

St Helens College

General further education college

Inspection dates

24–27 April 2017

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement	Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement	Apprenticeships	Inadequate
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement	Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Good	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too many teachers do not use the results of assessments completed at the start of students' programmes to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment meet students' specific requirements.
- Students' progress in English and mathematics is slow and the proportion of students who achieve a qualification is too low.
- Senior leaders do not make sure that governors receive clear enough information to ensure that they fully understand the overall progress of current students and apprentices.
- Adult students' progression to further education, higher education or employment is too low.
- Managers have not implemented a sufficiently rigorous system to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the provision to allow them to set actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Attendance is too low and too many students and apprentices leave their courses early.
- Too few apprentices complete their programmes by their planned end date.
- Achievement rates for students aged 14 to 19 and adult students require improvement.

The provider has the following strengths

- Students aged 14 to 19 benefit from work experience and work-related activities that are purposeful and meaningful, gaining self-confidence and experience of working in their chosen sector.
- Senior leaders and managers work very closely with a range of partners, including the local enterprise partnership, to ensure that learning programmes meet the needs of employers.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and throughout the college is good.
- The vast majority of students on study programmes, who remain on their course until the end, progress to further study or employment. Students make good progress in developing new practical skills.
- Most students on level 3 vocational programmes who remain on their course until the end make good progress and gain their qualifications.

Full report

Information about the provider

- St Helens College is a large general further education college situated in Merseyside in the North West region of England. The college is spread over five sites throughout the borough of St Helens. The college subcontracts to one provider, which it partly owns. St Helens borough has a population of 177,000 residents. Unemployment is slightly below that of the North West region and is in line with unemployment in Great Britain. The main employment in the borough is in the retail and service industries.
- Forty-six per cent of the population of St Helens are educated to at least advanced level compared with 56% nationally. The number of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is 4% below the national figure.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Senior leaders and managers should ensure that they routinely provide governors with accurate and useful reports on students' and apprentices' progress. Senior leaders and managers should use these reports to identify any slow progress and intervene swiftly to ensure that a higher proportion of students and apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers and managers should better use the results of assessments completed by students and apprentices at the start of their programmes to plan learning that meets the specific requirements of students and apprentices and supports them to achieve their full potential.
- Teachers and managers should devise and implement strategies to increase attendance at college, reduce the number of students and apprentices who leave their course early and increase the proportion of students and apprentices who achieve their qualifications.
- Governors and senior managers should ensure that self-assessment is accurate and that it concisely identifies the strengths and weaknesses in the provision to inform improvement plans. Managers should identify clear and specific targets to improve the provision based on more accurate self-assessment and monitor progress towards their achievement rigorously.
- Managers and teachers should improve the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. They should ensure that students make good progress in developing the skills that they need for employment, and that a higher proportion of students taking GCSEs in English and/or mathematics achieve A* to C grades.
- Managers should develop and implement strategies to increase the proportion of adult students who progress to further education, higher education or employment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The principal and governing body have developed and communicated successfully a clear aspirational vision of what the college can achieve in the next five years. However, the strategy to merge with another college in Merseyside has proved to be a distraction for senior leaders and governors.
- Senior leaders and managers have not yet rectified successfully all the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have not ensured that a higher proportion of apprentices complete their qualifications by the planned end date and have presided over a decline in the quality of apprenticeships since the previous inspection. Teachers still do not sufficiently use the results of assessments taken by students at the start of their courses to plan learning that meets individual requirements.
- Students' achievements in English and mathematics remain low. Managers have ensured that teachers of English and mathematics work closely with all departments to improve the integration of these subjects into vocational learning but the actions taken are not yet having sufficient impact on improving students' skills.
- Senior leaders' self-assessment of the college is insufficiently rigorous and too positive. Managers do not take sufficient account of the progress and achievements of students when evaluating the standards of education and training at the college. Improvement plans do not result in swift improvement in students' and apprentices' progress or achievements. Governors and senior leaders cannot hold managers to account because targets set in college improvement plans are insufficiently specific and do not lead to swift improvements.
- Senior leaders use data to monitor retention and attendance, but they do not use it well enough to set clear targets and hold managers to account. They do not monitor students' and apprentices' overall progress and consequently do not have a clear understanding of whether students' are making good, expected or poor progress. As a result, too many students aged 16 to 18 do not complete their courses and leave early, and too few students and apprentices are making the progress of which they are capable.
- While leaders and managers ensure that college observers identify strengths and areas for improvement in lessons accurately, they place too much emphasis on teaching and not enough on how effectively students progress on their courses and develop new skills. Consequently, managers have not identified sufficiently the need for a majority of teachers to challenge the most able students to develop additional skills.
- The principal and senior leaders have worked very closely with a number of external organisations, including the local enterprise partnership (LEP), to ensure that the curriculum aligns closely to current and future skills requirements in the Merseyside region. Leaders, managers and governors work effectively with the LEP, local authority, employers and other partners to ensure that the range and content of the provision meet local and regional priorities, resulting in opportunities for local people to study and progress into employment or further study. For example, in partnership with another local college, managers have developed the Northern Logistics Academy to cater for the needs of the logistics sector. The development forms part of Liverpool City Region's investment,

