

# Telford College of Arts and Technology

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130796

**Name of lead inspector:** Shaun Dillon HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 28 May 2010

**Type of provider:** General Further Education College

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## Information about the provider

1. Telford College of Arts and Technology is the only large general further education college in the Telford and Wrekin area. It operates from a single campus in Wellington in the new town of Telford but provides much of its provision in the community and on employers' premises. Most of the provision is vocational education and training. The college mission is "Where great futures begin and every learner matters".
2. The college has provision in 14 subject areas, the largest of which are health, public services and care, engineering and manufacturing technologies and preparation for life and work. The Train to Gain provision is very large. In addition, the college provides training to more than 600 unemployed people. It has much provision in the community, including work in areas of the town where the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is above the national average. Approximately 25% of college funding is from the Young Peoples Learning Agency and 56% from the Skills Funding Agency.
3. Most students, with the exception of those on the Train to Gain programmes, are from Telford. A substantial proportion is from wards ranked in the top 10% of multiple deprivation. Approximately 80% is from a White background and students from Pakistani and Indian backgrounds form the largest minority ethnic groups. The proportion of female students is slightly greater than that of males. In Telford & Wrekin, the proportion of young people who gain five or more GCSE A\*-C grades including English and mathematics has improved markedly but is well below the West Midlands and national averages.
4. Inspectors collected evidence from most parts of the college and inspected four subject areas in depth: learner responsive provision in health, social care and early years and in literacy, numeracy, key skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); learner and employer responsive provision in business management and administration and in engineering and manufacturing technologies. The principal has been in post since September 2009, having previously been vice principal.
5. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - University of Wolverhampton

| Type of provision                                | Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10             |
|--|--|
| <b>Provision for young learners:</b><br>14 to 16 | 546 part-time learners                             |
| Further education (16 to 18)                     | 1,480 full-time learners<br>562 part-time learners |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Foundation learning, including<br>Entry to Employment           | 474 full-time learners<br>98 part-time learners    |
| <b>Provision for adult learners:</b><br>Further education (19+) | 290 full-time learners<br>5,242 part-time learners |
| <b>Employer provision:</b><br>Train to Gain<br>Apprenticeships  | 15,551 learners<br>283 apprentices                 |

## Summary report

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

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b> | <b>Grade 2</b> |
|---|----------------|

|                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Capacity to improve</b> | <b>Grade 2</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------|

|                           | <b>Grade</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Outcomes for learners     | 2            |
| Quality of provision      | 2            |
| Leadership and management | 2            |
| Safeguarding              | 1            |
| Equality and diversity    | 2            |

| <b>Subject Areas</b>   |   |
|--|---|
| Health, social care and early years  | 2 |
| Engineering  | 1 |
| Skills for life, key skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) | 1 |
| Business management and administration   | 2 |

## Overall effectiveness

6. Telford college of Arts and Technology is a good college with outstanding features. Its capacity to improve is good. Most students enjoy college life. A high proportion progresses and achieves well, especially at foundation and intermediate levels. Students at advanced level, however, make satisfactory progress. Most students produce work of a high standard but few achieve high grades. Many students make significant developments as good citizens. They learn how to be safe and healthy and they work hard to fund charities and help their local communities.
7. Most students enjoy their lessons, especially when they learn through interesting activities which challenge them. In other lessons, they lose interest, particularly if the work is too hard or too easy. Most students receive good guidance on how to improve their assignments. Many students have clear individualised targets that help them to progress; others have vague targets which could apply to anyone and do not know how best to improve. Students

can choose from an outstanding range of courses at many levels and in many locations, including community venues and employers' premises. Students benefit greatly from the outstanding partnerships that the college has with a very wide range of organisations, particularly employers. They receive good advice and support to help them with their personal and course concerns.

8. Governors, leaders and managers demonstrate good planning and management skills that ensure that most students have a very good experience at the college. They do much to ensure the safety of students. They promote equality and diversity very effectively in most aspects of the college's work but occasionally staff miss opportunities to reinforce best practice. Managers have focused significantly on their Train to Gain provision, which is very large and is outstanding. They are working to increase the quality of their college-based provision to the same high standards, by improving their self-assessment and quality improvement processes.

