

# Tresham College of Further and Higher Education

Inspection report

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

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## Information about the provider

1. Tresham College of Further and Higher Education is a large college spread over four main sites in Northamptonshire and Rutland. The main campus at Kettering is two years old and has replaced the two sites in Kettering which were in use at the time of the last inspection. There are further campuses at Wellingborough, Corby and Rutland College in Oakham, and satellite centres at Corby and Rushden; motorsport and motor vehicle courses are provided through the National College of Motorsport at Silverstone.
2. The college provides mainly vocational courses in all subject areas except agriculture at entry level to higher level. Provision in five subject areas was graded at this inspection. Most full-time learners are aged 16 to 18 and more than half of them follow courses at advanced level. Most adult learners follow part-time courses. Pupils aged 14 to 16 attend the college as part of their school Key Stage 4 programme. Train to Gain programmes are offered mostly in health, public services and care, and apprenticeships in engineering, building and construction and service enterprises. The college is Northamptonshire's provider of Prince's Trust volunteer work.
3. The college serves a diverse socio-economic region. Unemployment is generally below the national level but is higher in Corby than in other areas served by the college. The number of Year 11 pupils who achieve five A\*-C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, in Northamptonshire is close to the national average. Some 6% of learners are of a minority ethnic heritage, which is above the proportion in the local population.
4. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the college:
  - Key Business Systems (accounting, finance and administration)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	101 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	2,225 full-time learners 679 part-time learners
Foundation learning, including	3 full-time learners 1,080 part-time learners
Entry to Employment	132 learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	566 full-time learners 3,506 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain	780 learners
Apprenticeships	386 apprentices

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Subject areas	Grade
Health, public services and care	2
Engineering	1
Construction, planning and the built environment	2
Foundation for learning and life	2
Business, administration and law	2

## Overall effectiveness

- The college's overall effectiveness is good. It demonstrates good capacity to improve and has made good progress since the last inspection in tackling specific weaknesses whilst bringing about significant overall improvements to outcomes for learners, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, all of which have improved from satisfactory to good. The recent significant improvements in outcomes are consistent for all learners. Although the college has yet to develop a system for analysing how much progress learners make after joining the college, learners in all subjects make good progress in lessons whilst developing good vocational skills. The proportion of good and outstanding lessons has increased and learners enjoy learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers' expectations of different groups of learners are not clear enough so that some learners do not benefit as much from their lessons as they should. Learners who find learning difficult receive good

support and this helps them make good progress. The college provides a comprehensive range of courses on most campuses and plans to expand the provision in Rutland, where the range of courses is narrower, are well advanced. The college attracts increasing numbers of learners from difficult and challenging backgrounds and supports them well. Learners use individual learning plans to monitor their progress but the effectiveness of these plans varies. Leadership and management are strong. The Principal receives good support from his senior managers and governors, who together have set very challenging targets to secure speedy improvements. Most of these targets have been met. Management procedures, including those for quality assurance, the promotion of equality and diversity, and safeguarding have been recently introduced or revised and they are more fully embedded in some aspects of the college's work than in others. The college has expanded significantly its work with external partners.

## Main findings

- Outcomes are good and have improved significantly for learners of all ages and at all levels since the last inspection. The improvement results from increases in both achievement and retention rates. The achievement of qualifications by apprentices, advanced apprentices and learners on Train to Gain is good and qualifications are completed within the agreed time.
- The college has yet to implement fully procedures to assess the progress learners make, based on their starting points. However, learners in all subject areas inspected make good progress in lessons and develop good vocational skills.
- Learners enjoy coming to college and feel safe there. They understand the importance of adopting safe working practices and most try to maintain healthy lifestyles. Attendance is good and improving.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Most teaching staff plan their lessons carefully and provide varied and interesting learning activities. Sometimes learning outcomes are not clear or realistic enough so that lessons do not provide sufficient pace or challenge to meet the needs of all learners in the class.
- Staff use initial assessment well to identify learners who would benefit from additional learning support. Learning support is extensive and learners who receive it achieve at least as well as other learners.
- The college provides a comprehensive range of courses on most sites and has well developed plans to increase the number of subjects on offer at the Rutland campus. Learners progress well to higher level courses, employment and higher education (HE). Enrichment activities have increased but the college does not yet gather information on which learners are participating in the activities.
- Links with schools, special schools and employers are strong. In particular, the college provides extensive and successful courses for young people who are at risk of not completing their education successfully. The college makes a

valuable contribution to social cohesion through its provision for young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and disaffected.

