused too much on the financial position of the college. While prudent financial management has enabled managers to invest in good facilities and resources for learning, this has sometimes been at the expense of a sufficiently strong focus on academic performance.
- Governors do not yet have a sufficiently detailed knowledge of the college's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Governors have introduced a new quality monitoring advisory group. To date, its focus has been too much on understanding the quality improvement arrangements and not enough on the quality of the students' experience at college.

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- The college has good links with external agencies to support vulnerable students.
- Procedures to identify and support students at risk of harm are comprehensive and effective. The safeguarding team risk assesses all referrals and subsequent actions are well considered and appropriate. Summary reports on safeguarding provide managers and governors with a wealth of detail about all aspects of safeguarding across the college. Training for the safeguarding team and staff with responsibility for pastoral support reflects the key themes arising from the reports.
- Leaders and managers have kept themselves well informed about the 'Prevent' duty and have implemented a comprehensive risk assessment and action plan. The safeguarding team ensures that all staff and governors receive training on the risks posed by extremist views and radicalisation.
- While comprehensive recruitment checks have been carried out on staff, contractors and volunteers, managers have not included the governing body in this process.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Students on study programmes make inadequate progress towards their learning outcomes. They receive inadequate support to develop responsibility for their own learning. Target setting and action planning are ineffective and students do not have clear targets and action plans that challenge them to succeed and to excel in their studies. Feedback to students on how to improve the standards of their written work is inadequate.
- Students on study programmes at levels 2 and 3 make slow progress and do not learn effectively. Teachers' planning of lessons is weak and students prepare themselves insufficiently well for learning. Teachers make insufficient use of the outcomes of initial assessment to plan individualised learning and their expectations of students are too low. Teachers insufficiently challenge unsuitable behaviour in lessons.
- In study programmes, tutorials to review progress are insufficiently frequent. Students and parents or carers do, however, receive helpful termly reports that keep them informed of their progress and the development of their employability skills.
- At entry level and level 1, students on study programmes, adult students on discrete provision and those on traineeship programmes make good progress in lessons. Teachers take good account of students' personal learning targets. They engage well in learning through a good range of individual and group activities. Students improve their skills in English, mathematics and information technology. Students on traineeships develop high levels of confidence and teachers have been particularly successful in reducing trainees' barriers to employment.
- Apprentices' progress reviews are insufficiently effective and too rarely involve employers. Apprentices receive appropriate training to develop their vocational skills, but these training activities are poorly coordinated and apprentices make slow progress. Apprentices' development of English and mathematics skills is adequate.
- Learning support assistants provide students who have additional learning needs with good support. With teachers, they frequently review and adjust the support arrangements to ensure that these students make good progress. Students with high needs are set realistically challenging expectations that help ensure that they make good progress in achieving targets in their education, health and care plan. Personal learning coaches support looked after students well.

- The development of students' skills in English and mathematics in vocational lessons on study programmes is poor. Feedback to students to help rectify and avoid errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar is often weak and does not help students to improve.
- The college's evaluation of standards of teaching, learning and assessment is insufficiently rigorous. Although it is effective in identifying training needs, the pace of change to raise standards in teaching, learning and assessment has been too slow.
- Teaching staff are working towards, or have, relevant qualifications. Students benefit from access to a good range of online resources that support learning well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