designed to meet employers' needs, bridge skills shortages and develop the workforce.

- Managers use performance-management processes effectively to ensure that teachers who are identified as underperforming receive intensive support to improve or are managed out of the college. Staff have access to a good range of professional development activities, though these have not yet improved teaching, learning and assessment consistently across the college.
- The effectiveness of information, advice and guidance services requires improvement. Students on study programmes benefit from impartial information, advice and guidance as to their next steps. As a result, most progress to further study or employment. However, too few adult students progress to further education, higher education or employment.
- Senior leaders and governors ensure that students benefit from good-quality accommodation and resources. The existing campus includes specialist facilities. For example, the redeveloped science, technology, engineering and mathematics centre, library and 14 to 16 academy provide a very good learning environment, which students appreciate.
- Senior leaders and managers promote equality and diversity successfully throughout the college. Staff benefit from appropriate training and development to ensure they have a good knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity. Students' behaviour is very good and their courtesy towards their peers, staff and visitors reflects the positive values that leaders, managers and staff uphold. For example, during the inspection students were actively participating in discussions with external visitors who were contributing to a faith event at the college.
- Operational department managers have been successful in improving the quality of courses by analysing performance accurately and setting clear targets for improvement. They monitor such targets closely, using an extensive range of up-to-date, accurate data. However, improvement is not consistent across the college. While the numbers of adults who stay on their course to the end has improved in the current year, this is not the case for 16- to 19-year-old students.

The governance of the provider

- Recent plans to merge with another college have distracted governors from their oversight of the quality of the provision at St Helens College, despite their high levels of commitment and enthusiasm.
- Governors do not receive reports on current students' overall progress and, consequently, they are unable to challenge senior leaders on how well students are progressing on their courses.
- In too many instances, the pace of improvement has been too slow because governors do not request or receive accurate information to hold senior managers to account. For example, governors do not receive sufficient detail about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment, including English and mathematics. Thus, they are not able to challenge senior leaders and managers about the actions being taken to improve.
- Governors have an appropriate range of skills and experience, and challenge college managers generally to enhance the standards of education and outcomes for students;

however, their actions have not brought about any significant improvements since the previous inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders and managers ensure that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place to keep students safe. They ensure the safe recruitment of staff and carry out the necessary checks prior to them taking up their employment.
- Managers have built up a wide range of external networks to ensure that students feel safe and are safe. They have developed a college well-being service, which refers students, who may be experiencing anxiety or who are affected by bereavement, internally or to an external agency for support.
- Staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They effectively use this knowledge to inform and safeguard students against the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Students recognise the threats of radicalisation and extremism and understand how to report any concerns.
- Students are actively involved in promoting safeguarding. For example, the college's involvement with Papyrus, a charity set up by parents who had lost children to suicide, has involved students in a project to develop resources to promote the charity's message within the college and the community.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers and managers do not focus sufficiently on ensuring that students understand how to improve their knowledge and skills and make good progress from their starting points. As a result, progress over time is not consistently good across all areas of the college.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of students. Too few teachers challenge most able students, especially those on level 2 programmes, with work that is more demanding. Teachers often provide effective support for students who struggle to keep up. However, they do not give tasks in lessons frequently enough to help these individuals develop independent learning skills.
- Staff do not all use their expertise well enough to plan learning that matches students' individual development needs as identified through assessments at the start of their courses. Consequently, too few students make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers and managers of apprenticeship programmes do not rigorously monitor students' progress over time. Assessors do not identify apprentices' starting points accurately or plan learning to develop their skills. Assessors focus too much on the completion of units as opposed to development of new skills. Too many apprentices make slow progress and do not complete their qualification by the planned end date.
- Vocational teachers do not consistently develop students' written English and mathematical skills in lessons. Teachers frequently use good, probing questioning techniques to help students express their views clearly and thoughtfully but they do not consistently help them to improve their oral accuracy. In too many instances, teachers do

not help students to develop the English skills they will need in work. For example, they do not consistently correct informal language in reports.