- The care, guidance and support learners receive are good and they value it highly. Tutorials have improved and are now good. Regular reviews of progress help learners to achieve their potential. The use of individual learning plans is well established but learners' targets are not always sufficiently sharp and focused on measurable improvement.
- The college makes insufficient use of the information available on the quality of tutorials and learners' support to plan further improvements. It has been slow to identify young people in public care in order to provide any extra support they might need.
- Leadership and management are good. The Principal leads the college with energy and vision. Together with governors and senior staff he sets clear and ambitious targets to improve the quality of learners' outcomes and experiences. Governors know the college very well and ensure that managers take appropriate action to address any areas of concern.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Good systems, policies and procedures exist, but they are new and their full integration into all aspects of college life is incomplete.
- The college has taken very effective actions to improve the quality of its partnerships with a wide variety of external stakeholders. It plays a key role in local regeneration initiatives.
- Quality assurance systems are good, although not applied with sufficient rigour in the college's sub-contracted provision. Managers monitor the quality of provision carefully and share good practice. Self-assessment involves most areas of the college's work but the views of learners and stakeholders are under-represented.

### What does Tresham College of Further and Higher Education need to do to improve further?

- Implement fully a system to measure and analyse the progress made by learners so that managers can establish more comprehensive targets for course performance and learners can be set targets that challenge them to achieve their full potential.
- Improve the clarity of learning outcomes in lessons and ensure that more teachers become proficient in providing teaching that is challenging, stimulating and better matched to individual learners' needs, so that the learning outcomes may be met.
- Establish robust procedures to identify young people in public care, from initial application onwards, in order to put into place appropriate support sensitive to their needs.

- Ensure that information and data on the quality of tutorial and support services are monitored at a strategic level to secure improvements and share best practice.
- Ensure that managers apply fully college procedures to promote equality and diversity, safeguarding and quality improvement to all aspects of the college's business, and in particular to the quality assurance of sub-contracted providers.
- Increase the involvement of learners and external stakeholders in the formation of the strategic plan and the self-assessment report, so that users' views inform planning and aid continuous improvement.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- friendly, relaxed and safe environment in which everyone feels valued
- good support for learning and personal issues
- patient and helpful teachers
- plenty of fun and enjoyment in lessons
- opportunities to work in small groups in lessons
- good facilities to help develop practical skills.

#### What learners would like to see improved:

- availability of computers
- lack of space in social areas at lunchtimes
- road safety outside the Kettering campus.

### Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

#### What employers like:

- good working relationship with the college
- very good communication between the college, employers and learners
- rapid and appropriate response to requests for training
- high quality of learners' work and their progress
- frequent and highly effective monitoring and review of learners' progress
- very knowledgeable assessors.

#### What employers would like to see improved:

- prompt issue of certificates to successful learners
- More challenging programmes for learners who make rapid progress.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

6. The college is making good progress in improving its outcomes for learners and the quality of its provision. Success rates increased significantly in 2008/09 for learners of all ages, at all levels, and for both learner responsive and employer responsive provision, to figures which are well above the most recently published national average figures for similar colleges. The quality of provision has improved since the last inspection and is now good. In 2008/09, the college met most of its very challenging targets, including those for learners' achievement and staff and employers' satisfaction, but not all of its targets for participation and progression. Managers have improved the availability of accurate data and staff and governors use it well to monitor learners' progress. Self-assessment procedures are thorough and the resulting report is largely accurate.
7. The college has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Retention rates have improved and more lessons are good or outstanding. Information and learning technology (ILT) is being used to increasingly good effect, although its impact on the quality of teaching and learning is still greater in some subjects than in others. The range of enrichment activities has increased but the monitoring of participation in them is insufficient. Regular progress reviews encourage learners to achieve their potential, but the quality of learners' targets remains an area for further improvement. The quality of accommodation has improved significantly at Kettering and is now good; accommodation at the other campuses is satisfactory.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