## Main findings

- Success rates on foundation level provision and for students aged 16 to 18 on intermediate level courses are high. Advanced level students, however, achieve satisfactory success rates and make satisfactory progress compared with their prior attainment. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes are high. Very large numbers of learners on Train to Gain programmes attain outstanding success rates.
- The success rates of different groups of students are similar, except for male students aged 16 to 18 and adult students from certain Asian and Black backgrounds who are less successful than their peers.
- Students gain a wide range of skills that prepare them very well for their future. They feel extremely safe in college and know how to live healthily. Most make a good contribution to the vibrant life of the college and their communities.
- Staff use initial and diagnostic assessment outcomes very effectively and promptly to ensure students are on appropriate courses and to identify their additional learning needs in literacy and numeracy. They use effective measures in tutorials to meet individual students' needs, including excellent support for the many students who obtain Skills for Life qualifications.
- Teaching and learning are good. Training and assessment on the large Train to Gain provision are very good. Staff plan most teaching and assessment activities well so that they include a wide variety of learning opportunities. Not all lessons, however, meet the needs of students with different abilities. Most teachers exhibit high levels of specialist knowledge and experience.
- The assessment of skills and coursework, through a range of methods, is good for college-based students and very good for workplace trainees. Teachers and trainers make much good use of questioning to check learning has occurred. Teachers mark written work accurately and return it promptly. Their detailed and constructive feedback enables students to improve their understanding.

- The breadth of the curriculum is outstanding and staff are particularly responsive to employers' and students' needs. Most students benefit from participating in enrichment activities. The college's partnerships promote social inclusion and business enterprise in innovative ways.
- Guidance and support are good. Personal support is particularly effective. The links with external welfare agencies are strong. The tutorial programme is comprehensive and information, advice and guidance are effective. Additional learning support is good. Retention and attendance, however, are satisfactory.
- Leadership and management of the Train to Gain provision are outstanding. Self-assessment and quality assurance arrangements are highly effective and lead to improvement. The management and coordination of training and assessment are models of exemplary practice.
- Leadership and management of college-based provision are good. Highly effective leadership and good strategic planning focus clearly on improving provision. Governance is good and financial management is outstanding. Self-assessment and quality assurance arrangements, however, are not fully effective. Managers have improved the accuracy of data returns significantly and they continue to do so.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers monitor the success rates of different groups of students and they have implemented a single equalities scheme. Staff promote equality and diversity well in most subject areas but this is less effective in other areas.
- Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Staff training is extensive and links with external agencies are excellent. Procedures for recruiting and vetting staff are robust and exceed essential requirements. Health and safety monitoring arrangements are comprehensive. Security staff are courteous and provide a reassuring presence around college.

### **What does Telford College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?**

- Increase students' success rates and their progress on advanced level courses by ensuring that students have the potential to succeed at this level and receive the academic support and challenge they need.
- Ensure that all students attain at high levels by determining the causes of any consistent underperformance by any group of students and by taking action to resolve these concerns.
- Increase retention and attendance rates by the consistent use of strategies to track those students at risk of withdrawal.
- Ensure the completion of college data returns is in accordance with current guidance so that managers use data as reliable measures of performance to aid self-assessment and improvement planning.
- Implement the developing improvements to the quality assurance arrangements, including the revised self-assessment process, to enable the

comprehensive and robust evaluation and improvement of all aspects of provision.

- Review the training and guidance to teachers and lesson observers to ensure that the awareness of cultural and linguistic diversities becomes an embedded feature of teaching, training and assessment. Clarify the awareness of the differences between equal opportunity, inclusiveness and diversity.

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

#### **What students like:**

- the very good facilities which help learning
- feeling very safe in a friendly and secure environment
- all the support received from all staff
- being treated the same as everyone else
- having childcare provision to give freedom to study
- being treated as an adult not a child
- tutorials which really keep them on track
- the wide choice of courses at different levels and in different areas.

#### **What students would like to see improved:**

- the car parking space and long waits to leave the car park at busy times
- too few social areas
- long queues in the refectory at break and lunch times
- the high cost of the food
- people smoking on site.

