

Stockton Riverside College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130576

Name of lead inspector: Vivien Shipley HMI

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the provider

1. Stockton Riverside College, located in the Tees Valley, operates from two main sites in Thornaby and Billingham. In 2007/08 the college merged with Bede Sixth Form College, Billingham. In the borough of Stockton, in addition to the college, there are five schools, including a special school and two independent schools, and a sixth form college that offer post-16 provision. Another general further education college is in easy travelling distance. During 2008/09 the college completed a major campus redevelopment programme.
2. The college provides further education in outreach, employer and community settings. It works in partnership with local schools, colleges, universities, employers and voluntary sector organisations such as the Prince's Trust. Working with local schools, the college is developing a range of 14 to 19 Diplomas. In collaboration with local universities, the college provides higher education for people from the local area.
3. The college recruits the majority of its learners from the surrounding areas of Stockton, Billingham, Thornaby and Yarm. The unemployment rate across the Tees Valley is higher than the national rate. Some of the college's learners come from areas that are in the top 10% of the most deprived wards nationally. The attainment rate in Stockton schools for five or more GCSE grades A*-C including English and mathematics is improving and in 2009 was slightly below the national rate.
4. The college's mission is to 'lead education for learners' success and progression'.
5. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - The James Cook University Hospital (health and social care)
 - North Tees and Hartlepool Health Trust (health and social care)
 - Working Links (workplace and employability skills)
6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - Arc (engineering and manufacturing)
 - Cablecom (communication technology)
 - Carillion (construction)
 - TTP (retail and customer service)
 - The Prince's Trust, Development Training North East (personal, team work and community skills)
 - The Prince's Trust, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (personal, team work and community skills)
 - The Prince's Trust, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (personal, team work and community skills)

- The Prince’s Trust, Cleveland Fire and Rescue Service (personal, team work and community skills)
- The Prince’s Trust, Consett YMCA (personal, team work and community skills)
- The Prince’s Trust, THAG (personal, team work and community skills)
- Foyer, Darlington YMCA (self-development)
- Foyer, City of Sunderland YMCA (self-development)
- TACS (meter reading)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16 Further education (16 to 18) Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment	9 full-time learners 291 part-time learners 1,686 full-time learners 631 part-time learners 489 full-time learners 301 part-time learners 23 learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	486 full-time learners 3,430 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	1,502 learners 22 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	4
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	
Health, social care and early years	3
Science and mathematics	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Arts, media and publishing	2

Overall effectiveness

7. Stockton Riverside is a satisfactory college with satisfactory capacity to improve. The college has developed outstanding partnerships that support the development of courses that meet the needs of the communities it serves. It is an inclusive organisation that makes good efforts to provide courses for learners who might not otherwise participate. Accommodation across all campuses is excellent. A strong community ethos at the Bede campus provides an environment that is conducive to learning. In advanced level courses a high proportion of learners gain their qualifications. The proportions of learners who attain foundation and intermediate level qualifications are satisfactory. The number of learners who successfully complete Skills for Life qualifications is low. Learners aged 14 to 16 from local schools enjoy college and make good progress developing positive attitudes to their studies.
8. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan most lessons well using resources that engage and interest most learners. Teachers and other staff

provide good support for learners both in and outside lessons. Some lessons are not sufficiently challenging for all learners in the class. Learners feel safe at college reflecting the good attention paid by the college to ensuring that the college's accommodation is secure and welcoming. However, the college has not developed effective arrangements for the safe recruitment of its staff.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The overall success rate on long courses has improved over the last three years and is satisfactory. However, rates vary significantly between levels. Success rates on short courses are low. Success rates are low on Skills for Life courses and intermediate level key skills.
- Learners enjoy college. Most make the progress predicted from their previous qualifications. In some subjects, including chemistry and geology, learners make outstanding progress.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the college is good and learners adopt positive attitudes to learning. They are punctual to lessons and treat each other with respect and tolerance. They learn how to make safe choices and to adopt safe working practices in practical lessons. Arrangements for health and safety are robust.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers are well qualified and are provided with good support and opportunities for professional development that help them to continue to develop their skills. Arrangements for initial assessment are effective in identifying learners who need support to improve their levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Senior and other managers have developed outstanding partnerships that are significant in contributing to the social and economic regeneration of the communities the college serves.
- Learners receive good care, guidance and support. Teachers, support staff and tutors work together well to identify and support vulnerable and at risk learners. Learners and their parents/carers speak positively about the support the college provides. The tutorial framework is new and has not impacted fully on outcomes for learners. The college has appointed an enrichment coordinator to increase participation in enrichment.
- The college is highly responsive to employers' requests for training and is flexible in its delivery. Provision developed in response to the needs of employers, supports the college's aim of reaching out and supporting more people to participate, achieve and progress. Learners' confidence and employability skills improve as a result of participating in these programmes. The college does not have systematic arrangements for collecting and analysing employers' views.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college has met its statutory duties in this area and is regarded well in the local community. However, some groups of learners underperform, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