8. Overall success rates for long courses have improved, significantly so in 2008/09, so that they are now high at all levels both for learners aged 16 to 18 and for adult learners. This improvement has resulted from increases in both achievement and retention rates. Learners aged 14 to 16 also achieve very well and most progress to full-time courses at the college. Learners on employer responsive provision in apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships and Train to Gain all achieve high success rates and complete their qualifications in good time. There are no significant differences in the success rates achieved by learners according to their gender, ethnicity or disability.
9. The college is developing a system for measuring the progress of learners, compared to their starting points, but at present, there is little statistical information available to help analyse how much progress learners make. However, inspectors observed learners making good progress in all subject areas, whilst developing good vocational skills. For example, as part of the

Children's Workforce Development, learners in early years demonstrate a high level of proficiency in paediatric first aid. Attendance is good and improving.

10. Learners of all ages say how much they enjoy their learning and their achievements are celebrated widely, for example, through the attractive displays of their original work that decorate classrooms and social spaces. The development of economic and social well-being is good. Learners are developing appropriate skills in literacy and numeracy to support their vocational programmes and results in key skills tests are good. Learners' progression between different levels of study is good and increasing numbers are progressing from college to HE and employment. Learners say that they feel safe in the college and free from bullying, harassment and discrimination. They are well versed in safe working practices, including those relating to the use of the internet, and implement them effectively on vocational courses and whilst at work. Learners are provided with the information they require to make informed choices about health and well-being through the tutorial system and specialist services. Most learners try to eat healthily but few participate in organised games and sports. Learners make a satisfactory contribution to the community through charity events and fundraising.

## The quality of provision

Grade 2

11. The majority of lessons are planned carefully, providing a good variety of activities to keep learners interested and promoting effective learning. In the most exciting lessons, teachers ensure that a brisk pace is maintained, so that learners are provided with constant challenge and encouraged to make good progress. Learners respond positively to this approach and contribute enthusiastically in lessons. They are highly motivated and say how much they appreciate the quality of teaching they receive.
12. Most teachers understand how learning activities can be differentiated successfully so that all learners in the class can contribute and learn. However, their intended learning outcomes are often too general to provide a reliable measure against which the progress made by individual learners can be checked, and the pace of learning is sometimes slower than planned. Although teachers mostly use questions well, their intention to vary the depth of questioning to match the different abilities of learners is not always successful in practice. Many teachers use ILT imaginatively and are providing increasing amounts of materials for learners to use on the college's virtual learning environment (VLE). However, the use of new learning technology is much more advanced in some subjects than in others.
13. Learners at the Kettering campus benefit from a high quality learning environment with readily accessible ILT resources. Other campuses provide less attractive environments for study but learners said, and inspectors found, that this did not impair the quality of their learning.

14. The assessment of learners' practical skills and coursework is good and fully compliant with awarding body requirements. In most subject areas inspected, teaching staff provide detailed and constructive feedback on learners' work. The VLE is used increasingly by learners to submit completed work and by teachers to provide rapid feedback. Learners express high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of assessment; the college has acted decisively to address their concern about the completion dates for assessments being too close together. The good arrangements for initial assessment identify accurately the additional learning support needs of learners. The support provided meets the specific needs of learners well and success rates for the vast majority of learners receiving funded learning support are at least as good as those who are not. Learners recognise the value of additional learning support and take-up is very high.
15. The college offers a comprehensive range of courses covering most subjects from entry to advanced level. The exception is the Rutland campus where provision is not as broad. However, highly effective partnership working has resulted in well-developed arrangements to remedy this limitation. Learners' progression to higher level courses, employment and HE is good. In particular, the college has been successful in increasing the proportion of learners applying successfully to HE.
16. The college has been successful in establishing strong and productive links with employers who speak highly of the college's ability to be both flexible and responsive to their needs. The close links with special schools benefit learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a smooth transition to college life. Young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, including those at risk of exclusion from school, are particularly well served by the School for Young Peoples' Engagement where extensive and successful programmes are provided. Many of these young people achieve well and progress to further education and employment.
17. The college has increased the range of activities available through enrichment both as an integrated part of tutorial provision and through cross-college activities. At present, there is insufficient monitoring of learners' participation in enrichment.
18. Learners value highly the academic and personal support they receive. The strong college focus on improving the quality of initial advice and guidance has been successful, ensuring that learners are following courses that are appropriate to their interests and abilities. Learners report that induction allows them to settle into their studies quickly and make new friends easily. The proportion of learners completing their courses successfully has improved sharply.
19. In response to the need to improve tutorials and the monitoring of learners' progress, the college has introduced clear procedures, schemes of work, and individual learning plans. Personal tutors are well informed and confident about their role in supporting learners' progress. Most tutorials are good and regular progress reviews encourage learners to achieve their potential. The quality of