- Managers have been unable to provide all students on the college's large study programme with a meaningful and relevant work placement. Although students without a work placement benefit from a range of employment-related enrichment activities, the lack of a work placement remains a significant weakness of the programme.
- The development of students' skills in English and mathematics is poor. Teachers do not integrate these skills in their lessons effectively in most subject areas. Teachers do not give sufficiently constructive feedback on spelling, punctuation and grammar to help students and apprentices improve.
- Apprentices develop an appropriate range of vocational skills, which improves their employability and contributes to their employers' business. Many are able to work independently, for example on advanced motor sports race vehicles, in challenging care settings and in administrative roles. Most students on traineeship programmes improve their employability and go on to an apprenticeship programme.
- Most students develop an appropriate range of skills to enhance their work readiness. Teachers work well to integrate employability skills with their teaching, especially in vocational and practical lessons.
- Managers monitor attendance closely and, as a consequence, attendance has improved over the past two years but continues to be lower than the college average in a minority of study programme areas such as health and social care, early years and academic studies. Attendance at GCSE English and mathematics lessons requires improvement, especially in the college's departments for creative arts, computing and digital media, and sport, leisure and service industries.
- Careers advisers provide good, impartial advice and guidance on careers and course options to prospective and current students, including apprentices.
- Most students behave well across all provision types and age groups. They show respect for each other and for their teachers. Teachers use an effective range of strategies to help students with high needs manage their emotions and behaviour.
- Students and apprentices know how to keep themselves safe because college managers place a high priority on safety and welfare. All college sites display posters and notices warning students of the dangers of grooming, internet bullying and extremism. Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain and teachers promote British values well during tutorials and in lessons. The tutorial programme for full-time students provides an appropriate range of enrichment activities that include sports, charity events, educational visits and external speakers.

Outcomes for learners are inadequate

- Achievement rates are low. For students aged 16 to 18, who account for the large majority of the college's provision, achievement rates have been declining for the past three years at all levels and are now too low. Achievement rates are particularly poor in construction, information and communication technology, and in health and social care.
- Achievement on A-level programmes is inadequate, having been in decline for several years at both A and AS level. Managers have taken a range of actions to tackle these low outcomes, and early indications suggest that in-year improvements are taking place.
- Apprenticeships' achievement rates are too low, having declined in 2013/14 and recovering only very slightly in 2014/15. The achievement of apprentices aged 19 to 23 is particularly low and well below that of all other age groups. Apprentices following programmes in health and social care performed well in 2014/15, but achievement rates in information and communication technology, retail and commercial enterprise, and business administration were very low.

- The proportion of apprentices who complete their programme within the planned period was very low in 2014/15. A significant proportion of current apprentices are making slow progress, largely because assessments and reviews of their work are too infrequent.
- The proportion of students on study programmes who achieve the grades expected of them, given their attainment at GCSE, is inadequate. Achievement data for 2014/15 shows that the large majority of students on advanced diploma courses failed to achieve their expected grades, particularly in engineering, sport, music, health and social care, and business studies. Students on the college's small A-level programme also performed very poorly, with very few achieving the grades expected of them.
- Managers responsible for study programmes use a range of tracking and monitoring data to predict that achievement rates for current students will be considerably higher than in 2014/15. However, the tracking tools used are insufficiently robust and too many inconsistencies are evident in evaluating how well current students are performing compared with the anticipated achievement rates.
- Achievement of higher grades in GCSE English was very low in 2014/15, but better in mathematics. In-year data suggests that achievement of higher grades this year for both English and mathematics will improve, although managers rightly acknowledge that further improvements are required.
- Teachers set targets for students, but these targets are not always sufficiently challenging and not all students can confidently articulate what their targets are and how they will achieve them.
- Outcomes for students aged 19 and over were good in 2014/15, especially for those following programmes in health and social care and information and communication technology. However, achievements in construction, retail and commercial enterprise were lower. Current students are making at least the progress expected of them.
- College managers have worked well to ensure that students remain on course and complete their studies. As a consequence, the proportion of students who stay on their course has increased since the previous year and is now high.
- Internal progression from one level to the next is generally good. Destination data for students who complete their studies at the college suggests that the majority remain in further education and a minority progress into an apprenticeship, employment or higher education. The proportion of AS students who progress into the second year is very low.
- Few significant performance differences exist between groups of students. In-year data indicates that students with experience of local authority care and those eligible for free school meals stayed in learning and achieved as well as their peers, largely as a consequence of good-quality care and support from the college's students' services team.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