- Curriculum management is good. Since the restructure the increased focus on monitoring levels of retention and learners' attendance at lessons is successfully raising standards.
- Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Arrangements for self-assessment and quality improvement have been effective in raising standards. However, trends in improvement are not consistent across subject areas. Some improvement plans do not have precise targets for improvement with clear timescales. Not all teachers have an action plan to improve the quality of their teaching.
- Financial management is satisfactory. The college has an ambitious financial recovery plan for 2009/10 to ensure that progress in raising standards of learners' outcomes is not affected by financial issues.
- The college's accommodation and many of its learning resources are stunning, particularly those at the Bede campus. They are appreciated by learners and the community and significantly contribute to raising aspirations within and around the main campuses.
- Safeguarding is inadequate. The college has placed high priority on ensuring that vulnerable learners are supported effectively. However, managers have not taken sufficient action to ensure that the college has adequate arrangements for the safe recruitment and training of staff. The college does not meet government requirements in this aspect.
- Governance is inadequate. Governors have ably supported senior managers in setting and achieving its mission, vision and strategic objectives and hold managers to account for key performance indicators relating to the curriculum. They have not fulfilled their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding.

What does Stockton Riverside College need to do to improve further?

- Develop and implement appropriate actions to ensure that success rates continue to improve, particularly on Skills for Life courses. Monitor and evaluate the impact of current strategies to improve retention.
- Encourage more learners to participate in enrichment activities.
- Maintain the momentum in improvements to tutorial provision by ensuring that the revised code of practice is implemented consistently.
- Develop and implement a systematic approach to collecting and using employers' views about the quality of the provision.
- Provide governors with reports on the implementation of the college's arrangements for safeguarding so that they are able to fulfil their statutory duties. These should include the analysis and evaluation of exception reports so that governors can challenge senior managers and monitor performance robustly.
- Revise policies and procedures and codes of practice to ensure that the college achieves its objective that all staff required to hold Criminal Record Bureau

(CRB) checks do so from the start of their employment at the college. Ensure that all staff receive appropriate training and that accurate records are kept to ensure that the college can monitor compliance in this area.

- Improve arrangements for quality assurance to ensure that the underlying causes of lower performance are clearly identified and addressed.
- Ensure that all observations of teaching and learning result in an action plan that supports teachers to continue to improve.
- Take action to improve the college's financial position. Control expenditure rather than relying on future assumed income streams.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the experienced and very supportive teachers
- the good support they receive from tutors and other college staff
- the flexible approach to meet part-time learners' needs
- the wide variety of courses to choose from
- the good learning environment and facilities, particularly at the Bede campus
- the friendly atmosphere and the way people are treated with respect
- the information and learning technology (ILT) resources and technician support.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the difficulties accessing the virtual learning environment (VLE) from home
- access to computers in the resource centre at the Stockton campus
- unreliable technology in some classrooms at the Stockton campus
- the car parking costs policy and the availability of spaces, particularly for part-time learners
- the high cost of food in cafes and vending machines.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the good supportive partnership working
- the highly effective communication with the college
- the supportive and helpful staff
- the speed of response by college staff to all requests
- the flexible approach to developing training to meet needs
- the cost effective training
- highly professional, friendly and approachable staff.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no areas for improvement were identified by employers.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement Grade 3

9. The college has, following merger, completed successfully an ambitious building programme and introduced a new organisational and management structure that has increased the focus on monitoring performance against targets for retention. Retention and attendance have improved but rates of improvement vary between subject areas. Success rates are low in Skills for Life provision and intermediate level key skills. Quality improvement arrangements are not implemented consistently. Self-assessment is systematic; however, some judgements are over stated. Management information is generally accurate but is not used consistently to inform the analysis of the causes of underperformance. Governors and senior leaders have a clear vision for the future of the college with a strong and coherent ambition for its local communities that is aided by outstanding partnerships.
10. Since the last inspection the college has made satisfactory progress in resolving the identified areas for improvement. Monitoring of key skills performance data is now adequate. The outcomes of observation of teaching and learning are used routinely to inform individual performance reviews; however, not all staff have an action plan to improve. Arrangements for identifying adults' additional learning support needs are now satisfactory. Recruitment to work-based learning has improved slowly. Insufficient progress has been made in improving the arrangements for child protection training for staff.