learners' targets recorded in individual learning plans remains an area for further development as targets are sometimes too general to provide sharply focused and measurable actions to secure improvement.

20. Although the college has begun work on identifying young people in public care that may require particular support, it has been slow to establish appropriate links and procedures. Learners with dyslexia receive effective support and achieve success rates above the college average.
21. Personal, financial and welfare support for learners are readily available and effective. Learners are referred appropriately to specific support agencies. The wealth of information and data available to monitor the quality of tutorials and support functions is, at present, underused to target improvements and share best practice.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

22. The Principal, governors and senior managers provide very clear and ambitious strategic leadership and direction. The Principal, ably supported by a strong senior management team, leads the college with energy and vision and has brought about much improved relationships with a wide range of partners. The college now makes a major contribution to local regeneration partnerships and collaborative education and training developments. Governance has been restructured and is now very good. Governors have relevant experience and hold senior staff to account for the effective management of the college. They monitor key performance indicators very closely and well.
23. The strategic plan is comprehensive and contains challenging targets which, with the exception of targets on participation and progression, were mostly met in 2008/09. Managers involve major stakeholders in the production of the plan, but employers and learners are less involved. Key plans to refocus the college's business, to develop a new campus in Corby and to increase learners' opportunities in HE are all very well considered and project management is good. Revisions to the management structure have resulted in much clearer accountability and improved communication throughout the college. Managers have made good improvements to accommodation and resources to aid learning whilst directing significant improvements to learners' success rates and the quality of teaching and learning.
24. Managers give a high priority to the promotion of safeguarding to staff, learners and visitors. Systems and procedures meet legislative requirements and staff, governors and volunteers have received training in child protection. Student union executive members receive enhanced training. The college presents clear information, advice and guidance on safeguarding, including arrangements for work placements, residential visits and apprenticeships. However, much of the current policy, action plan and risk assessment is new and arrangements to monitor and evaluate this work are not yet fully developed.

25. The college's policies and procedures to promote equality and diversity are very thorough but, as with safeguarding, much of the development work is recent and yet to become embedded fully into the work of the college. The college has been successful in increasing participation and success rates of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds, young people at risk and Prince's Trust learners. Equality and diversity impact measures are emphasised in the strategic plan and managers and governors monitor them carefully. In 2008/09, there were no complaints about bullying, harassment or racism. Former differences between the success rates of different groups of learners have greatly reduced, so that within the overall college improvement there are currently no substantial differences between success rates achieved by learners according to their gender, ethnicity or disability. Managers have identified correctly the need to evaluate more fully the progress made by different groups of learners. Learners are well informed about equality and diversity matters through induction, a poster competition and tutorials. On most courses, teachers promote equality and diversity widely and enterprisingly. Marketing materials represent learners from diverse backgrounds well and show male and female learners in non-traditional settings. However, the proportion of female learners in engineering and construction is low. Managers analyse staff recruitment carefully and ensure that different groups of applicants are not disadvantaged. Whilst a few areas of the college are not accessible to people with restricted mobility, the college takes effective action to ensure that no potential learner or employee is prevented from joining the college or participating fully in the opportunities it provides.
26. Learners have many good opportunities to voice their opinions on key aspects of college life. Managers consider these views, act on them appropriately and communicate the outcomes to learners. Managers have recently reviewed the 'learner voice' policy and procedures so that they apply to all areas of the college. Learners are well represented on the governing body and on cross-college committees.
27. Quality assurance systems and processes are planned logically and in most cases implemented consistently. Senior managers agree challenging targets with course leaders and monitor progress towards achieving them through rigorous curriculum 'health checks'. Action plan targets are variable; many are specific and constructive, but others are too general and do not set a time scale within which actions are to be completed. The lesson observation scheme is comprehensive and provides an accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. Expectations of teachers are clear and most of them have adapted well to being more accountable for the success of their learners. The quality assurance monitoring of sub-contracted provision is underdeveloped. Self-assessment procedures involve most areas of the college's work but the views of learners and stakeholders are under-represented. Managers moderate self-assessment carefully and share good practice effectively. The resulting report is accurate in most respects.
28. Teaching staff are well-qualified or following appropriate teacher training courses. New teaching staff value the induction and probation procedures and