are inadequate

- The college provides study programmes in seven subject areas, the largest of which are creative arts, computing, health and social care and foundation learning. The total number of students on study programmes is 1,265, with the large majority on vocational courses and a small minority on A-level courses.
- The quality of study programmes is inadequate because leaders have failed to implement all the requirements of a study programme. Specifically, too few students participate in work experience on vocational study programmes, particularly in construction and engineering. Leaders and managers recognise the importance of real work experience and have put plans in place to extend the opportunities available to students, including through enrichment activities. However, these plans are not a sufficient substitute for good-quality external placements. Students on a few courses, such as in health and social care, benefit from good-quality placements but too many students on vocational courses, especially in construction and engineering, receive no work experience at all.
- Attendance at GCSE English and mathematics lessons is low. Too many students make slow progress in developing their skills in English and mathematics because of insufficient reinforcement in vocational lessons. Teachers do not adequately monitor poor spelling, grammar and punctuation in written work, resulting in students continuing to make the same mistakes in subsequent work.
- In most lessons, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. Planning of lessons is often poor and does not take into account students' individual needs. Too many lessons lack pace and challenge, and fail to stimulate learning. Consequently, in the majority of lessons, students do not make the progress that they should.

- Target setting is weak. Students do not benefit from challenging targets in each of the components of their study programmes. As a result, the progress that most students make relative to their starting point is slow. Feedback is ineffective and teachers do not give students clear written guidance so that they know how to improve their skills.
- The support provided by learning support assistants is personalised and helps students with identified support needs to progress in lessons.
- Advice and guidance are now appropriate for A-level students. However, in 2014/15, the quality of advice and guidance was very poor, resulting in too many students studying subjects for which they were not suited, and failing to progress or achieve. For vocational programmes, advice and guidance are effective and impartial, ensuring that students study at the right level and that they are aware of progression opportunities. In most curriculum areas, students complement their programmes by participating in a good range of enrichment activities such as team sports, charity work, learner-led conferences and educational trips and visits.
- In the large majority of subject areas, too few students achieve their qualifications. However, the proportion of students who complete their study programme is high and the standards of work they produce in practical lessons is often good.
- Most students go on to further or higher education or training but few go directly into employment after they complete their programme. The proportion of students at levels 1 or 2 who progress onto a higher-level study programme is good.

Adult learning programmes

are good

- Adult students comprise a very small minority of the total number of students. Most follow short part-time courses across a range of academic and vocational areas. The largest numbers are concentrated in access to higher education courses, business training, preparation for employment and English for speakers of other languages.
- College staff work very well with partners to design and develop programmes to meet the needs of the local community and regional priorities. In partnership with employers, the college runs short vocational courses throughout the year preparing students for work in warehouses, care settings, the hospitality sector and call centres.
- Managers work closely with jobcentres to offer unemployed students specially tailored courses to improve their English and mathematics skills. Students, most of whom had previously failed to thrive in formal educational settings, benefit enormously from the college's range of Prince's Trust programmes, many of which include good-quality residential activities and work experience to develop employability skills.
- College managers react rapidly to changing local needs and provide courses that target local priority groups such as those aged over 50. Flexible timetabling allows those with care responsibilities to attend courses at accessible local venues, and a suite of care-related qualifications are delivered in students' homes for those unable to attend a local centre.
- Teaching and learning in the classroom are highly effective, ensuring that students make good progress and develop the skills they need for employment. Teachers plan their lessons well and take account of students' starting points and individual needs. Students work confidently and independently in the classroom.
- Students are highly motivated and inspired by teachers to take on responsibility for their own learning and strive to achieve their work and life goals. A few teachers fail to challenge the most able students and, as a result, these students do not work to their full potential.
- Students develop useful skills to prepare them for work and further study, increasing their confidence, communication and teamworking skills. In access to higher education courses, teachers effectively assist students to develop good study and research skills and most students progress to university.
- Teachers use high-quality paper-based and electronic resources that are accessible and interactive, which students enjoy. Learning resources and presentations are carefully prepared and adults are signposted effectively to very useful additional resources on the college's virtual learning environment.
- Students demonstrate a good understanding of equality and diversity. They show mutual respect for each other and for staff. In counselling courses, students explore and debate diversity, ethnicity and faith. Students acknowledge the importance of diversity when planning presentations.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. College-based students receive impartial information and advice to ensure that they are on the right course. They have a good understanding of the progression routes and support available to them. For distance learning students, tutors do not routinely give sufficient information and advice about how their qualifications equip them for their career aims, or

signpost them to other sources of careers information.