Outcomes for learners Grade 3

11. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The overall success rate on long courses has improved over the last three years and is satisfactory. The rate on short courses declined in 2008/09 and is low. Trends in improvement and outcomes vary significantly between levels. On foundation courses for learners aged 16 to 18 the overall success rate has not improved over the last three years and is satisfactory. At intermediate and advanced levels the success rates improved significantly in 2008/09. At intermediate level the rate is satisfactory; at advanced level it is high. Success rates on General Certificate in Education (GCE) A-level courses are high and have been so for a number of years. On GCE AS-level courses the success rate has improved over the last three years and is high.
12. On long courses for adults the success rate at foundation level declined significantly in 2008/09 and is low. At intermediate and advanced levels the success rates improved significantly in 2008/09. At intermediate level the rate is satisfactory; at advanced level it is high.
13. Improvement trends and success rates vary significantly between subject areas. Success rates are high in a number of areas including science and mathematics,

social sciences and construction. They are low in Skills for Life programmes and in business, administration and law. Managers of these areas have a clear understanding of the causes of underperformance and are implementing appropriate improvement plans.

14. Success rates on key skills courses have improved significantly over the last three years and are now high at foundation and advanced level. Although improved at intermediate level, the success rate remains low.
15. The college has been successful in broadening its provision for employers and developing courses to reduce the number of young people not in education and training. Train to Gain programmes make a good contribution to upskilling employed learners. The success rate on these courses is satisfactory as is the rate for the small number of apprentices. Young people aged 14 to 16 from local schools enjoy college and make good progress developing vocational skills and positive attitudes to learning.
16. Overall, learners aged 16 to 18 perform better than adults. In 2008/09 learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities did not perform as well as other students. The college is aware that more needs to be done to address variations in performance. Support provided by the college to help learners to improve their levels of literacy and numeracy is effective in helping them to attain at the same level as other students.
17. Learners enjoy college. Most make satisfactory progress. In some subjects, such as chemistry and geology, their progress is outstanding. Learners make good progress in lessons. Their personal and social skills develop well at college. They are punctual to lessons, attend regularly and adopt positive attitudes to work.
18. Learners say that they feel safe at college. They learn to treat each other with respect and tolerance. Teachers pay good attention to health and safety in lessons ensuring that learners are attired correctly and adopt safe working practices in practical sessions and workshops. Tutors and support staff provide a good range of programmes that help learners to make safe choices in, for example, how they use internet chat rooms. The college works hard to provide learners with a secure and welcoming environment that is maintained well.
19. Learners receive good support through the tutorial programme to make informed choices about their health and well-being. Effective links with external agencies and support from the college's youth workers provide learners with useful advice on topics such as sexual health and substance abuse. The college has established a wide range of initiatives to enable learners to make a good contribution to the community. The Prince's Trust programme is significant in raising the self-confidence of learners through participation in fund-raising activities for charity. Learners in visual and performing arts are involved in projects producing murals in community settings and performances for pupils from local schools.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

20. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers and other staff are well qualified and receive good support and professional development to continue to develop their skills. For example, 'learning squares' is an effective strategy that supports teachers to share good practice. Teachers plan most lessons well, using a variety of strategies to engage and challenge learners. For example, in practical lessons in health and social care learners work in realistic working environments and use learning resources that develop their employability skills. Most teachers make effective use of ILT to enhance lessons. In a number of areas teachers make excellent use of the college's VLE to extend students' learning outside of lessons. However, some lessons at the Stockton campus are disrupted by unreliable ILT equipment.
21. Most teachers make good use of open questions to check learners are making progress and to provide them with positive feedback that raises their self-confidence. In a minority of lessons the teacher talks for too long without checking learners' understanding and there is insufficient challenge for more able learners. Learners report that teachers are very supportive and take extra time to provide additional help for those that need it. Learners are industrious in most lessons, applying themselves well to the set tasks. They receive useful assessment feedback from teachers that helps them understand what they need to do to improve.
22. The college has developed a curriculum that responds well to the needs and interests of learners. It is socially inclusive and is working successfully to build ambition and increase participation in education and training. A wide range of provision for full- and part-time learners provides good opportunities for progression from foundation level to higher education, including a good range of relevant courses for 14 to 16 year olds. The college's Learning Bus which is equipped with laptops is used for marketing and to offer computer-based courses in the community. The college enables progression to higher education through its links with Teesside University and AimHigher.
23. The college is responsive to the needs of employers. Employers value highly the quick response to requests for training and the flexibility in how it is delivered. They are highly satisfied with the quality of training and the positive impact it has in improving employees' skills, boosting confidence and supporting progression in the job market. Communication with employers is highly effective. Although they are asked about their experiences with the college, there is no systematic approach to gathering their views and providing feedback.
24. The college's contribution to partnerships is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to the social and economic regeneration of the area. Collaboration with schools and the local authority has increased opportunities for learners aged 14 to 19. The vocational skills academy provides a range of options for pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools and the college is at the forefront of the introduction of Diploma programmes starting in September 2010. Headteachers

report that the performance of pupils in their GCSE examinations improves as a result of attending college. Together with partners, the college is co-sponsoring the development of two 11 to 16 academies. The college has widened opportunities for disadvantaged and socially excluded groups, such as offenders and those at risk of offending, through work with The Prince's Trust and Kirklevington Prison.