say they help them improve their teaching. Managers are fully aware of, and promote effectively, the workforce development reforms. The staff development programme is good; it embraces the outcomes of lesson observations and appraisal as well as mandatory training on health and safety, equality and diversity and safeguarding. Accommodation is good at Kettering, but satisfactory at Wellingborough and Corby.

29. The use of resources to secure value for money is good. Most success rates increased markedly in 2008/09 to above average. Prudent financial management and prioritisation, coupled with more efficient timetabling, better staff utilisation and improved vacancy control have all helped improve value for money, although best value purchasing practice for specialist items is underdeveloped.

## Subject areas

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

### Context

30. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in health and social care, public services and childcare from foundation level to advanced level. Of the 936 learners currently enrolled on learner responsive provision, 224 are adults, 641 are aged 16 to 18 and 71 are aged 14 to 16. There are 597 learners following full-time courses and 339 following part-time courses. In total, there are 234 learners at foundation level, 412 learners at intermediate level and 290 learners at advanced level. Some 414 learners follow the Train to Gain programme and work as care assistants.

### Key findings

- Learners achieve well. Success rates increased sharply in 2008/9 and are now high on the majority of courses. Success rates on Train to Gain are well above average. Most Train to Gain learners make very good progress and complete their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 2 early.
- Learners develop good practical skills and a keen awareness of clients' needs. They apply theory to practical tasks well and adopt professional attitudes to work. Employers value how well learners are prepared for work and the high level of commitment that they show.
- Learners enjoy their time at college and feel safe there. Their attendance is good and they participate enthusiastically in lessons. Learners say that if they have any ideas about how their course could be improved, the teaching staff listen and act upon their suggestions.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons involve learners in a wide range of activities that allow them to work at their own pace towards their specific targets. Schemes of work and assessment plans are good, but learning outcomes on most lesson plans are too general. This reduces the effectiveness of assessment used in lessons to check learning.
- The assessment of learners' work is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. Teachers praise learners for good work, but they are not always given sufficient feedback on how to improve their work.
- There is a wide range of provision. The curriculum has been improved to provide full-time courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels in care, early years and public services. Part-time courses are available in counselling and paediatric first aid. Progression is good, with increasing numbers of learners continuing to HE.
- The very good working relationships with employers have helped to provide the good range of work placements essential to the development of learners' high levels of vocational skills. Staff in the workplace provide strong support for learning and have an excellent understanding of assessment procedures.

- The initial assessment of learners' needs is thorough and support for specific needs is good. Learners appreciate the good tutorial support they receive and find the electronic learning plans help them monitor their own progress and improve their standards.
- Leadership and management are good and courses are well managed. The heads of school provide strong leadership; teamwork is good and morale is high. New staff receive good induction and support. Equality and diversity are promoted well in most lessons.
- Self-assessment is comprehensive, evaluative and accurate. Quality improvement plans align closely to areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report and contain realistic actions to remedy them. The college does not use its quality assurance measures sufficiently in its sub-contracted Train to Gain provision.
- Accommodation and resources are good. Classrooms are well equipped and the range of ILT resources available is used well to support teaching and learning. The library is well stocked. Public service learners have access to good venues for outdoor pursuits.