- Too many teachers do not consistently integrate mathematical skills in vocational lessons if they are not part of the main vocational study. However, students in engineering and information and communication technology study mathematics to a level higher than that required by their qualification so that they are adequately prepared for further studies. Departmental managers monitor the progress of students on study programmes closely and identify quickly those students who are making less than expected progress. Managers and tutors support students well who are not making the expected progress through a range of interventions such as additional extended tutorials and additional support from teachers.
- Most teachers provide encouraging and positive feedback on students' written work. Although teachers largely identify inaccuracies in written work, students do not receive enough support to help them improve the quality of subsequent work.
- The teaching and learning manager and observers give good support to teachers to enable them to reflect accurately on their performance in lessons. For example, they use a sports-coaching model of marginal gains to help teachers reflect on how they can make small improvements to their teaching, to improve the standard of education that students receive in lessons.
- Teachers receive regular informative feedback following observations of teaching and learning, which managers use constructively in appraisals to plan relevant developmental activities. While this often leads to teachers using a wider range of improved and interesting teaching strategies, managers do not monitor the impact of these improvements to judge if they are having a positive impact on students' progress.
- Teachers promote equality of opportunity very successfully. Students understand that treating people equally does not imply treating them in the same way. Understanding of this concept is integrated effectively with an understanding of democracy and respect for others. For example, students understand that coming to a democratic decision about their role in group work enables all members of the group to have a voice in decision-making.
- Teachers' promotion of diversity in lessons, by relating vocational subjects to other cultures, is good. For example, motor vehicle students consider how they would work on cars with a left-hand drive. Students show tolerance of each other's views. Adult students enjoy working together in diverse groups. They value learning about each other's cultures, which contributes to harmonious learning throughout the college.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Too few adults, 14- to 16-year-old students, and students on study programmes attend classes regularly enough to ensure that they make the progress of which they are capable and to prepare themselves for employment. Although managers have put strategies in place to encourage students to attend, attendance remains too low.
- Too many students leave their courses; most students who complete their programmes progress to further education, employment or training. The large majority of students and apprentices receive effective impartial careers information, advice and guidance.

Managers design the college prospectus so that it focuses strongly on the careers to which students can progress following the completion of their programme.

- Most 14- to 19-year-old students benefit from relevant, purposeful work experience and work-related learning. They gain self-confidence and this increases their likelihood of progressing into work or further training, which the majority achieve.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the college is good. Students are courteous and respectful to each other and to staff. In practical areas, where they meet with clients, they follow appropriate professional dress codes and communicate in suitably formal ways. Consequently, managers and teachers prepare students for employment and involvement in their local community effectively.
- The standard of students' practical work is high. Students work to a professional standard in, for example, hair and beauty salons where they cut and style hair to clients' specific requirements. Employers ensure that their apprentices gain good industrial skills.
- Students receive good information about the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Eye-catching posters are prominent around the college to reinforce the information that they receive. Students have an appropriate understanding of radicalisation and extremism, which they are encouraged to discuss. Performing arts students devised a performance around radicalisation and British values, which helped to consolidate and extend students' awareness, knowledge and understanding.
- A minority of students benefit from a good range of additional activities that enhance their own health and skills, and benefit the local community. Students receive good information about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and ways of maintaining their sexual and mental health. Students have good opportunities to take up sporting activities ranging from football to wall climbing. They take part in a wide range of fundraising activities for charities. For example, catering students participate in a very successful monthly lunch for a national charity. Teachers and managers enhance students' understanding of their vocational areas through visiting speakers, for example from armed forces personnel, and through visits to public health departments for public services students. Many employers offer students mock interviews to help them improve their techniques to be successful in gaining jobs.
- Students feel safe and work safely throughout the college. Staff monitor access to the college vigilantly and are diligent about checking that all students wear identity badges.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Achievement rates require improvement. For students aged 16 to 19, who account for the majority of students at the college, achievement rates are below similar colleges nationally. At levels 2 and 3, for those who stay for the duration of their course, pass rates are good. Too many students who undertake A-level courses leave their course early and do not develop their skills sufficiently or reach their full potential.
- Students who work towards vocational qualifications at level 3 make good progress from their starting points, for example in animal management, creative media production, and art and design.
- The proportion of 16- to 19-year-old students who achieve GCSEs in English and mathematics at grades A* to C is too low and significantly below the already low national