25. Learners have access to a satisfactory range of enrichment activities. In subject areas they take part in a wide range of visits, student exchanges and charity events. In addition, they can participate in non-subject related activities; for example, a Ready Steady Cook competition and an edition of Schools' Question Time took place during the week of inspection. The college has appointed a sports champion and an enrichment coordinator to address the need to increase participation. Work experience is only available to those learners where it is a requirement of their course.
26. Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Applicants to the college are interviewed by subject specialist staff to help to ensure that they enrol on the right course. Arrangements for transition from school to college are good and induction helps learners to settle into college quickly. Learners in need of additional learning support to develop their literacy, numeracy and language skills are identified and supported effectively by specialist staff. Most learners receive useful careers advice and helpful support to apply to university. However, advanced level students at Bede wishing to progress to employment are not supported well.
27. Tutorial support is good. A new code of practice being implemented this academic year provides a comprehensive framework for tutorial support for all learners, both full- and part-time. The framework places high priority on setting learners challenging targets and monitoring their progress. Learners who are vulnerable and those at risk of dropping out early are identified promptly by tutors and are supported to complete their programmes. Although the new arrangements for tutorials are improving attendance at lessons more time is needed to see the full impact on learners' outcomes.
28. Tutors are assisted well by a team specialist support staff, including four youth workers, external agencies such as the Brook advisory service and outside speakers. Learners find tutorials helpful in providing them with advice on how to make safe and healthy choices. Tutors also help learners to develop the skills to become active citizens through fund-raising and community activities. Tutorials are not fully incorporated into the college's observation scheme.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

29. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The Principal, governors and senior managers set ambitious and challenging targets and provide clear strategic leadership and direction. Governors have ably supported the recent college merger and subsequent accommodation developments which have been managed very effectively. High quality accommodation developments support

the college's vision 'to promote ambition and raise aspirations' in the communities it serves. Governors use their knowledge and experience to monitor and review key performance indicators for the curriculum closely.

30. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. Quality assurance and self-assessment procedures are implemented appropriately across most of the provision. However, they are not applied robustly to some off-site provision and work-based learning programmes. The self-assessment report is extensive but lacks clarity in identifying specific areas for improvement and some judgements are over stated. Using a new 'Step-up' procedure managers agree challenging targets with course leaders and monitor progress towards achieving them through regular curriculum audit. Resulting action planning targets are variable; some are precise and constructive while others, for example for underperforming courses, are too general and do not clearly identify timescales for actions to be completed. Management information is generally accurate but is not used consistently to promote improvement.
31. The lesson observation scheme is comprehensive and provides a relatively accurate record of the quality of teaching and learning. A well-trained team of observers have their judgements peer reviewed and moderated; however, this has not resolved some inconsistencies in the grades awarded. Some observations are too focused on describing what the teacher is doing rather than the impact on learning.
32. The college has ensured that learners have good opportunities to voice their opinions on key aspects of the college. They were involved recently in making decisions about the development of the new accommodation. Learners from both sites are represented on the governing body.
33. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and embedded well across the college. Managers review the curriculum regularly to ensure that it provides good opportunities to increase participation and contribute to social mobility. The college has appropriate policies and action plans to meet its duties with regard to race, gender and disability. Policies have been reviewed and updated since the merger, to ensure they are aimed at all learners. The college has developed a single equality scheme which has arrangements for increased monitoring through equality impact assessments. A high level training programme is used to train governors, staff and external partners. Differences between the success rates of different groups of learners are analysed and reported to governors. Appropriate plans are being developed to resolve areas of underperformance. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is higher than that of the local population. In curriculum areas equality and diversity are given high profile through induction, tutorials and in teaching and learning. The college is fully accessible to learners with restricted mobility. Equality and diversity are celebrated well through the curriculum and displays in circulation spaces and social areas.
34. Senior and other managers have placed high priority on ensuring that there are good arrangements in place to identify and support vulnerable and at risk

learners and to develop effective multi-agency and cross-college working to support learners identified to be in need of support. Where cases are reported the support provided is effective.