What does Tresham College of Further and Higher Education need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teachers provide clearer learning outcomes in lessons so that they can measure individual progress more accurately.
- Ensure all assessment feedback provides a detailed summary of what learners need to do in order to improve the standard of their work.
- Extend the use of the college's own quality assurance systems to monitor the quality of sub-contracted provision more effectively.

## Engineering

## Grade 1

### Context

31. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in mechanical engineering, motor vehicle engineering and electrical and electronic engineering from foundation level to advanced level. Of the 631 learners currently enrolled on learner responsive provision, 287 are adults, 331 are aged 16 to 18 and 13 are aged 14 to 16. There are 432 learners following full-time courses and 199 following part-time courses. In total 204 learners are at foundation level, 305 learners at intermediate level and 122 learners at advanced level. An additional 613 learners follow the Train to Gain programme and work as food and drink operatives or engineering process operatives. Some 272 learners are enrolled on engineering apprenticeship programmes.

### Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are outstanding. Success rates have increased substantially to well above the most recently published national averages on all courses. Learners make very good progress. On employer responsive programmes, local employers welcome the outstanding timely success rates as they help their efforts to reduce specific skills shortages.
- Learners receive good training in health and safety at work and generally make safe working a priority in their practical classes. Some aspects of workshop signage, such as the identification of safe walkways and the prominent display of safety notices, require improvement.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. The quality of teaching has improved as teachers have put into practice the training they have received through staff development. Lessons provide learners with plenty of opportunities to follow their own interests and express their own opinions. The use of ILT is well developed and learners say how interesting this makes their lessons. Assessment is rigorous and reflects industry requirements well.
- The range of provision is good for learners of all ages and at all levels with good opportunities to progress to advanced courses in mechanical, motor vehicle, and electrical and electronic engineering. Progression between levels is good and the vast majority of learners enter HE or employment when they leave the college.
- Provision at the National College of Motorsport at Silverstone is outstanding. Learners working towards the NVQ in performing engineering operations develop their skills as motor racing support technicians by training on Formula 3 racing cars. The college also runs its own Formula 3 racing team. The majority of learners progress to employment in Formula 1 race support teams.
- Engagement with employers is outstanding. The college responds rapidly to provide the training that local employers need and has attracted sponsorship from industry to supply materials and equipment. Learners benefit from

excellent work placements in industry that help them develop high levels of technical skills.

- Care, guidance and support are good. Tutorials are well organised and managed and learners appreciate them. Individual progress monitoring is effective, and attendance, retention and achievement rates have all increased. The inclusion of guest speakers from local industries and charities adds interest to the tutorial provision.
- Identification of learners' additional learning needs, during induction, is prompt and accurate. The vast majority of learners who require support welcome the help available; the quality of the support they receive is very good.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. New management responsibilities provide a much sharper focus on improving outcomes and, together with access to accurate data, are enabling the subject area to meet its challenging performance targets. Self-assessment is accurate and well informed by information gained from lesson observation. Equality and diversity are promoted enthusiastically, but despite the best efforts of managers, there are very few female learners in this subject area.
- The quality of accommodation and resources is satisfactory overall but varies between different campuses. At the National College of Motorsport, accommodation is outstanding. At Corby and Wellingborough, learners make very good progress despite the unattractive conditions they work in.

What does Tresham College of Further and Higher Education need to do to improve further?

- Raise still further the profile of health and safety and ensure that relevant safety signs are prominently displayed.

## Construction, planning and the built environment

Grade 2

### Context

32. The college offers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in construction at the Corby campus and plumbing at Wellingborough. These programmes cover the occupational areas of bricklaying, plumbing, heating and ventilation, carpentry and joinery and painting and decorating. Currently 103 learners follow apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes in bricklaying, 69 in plumbing, heating and ventilation, 79 in carpentry and joinery and 35 in painting and decorating.

### Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are good. Success rates for apprentices aged 16 to 18 years are satisfactory, but redundancies have affected recent outcomes for these learners. Success rates for older apprentices are well above average, as are the timely success rates for all learners.
- Learners develop good practical skills in the workplace and their positive attitude to work impresses employers. Learners work hard in key skills to acquire the levels of functional literacy and numeracy they require to improve their job performance. Employers appreciate the high levels of skill their apprentices display and readily include them in their plans for workforce development.
- Learners work safely in the workplace and during practical activities in college. They understand their responsibility to maintain a safe and healthy working environment for all, behave well and demonstrate a mature attitude. All learners receive information on safety during induction and know who to contact should the need arise.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teaching staff make good use of initial diagnostic assessment to plan their sessions and provide clear aims and objectives to help learners understand what is expected of them. In theory lessons, ILT is used well to make lessons livelier and more interesting. Learners are attentive and make good progress.
- Assessment is good. The frequent assessments in the workplace are fair and support learners' progress well. Learners receive helpful feedback on their work and this helps them understand the progress they are making towards achieving their short-term targets, but not always towards their full framework achievement.
- The college gives good support to employers and responds well to their needs. The range of work-based learning provision is good; the college has continued to offer provision in building trades that are suffering a decline in enrolments nationally but are important to the regeneration of the local economy. Employers have confidence in the quality of training provided by the college and many recruit learners into full-time employment.

- Learners receive good care, guidance and support and particularly value the help they receive from tutors and apprenticeship advisors. Full-time learning support teaching staff provide valuable assistance to construction apprentices and this helps them to make good progress.
- Learner reviews are satisfactory. The apprenticeship team do not always receive sufficient detail to inform fully learner reviews and although employers assist in the review process, their lack of information about the framework makes the scheduling of activities for learners difficult.
- Leadership and management are good. Effective collaboration between the construction section and apprenticeship managers has helped learners to complete their frameworks within time. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate; the main areas for improvement are addressed in the quality improvement plan and monitored closely. There is an unacceptable delay in claiming and distributing certificates of achievement for the elements of the apprenticeship framework.

What does Tresham College of Further and Higher Education need to do to improve further?

- Improve the monitoring of learners' progress against framework achievement by employing a more effective tracking system.
- Provide employers with a summary of schemes of work for all elements of the framework at the start of programme so that they can plan the work schedules for apprentices more effectively.
- Ensure that achievement certificates are claimed from awarding bodies quickly and forwarded to the apprenticeship team upon receipt.

## Foundation for learning and life

## Grade 2

### Context

33. The college offers full-time and part-time courses from entry level to intermediate level in literacy and numeracy. Of the 5,150 learners currently enrolled, 2,219 are adults and 2,931 are aged 16 to 18. The majority of learners follow key skills in literacy and numeracy as part of their full-time vocational programme. The college also provides extensive in-class support for literacy, numeracy and language. Provision for students with learning disabilities and difficulties (LDD) and in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) was not inspected.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are high on most courses and increased substantially in 2008/09. On the level 2 key skills application of number course, the success rate was above average but has declined over the last three years.
- Learners make good progress in literacy and numeracy lessons. They gain a clear understanding of mathematical concepts, sometimes for the first time, through a range of fun, interactive activities and learn well. However, some learners on key skills programmes lack sufficient motivation to engage fully in the development of skills vital for their work.
- Learners enjoy learning. Most attend regularly and arrive for lessons punctually. Skills for Life learners gain confidence in their ability to learn and this is reinforced by regular events to celebrate success, including certificate presentations, 'learner of the month' posters and attractive displays of learners' work.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory but the quality of individual lessons varies considerably. In the majority of lessons, learners understand what skills they will develop and take part in a wide range of interesting and challenging activities. Learners have good opportunities, during small group and individual work, to develop specific skills at their own pace.
- Most lessons are planned well. In many key skills lessons, teachers plan learning activities that are directly relevant to the learners' main programmes of study. They use realistic, authentic materials that are supported well by references to interesting, relevant websites. These activities support the successful completion of course assignments and enrich learning.
- In less successful lessons, teachers spend too much time explaining learning points by means of computer presentations or overlong verbal explanations. Learners become passive, or lose concentration. Teachers often pay insufficient attention to the room layout to facilitate effective small group work and interactive activities.