rate.

- Achievements for adult students require improvement. The vast majority of students who remain on programmes to the end gain their qualifications, such as access to higher education courses in nursing and midwifery, and level 3 diploma courses in sports massage therapy. However, too many students at levels 2 and 3 leave their course early and fail to realise the ambitions that they had at the start of their programme.
- Apprenticeship achievement rates are very low. Too few apprentices complete their programmes by the planned end date. Managers have overseen a decline in completion rates since the previous inspection, so that less than half of the current apprentices are completing their programmes by the planned end date, which is much too low.
- Students aged 14 to 16, who join the college from very a low starting point and have often been disengaged from education for some time, make good progress in GCSE English, and make expected progress in mathematics. Approximately one fifth of all students starting key stage 4 at the college leave before completing their studies. While leaders record the reasons for leaving, they do not analyse this information sufficiently well to ensure it informs their planning for improvement.
- Leaders do not monitor sufficiently students' progress or have plans in place to close the gaps in achievement between different groups of students. For example, students aged 16 to 19 who have previously been in receipt of free school meals achieve at a significantly lower rate than their peers.
- Progression to higher levels of education and training following completion of courses at the college requires improvement. While there have been improvements over the past year at levels 1 and 2 for 16- to 19-year-olds, at level 3 the proportion progressing to higher levels of study or moving into employment has declined. The number of adult students who progress to higher levels of study is low.
- The majority of students and apprentices who stay on their course until its conclusion progress to further education, higher education or employment. However, too few adult students progress to further education, higher education or employment and this requires improvement.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The college provides study programmes across a range of vocational areas including hairdressing and beauty therapy, hospitality and catering, art and design, business and administration, public services, health and social care, engineering, construction, and animal care. Qualifications range from entry level, to level 3, including A levels in science, humanities, and English. At the time of inspection, 1,569 students were following study programmes at the college, which is the largest proportion of students at the college.
- Teachers do not take students' starting points and potential for achievement into consideration sufficiently when planning learning. Many less-able students struggle to make progress and many of the most able students do not receive sufficient challenge to make more rapid progress. For example, in the majority of lessons all students undertake the same tasks despite different starting points and abilities.

- Leaders and managers have now put strategies and actions in place to improve students' English and mathematics skills, but it is too early to identify their effectiveness. Achievement grades in too many instances are too low. Additionally, students are making slow progress in levels 1 and 2 functional skills English and mathematics and the proportion of students who achieve GCSEs in English and mathematics at grades A* to C is too low.
- The development of students' English and mathematical skills in vocational lessons requires improvement. In too many instances, teachers fail to integrate English and mathematics into their lessons so students can practise these skills and improve their understanding in vocational contexts.
- Too many teachers do not routinely and effectively assess learning in lessons. The most able and most confident students tend to dominate question and answer activities, with the less able or less confident students unable to demonstrate their learning or progress well enough. Tutors do not always provide helpful feedback to students that show them how to improve the quality of their written work. Consequently, students' work is often of a low standard.
- Students do not always benefit from sufficiently frequent progress reviews. Consequently, a minority of students are not set targets that teachers review regularly. Additionally, teachers do not routinely review all components of students' study programmes during progress review meetings, leading to students not having a full appreciation of the progress they are making on all their qualifications.
- Leadership of the 16 to 19 study programmes requires improvement. In the majority of programmes, departmental managers track and monitor the progress of students efficiently. For those students that remain in learning, most are making expected progress and are on target to achieve their main qualification aims.
- Students benefit from work experience and work-related activities that are purposeful and meaningful to them. They develop good employment skills and receive positive feedback from their employers during the time spent on placement. Students benefit from effective activities to improve their employability skills, including visits to employers, community activities, interview-skills development and team-building exercises.
- Students develop good practical skills and knowledge in work-related environments. They can demonstrate a high level of understanding related to their chosen vocation, for example, how to cook certain cuts of meat to ensure they are tender. In the motor vehicle body shop, students complete respraying tasks skilfully and confidently on external customers' vehicles.
- Staff provide effective information, advice and guidance that support students well and enable them to progress to further learning and employment. Many 16- to 19-year-old study programme students progress to a higher level of study and most students who complete their courses progress to further education or higher education or gain employment.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- The college provides adult programmes across a range of vocational areas including hairdressing and beauty therapy, information and communication technology, hospitality and catering, English for speakers of other languages, access to higher education courses