35. Insufficient priority has been placed, until very recently, on developing and implementing appropriate arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff. The college has been extremely slow in responding to the requirement to have a single central register (SCR) in place by April 2007. The college began to produce the SCR in October 2009. At the start of the inspection the SCR was incomplete. Although the college made some progress developing the register during the inspection it remains incomplete. This includes gaps in information on staff that have not been subject to a CRB check carried out since direct employment at the college and identity checks and evidence to confirm the CRB status of agency staff.
36. Senior managers have failed to resolve serious weakness in human resource management that have existed over a period of years and have impeded progress in developing and implementing safe recruitment processes. The college has not implemented appropriate actions to ensure that it complies with its aim that all relevant staff are CRB checked following an offer of employment. Risk-assessments of staff without CRB checks are not implemented appropriately.
37. Governors have not been provided with sufficient information to fulfil their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Governors have not approved the child protection policy annually. Although the college's child protection policy states that governors will receive annual reports on safeguarding, none have been presented by senior managers. Governors were not informed that the college had not complied with the requirement to have a SCR in place by April 2007 and they were not aware that there are gaps in the records of staff CRB checks.
38. Arrangements to plan and monitor safeguarding training for staff are unsatisfactory. Not all staff have received training. The need to improve training in child protection was highlighted as an area for improvement in each of the former colleges at their previous inspections.
39. Arrangements for health and safety are robust. The college environment which is newly built provides a secure and welcoming environment. Governors receive annual reports to monitor the implementation of college policies in this area. Teachers pay good attention to health and safety in lessons.
40. The newly built accommodation is impressive across all sites as are many of its resources that support teaching and learning. However, the college's visionary plans for redevelopment and associated funding demands impacted negatively on the financial position in 2008/09. An ambitious recovery plan is in place for the current year. Financial management is satisfactory. In the context of the satisfactory outcomes for learners, value for money is satisfactory.

Subject areas

Health, social care and early years

Grade 3

Context

41. The subject area offers full- and part-time courses from foundation to advanced level. Of 1,185 learners following courses in the area, 28 are aged 14 to 16 from local schools, 257 are aged 16 to 18, 708 are adult learners, six are following apprenticeship programmes and 191 are following Train to Gain programmes.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory overall. For learners aged 16 to 18 outcomes are good but success rates vary between levels. At foundation level success rates are satisfactory; at intermediate and advanced level the rates are high on most courses. On the national extended diploma in health and social care and early years the rate is satisfactory and on the diploma in child care and education the success rate declined significantly in 2008/09 and is low. Success rates on most courses for adults are low.
- Pass rates are high on most courses. Effective action has been taken to improve retention which at the time of the inspection was high. Attendance has also improved to above the college average. Progression to higher level courses is satisfactory.
- Learners make good progress. Many learners start with low level entry qualifications and poor previous experiences of education. Considering these starting points it is significant that they acquire a good range of employability and social skills, including punctuality at lessons, improved attendance and positive attitudes to learning. Learners benefit from a variety of work placements that help them to develop workplace ethics such as respect for colleagues and parents and how to work as part of a team.
- Teachers use open questions effectively to check learners' understanding. Learners are well motivated; most participate enthusiastically. The better teaching is energetic and well paced, engaging all learners. However, some theory lessons are dull and lose learners' interest and attention.
- Assessment is effective in helping most learners to understand what they need to do to improve. Assignments are challenging but realistic and teachers' verbal reviews of progress provide learners with constructive and positive feedback. Most teachers provide detailed feedback on learners' written work.
- A good range of provision, from entry level to advanced level, meets the needs and interests of learners and provides them with opportunities to progress within the college. Learners receive useful advice that helps them to enrol on the right course. Tutors organise visits and external speakers that enrich the curriculum and provide advice on future careers.

- Managers work well in consultation with key external agencies such as the local National Health Service Trust, Stockton Borough Council and local schools to provide courses that meet local and national priorities. For example, the college has introduced a medication workbook to improve induction for new workers in the social care sector, it is the lead partner in Stockton for the diploma in society, and is developing provision at levels 4 and 5 in response to employer needs.
- Learners receive good academic, pastoral and placement support through one-to-one and group tutorials where their progress is monitored regularly. Learners speak positively about how the support they receive helps them to progress.
- Curriculum management has improved as a result of the restructure and is satisfactory. Managers provide staff with clear direction and support that have been effective in improving standards. Recent actions are improving the quality of provision and levels of retention and attendance. However, these have not impacted fully across the provision.
- Internal communications have improved and are effective in ensuring that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Teachers are well qualified; many having significant professional experience. Staff benefit from good development opportunities. For example, they are able to update their skills in industry by working in nurseries and care settings.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers successfully promote a culture of mutual respect and tolerance among staff and learners. Learners have appropriate vetting checks completed before work experience placements.
- The self-assessment report involves all staff in evaluating the quality of the provision. The views of learners are not used systematically. Quality assurance arrangements have not been sufficiently effective in resolving varying success rates. Observations of teaching and learning are mostly thorough and support teachers to improve. Some observations are overly focused on what the teacher does without sufficient analysis of the impact on learning and the progress students make.
- Accommodation and specialist learning resources are very good and provide learners with realistic experience of working with reality babies, hospital beds, and rooms equipped as nurseries and care settings. A few classrooms are too small for the number of learners.