- Lesson objectives are often too general and focus on activities to be completed rather than skills to be developed. In key skills lessons, teachers sometimes plan activities that require learners to use a wide range of study skills but do not provide learners with sufficient opportunities to develop them.
- The college has developed good partnerships with schools, community and voluntary groups, and other private training providers to engage first-time learners from the local area. The number of learners recruited has increased substantially and opportunities for them to progress are very good.
- Guidance and support are good. Skills for Life learners receive a comprehensive initial assessment and interview that correctly identify their starting points. Induction is well-managed and enables learners to join courses at regular intervals throughout the year. An external relations manager effectively supports learners' progression from community courses to campus provision. The introduction of these actions has had a significant impact on improving retention.
- Leadership and management are good. A clear strategy promotes the importance of literacy and numeracy. Skills for Life teachers participate in a well-planned programme of training to share good practice and improve the quality of learners' experiences. However, actions to raise the success rates and improve the quality of the teaching and learning of key skills have been more successful in some subject areas than others.

What does Tresham College of Further and Higher Education need to do to improve further?

- Develop staff expertise in setting detailed lesson objectives so learners fully understand the skills they will practise and develop in lessons.
- Provide additional training for teachers to encourage good practice in developing learning activities to fully engage and address the needs of all learners.
- Implement quality assurance procedures consistently across key skills provision to ensure improvements in success rates can be maintained.

## Business, administration and law

Grade 2

### Context

34. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in business and management, accounting, law and administration from foundation level to higher level. Of the 709 learners currently enrolled on learner responsive provision, 255 are adults and 454 are aged 16 to 18. Some 476 learners follow full-time courses and 233 follow part-time courses. In total there are 44 learners at foundation level, 259 learners at intermediate level, 305 learners at advanced level and 101 learners at higher level. The college offers a Train to Gain programme and apprenticeships, but these were not inspected.

### Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are good. Success rates are high on most courses but are low on AS law and the NVQ level 3 accounting technicians course. Success rates are high in key skills.
- The quality of learners' work is good. Learners develop good vocational skills and many apply these successfully in the workplace. Portfolios are well presented; learners use business and law terminology confidently and accurately.
- Learners enjoy coming to college and develop good social attitudes through the considerate and supportive way they work together in lessons. They appreciate the way that teachers try to make lessons relevant to the modern world, but not all learners have opportunities to become involved in community-based activities or projects.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their work carefully and use a wide range of methods to interest learners. Lessons are brisk and purposeful. Good links are made between theory and practice. Learners enjoy the different ways in which they learn and respond positively in lessons.
- The use of questions in lessons often lacks focus. Teachers ask questions frequently but many questions are too general and fail to provide a realistic check on understanding. In particular, questions do not challenge more able learners sufficiently.
- The range of provision is good and meets most learners' needs. Full-time courses provide clear progression routes in business administration and accounting and the range of part-time management courses for adults is good. The college recognises that links with employers require improvement and that opportunities to participate in work experience are currently underdeveloped.
- Tutorials provide good opportunities for learners to monitor their own progress and identify where they require additional help with their work. Full-time learners use individual learning plans that are linked closely to their attainment targets and generally work well. Part-time learners appreciate their individual

targets and say they provide a good framework to reflect on and review their progress.

- Leadership and management are good. Outcomes for learners have improved and managers and teachers share a common purpose to improve them still further. Managers use data regularly and effectively to monitor learners' progress and identify any courses which are underperforming. They take prompt remedial action if required. Self-assessment is largely accurate.
- Accommodation and resources are good. Classrooms are well equipped and comfortable to work in. Teachers produce good resources that stimulate and encourage learning. ILT resources are available, but underused in many lessons. The library has clear links with the business area and provides good business related textbook and on-line resources.

What does Tresham College of Further and Higher Education need to do to improve further?

- Develop questioning techniques in lessons to provide more challenge and variety in checking learners' progress and understanding.
- Improve and extend the use of ILT in lessons to include more interactive approaches that engage more learners.
- Extend partnerships with local schools, employers and community groups to provide learners with more opportunities to experience how business works in the modern world.

## Information about the inspection

35. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Vice Principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
36. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## Tresham College of Further and Higher Education

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners:	2,926	0	2,228	566	132
Part-time learners	5,339	101	566	3,506	1,166
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3				
Quality of provision	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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