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

#### **What employers like:**

- the very flexible nature of the training which meets their needs
- improvements in the skills and value of their employees
- the very wide choice of training available on and off their premises
- high quality training and assessment as and when required by employees
- the bespoke training arranged to match their specific companies' needs
- very well managed training programmes
- frequent contact with employees and monitoring of their progress.

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

- initial guidance to ensure employees are on the right level and type of course for their roles.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

9. The college has a good capacity to improve. The recently appointed principal provides secure leadership and has a clear vision for the future direction of the college. She has the confidence of staff and has formed extremely positive working relationships with an impressive range of key external partners. In recent years, governors and managers have concentrated on growing the extremely successful Train to Gain portfolio. They now realise the need to refocus attention on improving the college-based provision. Managers have recently strengthened the quality assurance arrangements and improvements are evident, but it is too early to judge their full impact. Managers have also revised the arrangements for self-assessment because the current process for college-based provision is insufficiently self-critical and contains over optimistic judgements. Self-assessment and quality assurance arrangements for Train to Gain courses are highly effective and this area has an outstanding capacity to sustain excellent performance.
10. Managers have addressed all the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They are developing a better use of target setting within the college. Senior managers are becoming more effective in holding to account middle managers for their areas of responsibility. The college has the necessary financial and staffing resources to implement planned improvement measures and to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for college-based students.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

11. According to college data for 2008/09, students' attainments on long courses are high at foundation level and for students aged 16 to 18 at intermediate level. At advanced level, however, and for adults on intermediate courses, success rates are close to the national averages. Students aged 16 to 18 succeed well on short courses, but poorly on very short courses. Retention rates on most courses are close to national averages, but in-year retention rates are higher than at the same time last year. Most pass rates are at or above national averages. Success rates for students aged 14 to 16 are high, but not all have increased during the last three years. Students on advanced level courses make satisfactory progress compared with their attainment on entry but those on foundation and intermediate level courses make good progress. The proportion of high grades achieved by students is low. The standard of students' work is good.
12. Students receiving additional learning support succeed better than those not receiving help. Female students aged 16 to 18 are significantly more successful than male students of the same age. Adult students from certain Asian and Black backgrounds succeed less well than students from other backgrounds, whereas students aged 16 to 18 from different backgrounds have similar

success rates. The relatively few students with physical and mental health disabilities succeed less well than other students with disabilities and no declared disability.

13. Key skills success rates are high for the large numbers of students taking them at intermediate level, but are low for the small numbers taking them at foundation and advanced levels. Apprentices and advanced apprentices are very successful and most of them complete their courses within the time allotted. The very large numbers of learners on Train to Gain courses attain extremely high success rates and nearly all make excellent progress and complete their programmes within the expected time.
14. Students' progression within the college is good, whereas progression from the college to higher education or employment is satisfactory. Students' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. They enjoy their work and college life greatly and feel exceptionally safe in their learning environment. The development of their economic and social well being is good. Students receive much good information and advice about health and well being but smoking is permitted in designated locations on the campus. Students make a good contribution to college life and to their local community and are involved in charitable fund-raising. The promotion of community cohesion is very good. Sustainability practices focus on recycling and reducing consumption, but are at an early stage.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

15. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Training and assessment are very good on the large number of Train to Gain programmes. Staff plan most teaching and assessment activities very effectively so that they include a wide variety of learning opportunities. These engage and interest students and support their good progress. A minority of lesson objectives, however, is imprecise about expected learning outcomes. Most teachers have high levels of specialist knowledge and experience. The development of students' employment skills is very good. On most programmes, the facilities and realistic work environments to aid learning are of high quality. In a minority of lessons, the discussion of contemporary issues is limited. Most lessons involve students well and engage them in stimulating learning activities. A few lessons, however, do not meet the needs of students of lower abilities. The use of information communication technology to aid learning is widespread, but teachers rarely make full use of the well-developed interactive resources. In a small number of lessons, teachers miss opportunities to challenge the more able students, despite having identified demanding learning tasks in lesson plans.
16. The focus on equality, inclusiveness and diversity is strong. This is clear from college strategies, the wide and inclusive range of provision and in the actions taken to remove barriers to learning. Staff receive extensive development on this aspect through induction, initial training and continuing professional development. Their imaginative course planning contains good examples of

diversity matters. In most lessons, however, teachers miss opportunities to promote awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity. Lesson observers receive insufficient training on this aspect. In most internal lesson observations, outcomes, judgements and grading are accurate. In a small minority, however, observations focus too much on teachers instead of students and their learning and judgements are optimistic.