What does Stockton Riverside College need to do to improve further?

- Monitor and evaluate the impact of existing strategies to ensure that improvements in success rates are consistent across the provision.
- Improve the standard of theory lessons through the development and use of more challenging and varied learning activities. Share the good practice of the creative approaches used in practical sessions.
- Increase the focus on learning and the progress learners make in observations of teaching and learning.

- Enhance the involvement of learners in evaluating the quality of the provision and use their views to inform self-assessment.

Science and mathematics

Grade 2

Context

42. The subject area offers GCE AS- and A-level in mathematics and further mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, psychology and geology. GCSE courses are available in mathematics and biology. Of 205 learners enrolled on courses in the area, 122 are aged 16 to 18; 83 are adults.

Key findings

- Overall, outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are high in most GCE AS- and A-level subjects. The rates are outstanding in chemistry and geology. The majority of learners attain high grades in AS- and A-level subjects.
- Learners make very good progress in AS- and A-level geology, and in AS-level biology, chemistry, mathematics. In these subjects learners attain higher grades than predicted from their GCSE achievement.
- Success rates in AS-level psychology are improving but remain low. Learners make less progress than predicted from their GCSE achievement in AS- and A-level psychology. However, the results from January 2010 module examinations are much improved. Retention has also improved.
- Success rates in GCSE mathematics for learners at the Bede campus are high; at the Stockton campus they are satisfactory. Learners without recent experience of mathematics follow an adult numeracy qualification before progressing to GCSE. This qualification helps them develop confidence and to enjoy the subject. Success rates in GCSE biology are low.
- Learners enjoy their studies and make good progress. They produce good standards of work. For example, in psychology learners develop a good understanding of obsessive compulsive disorder. In science lessons they learn to adopt safe working practices which prepare them well for employment and further study. Progression to higher education is good. Learners are supported to apply to selective and highly competitive courses at a range of universities.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers plan most lessons well and use high quality learning resources that develop learners' subject knowledge and understanding effectively. Teachers make good use of ILT to enhance students' learning. Learners make good use of a particularly rich range of physics and biology resources available on the college VLE. Teachers of physics make good use of computers and sensors to help learners develop skills in capturing data.
- Assessment is regular and thorough and helps most learners to understand what they need to do to improve. It is especially good in AS- and A-level mathematics. In a few lessons teachers do not use sufficiently probing questions to allow learners to articulate and develop their understanding. Teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging tasks for more able learners.

- Learners value and benefit from a substantial amount of useful subject-specific support. However, low levels of basic mathematical knowledge impede progress in some AS-level mathematics lessons and there is insufficient subject support to meet the widely ranging abilities of learners. Good enrichment activities, such as geology field work in the Alps, make learning relevant and motivate students.
- Support to help learners achieve and progress is good. Learners speak positively about the guidance and support they receive from tutors on their academic progress and to help them address personal issues. Teachers and tutors set learners aspirational targets based on their GCSE grades. Learners discuss their progress regularly with their tutors and agree action plans for improvement. Tutorials cover a good range of topics that help learners to make career choices, apply to university and to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- Leadership and management are good. Weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been mostly resolved. Managers successfully promote a culture of high expectations and professionalism among staff which has raised ambition in the subject area.
- At the Bede campus a strong sense of community combined with learners' focus on working hard and striving for success has created an environment that is conducive to learning. Learners appreciate this sense of community and the very high quality accommodation and resources available to support their studies.
- Self-assessment focuses appropriately on the analysis of examination results but does not present sufficient analysis and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. The outcomes from lesson observations are used to inform individual teachers' performance review. However, targets set at review meetings do not place sufficient emphasis on maintaining improvements in teaching and learning. Teachers receive good coaching and mentoring support from the learning manager that helps them to continue to develop their skills.

What does Stockton Riverside College need to do to improve further?

- Work to sustain improvements in examination results, particularly in those courses that are underperforming. Build on and consolidate improvements in psychology by evaluating the impact of current initiatives. Provide support from the learning manager to improve standards in GCSE biology.
- Increase the subject-specific support available for AS-level mathematics learners with lower levels of ability to allow a faster pace in lessons for all.
- Improve the way in which differentiation of tasks in lessons addresses the needs of learners of all abilities. Improve teachers' use of questioning techniques to help learners to better articulate their understanding and become more confident in their communication skills.
- Put more emphasis on the evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in subject area self-assessment and in individual professional development reviews. Use these to produce more detailed action plans for subject areas and individual teachers that support improvements in teaching and learning.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 2

Context

43. The subject area offers full- and part-time courses from foundation to advanced level. Of 850 learners following courses in the area, 35 are aged 14 to 16 from local schools, 173 are aged 16 to 18, 609 are adult learners, three are following apprenticeship programmes and 30 are following Train to Gain programmes.