- Students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve but teachers do not consistently follow through the feedback given to students on their written work. As a result, a few students demonstrate insufficient improvements, especially in their spelling and grammar.

Apprenticeships

are inadequate

- At the time of inspection, 686 apprentices were on programmes across seven subject areas, with significant numbers in engineering, construction and business administration. Most apprentices study at level 2 and are aged 16 to 18, with a minority aged 19 to 23 and a few aged 24 or above.
- The apprenticeship programme is inadequate because achievement rates are very low and too many current apprentices make slow progress. Staff shortages have resulted in significant delays in workplace assessment, leading, in some cases, to apprentices receiving their first workplace assessment a year or more after they started. Recruitment of new assessors is addressing this shortfall, but too many are still achieving their qualifications late.
- Staff do not set targets or develop action plans sufficiently well. At progress review meetings, assessors set poor targets that are not always sufficiently clear or constructive, such as 'continue to attend mathematics lessons'. On assessment plans, actions are often too general, for example to 'practise all skills ready for assessment'. Few apprentices complete within the planned period.
- Apprentices do not receive sufficient written feedback so that they know what they need to do to improve. Assessors often give useful verbal feedback on apprentices' work, and the few apprentices who use an electronic portfolio occasionally receive useful feedback on their portfolio work. However, those using paper-based portfolios do not receive detailed recorded feedback.
- Apprentices develop appropriate skills and knowledge. Employers provide adequate on-the-job training that helps most apprentices progress in their development of job skills. Apprentices working in small- to medium-sized businesses benefit from the opportunities to work on a variety of tasks. The large majority of apprentices progress to sustained employment and a few progress to an apprenticeship at a higher level.
- Assessors do not plan, record and review workplace learning with employers well enough, nor do they coordinate it with college-based training, either at the start of the programme or during progress reviews. This contributes significantly to apprentices' slow progress.
- Tutors use high-quality workshop resources and well-equipped classrooms to provide off-the-job learning sessions that they plan effectively. In practical sessions, apprentices work well independently, developing good skills in brickwork, plumbing and decorating.
- Employers report satisfaction with the quality of apprentices' work, which includes plumbing-in bathroom suites, installing racks in vans and applying good customer service skills. In portfolios, most apprentices produce a good standard of work, including well-written work assignments, photographic evidence and detailed answers to knowledge questions.
- Apprentices feel safe and adhere to the rigorous health and safety standards both at work and in college. They work safely and have a good understanding of the safe use of tools in trades such as construction and engineering. Their understanding of equality and diversity in the workplace is adequate.
- Initial information, advice and guidance are effective in ensuring that apprentices are studying an appropriate qualification at the right level. In some instances, they work towards a higher-level functional skills qualification than required for their qualification.
- Apprentices attend lessons and support sessions for English and mathematics and most achieve their qualification in these subjects. However, a small minority are timetabled to begin their functional skills studies too late in their programme. Teachers do not sufficiently promote the relevance of English and mathematics skills in the workplace.

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	7,700
Principal/CEO	Stuart Wesselby
Website address	www.tresham.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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	283	520	860	527	1071	398	21	209
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	198	183	69	234	1	1		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	7		2		9			
Number of learners aged 14-16	3							
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"> ■ None 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Jai Sharda, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Gary Adkins	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Moore	Ofsted Inspector
Cheryl Pennington	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Jean Webb	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the director of curriculum and quality, 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.

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