in nursing and midwifery, employability courses, and courses in English and mathematics. Students take qualifications from entry level to level 4. At the time of inspection, 1,392 students were on adult learning programmes, mainly on part-time programmes.

- Leaders and managers do not monitor progress towards target grades across programmes well enough. An over-reliance on information supplied by teachers in various formats means senior leaders cannot interrogate rigorously the progress that students make on their courses.
- Teachers do not consistently consider students' starting points systematically when planning learning. While teachers plan activities that reflect the qualification–achievement aims, these are too generic. The limited range of tasks that students with different needs and starting points undertake results in a small minority of less-able students not always making the progress that they should.
- In theory lessons, teachers do not always make full use of in-class support to help students who need it. A few learning support assistants receive limited direction from teachers to support students when completing learning activities. As a result, students who require support do not always receive it and, therefore, do not make sufficient progress. In practical lessons, teachers provide individual support to those students with additional learning needs and these students develop new skills and enjoy their learning
- In many practical vocational lessons, students develop a good understanding of the diverse range of customers and clients' needs. Students on level 2 beauty therapy programmes carry out beauty treatments on clients from a local hospice and learn how to treat vulnerable clients with dignity and respect. Students on level 2 hospitality courses develop communication skills that enable them to advise customers on a range of beverages that suit their requirements. As a result, students develop good social and employability skills relevant to their learning goals.
- College managers work with a broad range of partners, including voluntary organisations and employers, to develop programmes that meet local employment needs and prepare vulnerable adults for progression into employment. Employers take a strong lead role in course design and voluntary organisations support those courses that enable hard-to-reach students to access entry-level qualifications.
- The achievement of students on entry and level 1 qualifications are good. The achievement of this group of students is much higher than those at level 2 and level 3. Almost all of these students stay on the course until its conclusion and enjoy their learning.
- Students' conduct and behaviour in lessons are very good. Students are respectful and courteous to each other and their teachers. Students from different cultures and language backgrounds work together very effectively and they share and develop an understanding of each other's cultures. As a result, students develop a good understanding of wider society and are sensitive to the needs of people from different backgrounds.

Apprenticeships

Inadequate

- The college provides apprenticeships across a range of vocational areas including health and social care, engineering, hairdressing and beauty therapy, hospitality, and business and management. The college provides apprenticeships at intermediate, advanced and

higher levels to 864 apprentices. The majority of apprenticeships are delivered directly by the college, with a small minority provided by Waterside Training Limited, which is part owned by the college. Apprentices receive their entitlement of on- and off-the-job learning and the requirements of an apprenticeship are met.