Key findings

- Success rates are satisfactory overall. However, rates vary significantly between levels. On intermediate level courses for the majority of enrolments, success rates are high. At foundation and advanced level success, rates are low on most courses, apart from advanced level beauty therapy where the success rate is high and the diploma in theatrical and media make-up where the rate is satisfactory.
- Pass rates are high on most courses. Retention is high on intermediate level courses; the rates are low on most foundation and advanced level programmes. Effective action has been taken to address this and retention has improved significantly in 2009/10. Pass rates for learners completing foundation level hairdressing in February 2010 have improved significantly and are high.
- Learners make good progress in beauty therapy and the standard of their practical skills is good. In hairdressing, standards are satisfactory. In some hairdressing practical sessions, learners are not sufficiently challenged as there are too few clients for them to develop their skills. In these sessions, learners' progress is impeded. Learners aged 14 to 16 from local schools enjoy their time at college and make good progress developing new skills.
- Learners develop safe working practices that reflect industry standards. They adopt high standards of appearance and corporate identity and learn to treat clients and each other with respect and courtesy. In most lessons high standards of sterilisation and health and safety are promoted. However, in hairdressing some poor sterilisation practices were observed.
- Learners receive good support to help them develop the skills needed to make safe choices and to adopt healthy lifestyle. Safety, health and well-being are actively promoted in tutorial sessions and lessons. Tutorial topics include staying safe in internet chat rooms, sexual health, substance abuse and anti-smoking. Learners report that food in college refectories is expensive and lacking in healthy options.
- Learners have a variety of opportunities to express their views about the quality of the college's services and staff make good efforts to respond. For example, timetables were amended recently to accommodate changes in the times of public transport.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the better lessons teachers use a variety of activities that maintain learners' interest. They use questioning techniques well

to check learners understand the topic and to reinforce learning. In these lessons learners make good progress. Most teachers make very good use of electronic resources, including the VLE, to enrich lessons and to support students to extend their learning outside of lessons.

- Most teachers pay good attention to health and safety practices and salon management which prepare learners well for employment. However, in weaker lessons insufficient attention is paid to these issues. Some lessons are too long and limited availability of clients for assessment purposes impedes learners' progress.
- Learners benefit from being able to choose from an extensive range of courses that provide opportunities for them to progress from foundation to advanced level. A high proportion of learners progress between levels within the college. The college does not monitor fully the numbers of learners who progress to employment.
- The curriculum is enriched with a good range of opportunities to participate in competitions, master classes and guest speakers. One learner recently won the gold medal for nail art in the World Skills Competition. Opportunities to participate in work experience are limited to learners on the level 3 National Vocational Qualification in hairdressing.
- Managers have developed strong links with local schools through the Increased Flexibility Programme and collaborative partnerships to introduce the new Diploma. These have extended the range of provision available for learners aged 14 to 16.
- Initial advice and guidance is satisfactory. All learners are interviewed and receive guidance from staff from the subject area which helps to ensure that they enrol on the correct level programme. Recent remodelling of the curriculum has ensured that hairdressing learners can have direct entry onto intermediate courses where appropriate. Further curriculum review is needed in hairdressing to ensure that courses meet the new standards for the qualifications.
- Management of the subject area is good. Managers have taken effective action to improve retention. Staff are set ambitious targets and progress is monitored through regular audit. Self-assessment has been effective in promoting improvement; however, there is insufficient analysis and evaluation of the quality of the provision in the whole college report to fully inform action plans. Observations of teaching and learning are not clearly reported at subject area level in the self-assessment report. Not all staff have an action plan to improve following an observation.
- Accommodation is purpose built with large salons and well-equipped teaching rooms. Ventilation is not sufficiently effective in nail salons and shortages in consumable resources cause problems in hairdressing. These issues were not highlighted in the self-assessment report. Learners informed inspectors that computers often don't work and are insufficient in number.

What does Stockton Riverside College need to do to improve further?

- Review and evaluate the impact of retention strategies to maintain current improvement trends.
- Evaluate the impact of curriculum remodelling on retention and success rates and carry out further action to meet the requirements of the new standards in hairdressing.
- Report more fully on the outcomes of observations of teaching and learning in self-assessment and ensure that this informs action plans for improvement. Ensure all teachers have an action plan that results from observation.
- Ensure that self-assessment more fully identifies the underlying causes of lower performance, all areas for improvement and celebrates the successes of the subject area.
- Ensure that there are sufficient clients so that learners in hairdressing make good progress.

Arts, media and publishing

Grade 2

Context

44. The subject area offers full- and part time courses from foundation to advanced level in art and design, fashion and clothing, film, media, performing arts, drama and theatre studies, musical theatre and music technology. Of 465 learners enrolled on courses in the area, 21 are aged 14 to 16 from local schools, 211 are aged 16 to 18 and 233 are adults.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are high and improving on advanced level courses for learners aged 16 to 18, which is the majority of enrolments in the area. Success rates are outstanding in GCE A-level film studies and A-level media studies. Success rates for adult learners are satisfactory. Although success rates are high on GCE AS-level art and design, and AS-level drama, too few learners attain high grades.
- Pass rates are high on most courses. Retention has improved over the last two years and is high. Attendance at lessons has also improved and is high.
- Learners enjoy their studies. They have respect for their teachers and for each other. For example, when the attention of a teacher, who is already engaged, is needed, learners put up their hand and wait politely for acknowledgement. Students learn to take responsibility for their own learning which prepares them well for progression to higher education.
- Learners produce good standards of work and learn to adopt positive attitudes to their studies. They are well organised and automatically assemble the materials they need for their lessons. In dance classes, learners are attired correctly and are taught to develop safe working practices. In a minority of lessons, learners are not supported to develop the principles of professional practice in studios and classrooms.
- A high proportion of learners progress to higher level courses within the college. Progression to higher education is very good. Particularly impressive is the number of learners in dance and musical theatre who, in a highly competitive environment, gain places at prestigious and internationally renowned specialist training institutions, some with full scholarships.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers make effective use of ILT to enliven lessons. They spend a considerable amount of time preparing learning resources that motivate learners and in developing innovative curriculum projects that provide learners with very good opportunities to work across the subject area. Assessment is thorough and informative and helps learners to improve.
- The range of provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. The wide choice of subjects and levels provides learners with clear progression routes. Good use is made of adapting national diplomas into certificates and awards to

provide extended choice and the opportunity to flexibly allow part-time employment to fit in with learners' timetables. In a minority of lessons small class sizes impact adversely on learning.

- Managers have developed good partnerships with local schools. The subject area offers successful performing arts, and art and design courses for learners aged 14 to 16. Local schools are extensively involved in the college's high profile productions. For example, many of the 6,000 people who attend performances of the annual Christmas production are children from local junior schools. Following auditions, the part of Tinkerbell in the college's 2009 production of Peter Pan, was played by a pupil from a local school.
- Excellent use is made of funds raised through performances to support learners and to extend the curriculum. For example, in music, individual instrumental tuition is subsidised and learners applying for conservatoire training receive financial assistance where appropriate. In performing arts, master classes and enrichment activities, such as London theatre visits, are supported.
- Curriculum management is good. Following a management restructure, new strategies have been implemented and retention has improved significantly. Managers support staff to resolve issues positively and decisively. Support is given where appropriate but responsibility and accountability are devolved appropriately to course teams. Progress and outcomes are monitored regularly by managers. All staff are involved in self-assessment, which is mainly accurate.
- Equality and diversity are promoted and celebrated very well. The curriculum is highly inclusive. Staff work hard to remove barriers to learning so that all learners can participate fully. Managers are responsive to the views of learners and have formed focus groups to unravel findings that emerge through surveys.
- Accommodation and resources are stunning as is the maintenance of specialist equipment. Teachers are well qualified and use their experience effectively to promote learning. Opportunities to share some of the splendid resources between sites are missed.

What does Stockton Riverside College need to do improve?

- Carry out focused observations of teaching and learning in AS-level art and design and AS-level drama to inform action plans to increase the proportion of learners who attain high grades. Increase the number of subject-specific tutorials on these courses to improve learners' academic attainment.
- Evaluate the impact of existing strategies to improve retention. Develop and implement new actions to maintain improvement trends.
- Ensure that the principles of minimum professional practice are clearly established in induction and that staff remain vigilant in ensuring that learners comply with these standards and understand that they are non-negotiable.
- Review the current provision to identify how courses with small groups can be better accommodated and, where appropriate, integrated with other groups.
- Prepare joint assignments so that learners on both sites are able to benefit fully from the stunning accommodation and specialist resources.

Information about the inspection

45. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Vice Principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their levels of attainment over the period since the previous inspection.
46. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and emails. They also observed lessons, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Stockton Riverside College

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	Adult safeguarded learning
Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection						
Full-time learners	2203	9	1686	486	22	
Part-time learners	6305	291	631	3430	1502	451
Overall effectiveness	3	-	3	3	3	-
Capacity to improve	3					
A. Outcomes for learners	3	-	3	3	3	-
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3					
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3					
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	3					
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3					
A3. How safe do learners feel?	2					
A4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2					
A5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2					
B. Quality of provision	2	-	2	2	2	-
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2					
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2					
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1					
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2					
C. Leadership and management	3	-	3	3	3	-
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2					
C2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	4					
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	4					
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2					
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2					
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3					
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3					

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