- Leadership of the apprenticeship provision is inadequate. Senior leaders and managers do not have sufficient oversight of the progress that apprentices make on their programmes. Throughout the inspection, managers could not identify the progress that apprentices were making on their apprenticeship. This limits their ability to intervene when progress is too slow and achievements are too low, as they were at the time of the inspection.
- The majority of current apprentices are making slow progress on their qualifications; just under half of current apprentices have completed their qualification within their planned timescales.
- Too many assessors do not plan apprentices' learning effectively and not all apprentices receive adequate support when they need it. Assessors do not identify apprentices' starting points accurately and plan learning systematically to ensure they develop new skills. As a result, many apprentices make slow progress. Assessors place too much emphasis on meeting the minimum standards of qualifications as opposed to supporting apprentices to develop more extensive knowledge and skills that will assist them in making a greater contribution to their employers' businesses.
- Employers are not involved sufficiently in the planning and monitoring of apprentices' knowledge and skills development. Too few employers contribute to progress reviews or inform assessors how successfully apprentices are developing new skills or contributing to their businesses.
- Too few apprentices are aware of the progress they are making on their apprenticeship. Targets set by assessors in progress reviews disproportionately focus on the achievement of units as opposed to setting targets to develop a wider range of skills that apprentices need. Many assessors set perfunctory targets and action plans for apprentices, which include arbitrary actions such as 'complete mandatory units' without any planned learning taking place or support being given prior to assessments.
- Too many assessors and teachers do not develop apprentices' writing skills to support them in their personal and professional lives. They do not provide sufficient guidance and feedback about written work to prevent apprentices making the same mistakes in subsequent work. For example, apprentices who submitted end-test work with spelling mistakes did not receive support from their assessors to improve their English skills.
- A minority of apprentices develop good employability skills in accordance with current industrial practice through effective support from their employers. For example, dental nursing apprentices prepare dental equipment for use on patients in line with the requirements of the General Dental Council, while mechanical engineering apprentices show good practical skills in developing products such as a spirit level to high levels of accuracy.

Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds

Requires improvement

- The 14 to 16 academy is in its third year of operation. The first cohort of students completed their studies in 2016. There are currently 96 students attending the college. Forty-eight students are in year 10 and 48 are in year 11. The curriculum offer meets the

statutory requirements for key stage 4 provision and students can study a wide range of vocational subjects. Many of the students who attend the college have not had positive educational experiences prior to attending the college, including poor attendance, punctuality, behaviour and attainment.

- Leadership of the provision for 14- to 16-year-olds requires improvement. Leaders have an overoptimistic view of current students' progress because they use inconsistent teacher-derived data to monitor progress. Self-assessment does not fully identify the key areas for improvement and the strengths of the provision are overemphasised.
- Leaders, managers and teachers do not sufficiently ensure that all students make the progress of which they are capable. Progress over time for current year 11 students requires improvement. College data indicates that while students in a minority of subjects, such as English language and vocational subjects, make expected progress students' progress across all subjects is too slow. Following recent changes to the structure of the curriculum, the current year 10 students make better progress and enjoy their education.
- A small minority of teachers do not plan sufficiently for the needs of all students. They do not take into account students' starting points or specific learning needs when planning lessons. In these lessons, all students, regardless of their ability, complete the same tasks. Support for students' specific learning needs is not routinely effective. As a result, too few students make the progress of which they are capable.
- Attendance requires improvement. Students' attendance improved in 2016/17 and is significantly better than students' attendance at their previous school but it is still not high enough. Leaders' interventions and the use of local authority statutory fines are challenging students to attend more frequently.
- Leaders use pupil premium funds well. Specialist teachers provide effective support for students in receipt of additional funding. Leaders complete a special educational needs and disabilities register, that clearly identifies the students requiring support and actions required to support their needs. As a result, students from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve as well as their peers.
- Leaders plan curricula that are broad and inclusive, and meet students' needs and interests effectively. Students study a good mix of GCSE qualifications and a range of vocational programmes by following one of three available pathways. Leaders include appropriate lessons in personal, social and health education, physical education and religious education to meet the key stage 4 statutory requirements.
- Pastoral support for students is good. Leaders have developed effective relationships with a wide range of external agencies that provide appropriate support to students who need it, such as the Teenage Action Zone and Young People's Drug and Alcohol Team. Internal college departments also support students effectively when necessary. Where appropriate, staff liaise with external agencies and make referrals when needed. As a result, this support is successful in enabling students to remain in education.
- Arrangements for securing work experience are effective. Nearly all students take part in work experience during key stage 4 in a variety of settings within the college and local businesses. For the majority of students, their work placements link to their current curriculum or intended next steps.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130488
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	7,568
Principal	Jette Burford
Telephone number	01744 733766
Website	www.sthelens.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 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	175	564	858	593	711	170	-	65
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	220	140	246	237	1	20		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	31		5		36			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	110							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	2							
Funding received from:	The Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Waterside Training Limited							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the college'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 college.

Inspection team

Paul Cocker, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alison Cameron-Brandwood	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ken Merry	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Rachael Hennigan	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Baron	Ofsted Inspector
Jonny Wright	Ofsted Inspector
Pauline Hawkesford	Ofsted Inspector

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