17. The very effective and prompt use by staff of the outcomes from initial and diagnostic assessments ensures students are on appropriate courses and identifies their additional learning needs in literacy and numeracy. Tutors use effective measures in tutorials to meet individual students' needs, including excellent support for the many students obtain Skills for Life qualifications.
18. The assessment of students' skills and coursework through a variety of methods is good for college-based provision. It is highly effective for workplace trainees. Teachers make much good use of questioning to check learning has occurred in lessons. Trainers use very effective one-to-one questioning to ensure apprentices and Train to Gain learners have understood new concepts and gained new skills. Teachers mark written work accurately and return it promptly. Detailed and constructive feedback enables students to improve their understanding. Target setting is generally good. In most subject areas, teachers set clear and appropriate targets and use them well to monitor and improve performance. In a minority of subject areas, however, their targets lack clarity and precision and are insufficiently challenging. Most individual learning plans help students to progress.
19. The college meets the needs of its students and employers outstandingly well. It provides an exceedingly broad range of courses from foundation to advanced level. These include a very extensive range of Train to Gain provision, a smaller but growing apprenticeship programme and courses for students aged 14 to 16. The curriculum offer is highly responsive to the needs of under-represented groups. The college has many successful projects that meet the specific needs of young people who are not in employment, education or training. Its offer is extremely flexible and covers a full range of provision, including training on employers' premises at all times. Excellent cross-college and curriculum enrichment adds richness and variety to students' learning experiences and broadens their horizons. Students' participation is high, but few female students participate in sports enrichment activities.
20. The college has outstanding, well-established and extensive partnership arrangements. These include collaborative work with many local and regional bodies and contracts with national organisations to provide training for thousands of employees. The college also has a range of partnerships to promote enterprise with local businesses. For example, a joint initiative with a local hotel allows students to run a full commercial beauty salon that benefits students and the partner alike. The college is very proactive in consulting with employers. It has excellent systems to monitor and measure the impact of its training on business productivity and success. The college has particularly effective initiatives to promote social inclusion and widen participation. It is

involved in a substantial number of innovative and sustainable regeneration and health promotion projects. These engage and empower local people.

21. Support, care and guidance are good. Students receive high levels of personal support through the growing counselling, mentoring and 'befriending' services. The college has very good links with a range of relevant welfare agencies that support students to attend courses. The well-planned and comprehensive tutorial programme has a good breadth of topics that introduce and reinforce aspects of citizenship well. Tutors involve external speakers to good effect. They receive appropriate training and support from the student services team to fulfil their role effectively. Good information, advice, and guidance ensure that most students enrol on the correct course. Additional learning support is good. Effective communication with local schools ensures students receive support early in their programme. Students with specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, autism and Aspergers syndrome receive good support. Train to Gain learners receive very good support. Retention rates for students in receipt of personal and additional learning support are high. The retention and attendance of most students, however, are satisfactory. The college is taking measures to resolve both of these concerns, but it is too early to assess their impact.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

22. Senior leaders and managers have developed a positive and supportive culture successfully. It now focuses clearly on raising aspirations and improving the quality of provision and outcomes for students. Well-considered mission and strategic priorities align closely with local, regional and national priorities. Under the leadership of the recently appointed principal, the college has identified correctly the need to refocus attention on improving the education and training for students attending college-based courses, so that they achieve as well as learners do on Train to Gain programmes.
23. Governors provide dedicated and enthusiastic support and monitor finances particularly well. They have a wide range of experience and expertise and have excellent business and community contacts. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and provide a high level of challenge. They hold managers to account for the colleges overall performance effectively, although they have paid insufficient attention to monitoring the performance of college-based provision.
24. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. They are comprehensive and robust. Managers use recruitment procedures rigorously to complete appropriate checks on all staff. They carry out enhanced criminal record bureau checks every three years. Safeguarding has a high priority and all staff receive basic awareness training with many receiving more advanced training. All staff, students and visitors to the college must wear identification cards that high profile, sensitive and courteous security staff check carefully. This provides a reassuring presence around the campus. Arrangements for ensuring the health

and safety of students are secure and comprehensive risk assessments are in place. Staff promote safeguarding arrangements to students very effectively. Students demonstrate a very high level of awareness and understanding of safeguarding matters.

25. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college has been successful in increasing participation by students from minority ethnic backgrounds and by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Managers have completed equality and diversity impact assessments and have produced appropriate action plans. In most cases, however, the targets and deadlines to improve or promote equality and diversity lack specificity. Most students have a good understanding of equality and diversity issues. Staff in certain subject areas promote equality and diversity well through the very good initiatives of the enrichment and tutorial programmes. The promotion, however, in other subject areas is less effective. Students in these areas and apprentices do not have a well-developed understanding of equality and diversity. Students with restricted mobility can access all the accommodation and facilities.
26. Leadership and management are outstanding for Train-to Gain provision. Employer engagement to support and promote improvement is excellent. Staff meet with employers frequently to discuss training and assessment requirements and to engage them in the design of training packages to meet their individual needs. Employers review and evaluate the performance of the college and contribute to improvements in its provision. The engagement with college-based students and other community partners to support and promote improvement is less well developed. Detailed arrangements enable students to be involved in decision-making processes, but managers do not apply these fully or effectively in all subject areas.
27. Quality assurance processes, including self-assessment, for Train to Gain programmes are highly effective and improve provision. They have not been as effective for college-based provision. Managers recognise that success rate data for the years 2006/07 and 2007/08 are unreliable. In particular, they accept that retention figures for these years are too high. They have taken steps to improve the integrity of data for 2008/09, although concerns remain about the late entry of students on some qualification aims, which has the potential to inflate success rates. Recently, managers have improved the management and use of data and have strengthened quality assurance procedures significantly. These are having a positive impact in improving the quality of provision and outcomes for college-based students.
28. The use of resources to secure value for money is good. It is outstanding for employer-focused provision. Success rates are high on foundation level and intermediate level college-based courses and are exceptionally high on Train to Gain courses. Financial management and control are outstanding. The college monitors expenditure closely and uses available funds to improve accommodation and resources for learning. The commercial development unit's procurement process is an excellent example of best value purchasing practice.

The monitoring of staff and the use of resources for college-based provision, however, are not as developed.

## Subject areas

### Health, social care and early years

Grade 2

#### Context

29. Approximately 480 students are on health and social care and early years courses from foundation to advanced levels. Nearly 400 students are aged 16 to 18 and the remainder are aged 14 to 16. Most students are on health and social care courses. Most students are female. Approximately 12% are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

#### Key findings

- Success rates on most courses are high. Retention rates are close to the national averages, but retention on the advanced childcare course is high. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory, but few classes in the 12 weeks prior to inspection had full attendance.
- Students' written work is of a good standard and is appropriate to the level of the course. They present work clearly and most students use graphs and statistics effectively to support their judgements. Students submit draft assignments for advice and guidance before their final assessments and this helps them improve the standard of their work.
- Although most students make good progress compared with their prior attainment, others do not make the progress expected of them. The use of systematic measures to monitor students' progress from starting their course is inconsistent. In these cases, targets are insufficiently precise and have unclear deadlines.
- Students develop good personal, social and employability skills. They gain confidence in seeking further learning opportunities and employment. Students feel very safe and valued within the college. Staff seek their views and act on them wherever possible. Health, social care and early years students organise many health promotion events on different topics such as sexual health and drug misuse.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons well and identify students' specific needs carefully. The provision of activities to meet these needs, however, does not always take place. Teachers use a variety of methods and choose interesting vocational topics to aid learning. They make good use of interactive learning technology to reinforce their explanations.
- The range of provision from foundation to advanced levels is good. Opportunities for progression to higher-level courses at the college and elsewhere are good. Students are enthusiastic about the enrichment activities that broaden their social and leisure learning. They attend a residential outward-bound activity centre and visit a wide range of relevant organisations to broaden their experience.

- The college works effectively with the local NHS Primary Care Trust and is involved with an initiative to promote cross agency working within health and social care. The partnership with local schools supports the successful courses for students aged 14 to 16. The range of work placements in health, social care and early years is wide.
- Care, guidance and support for students are good. A wide range of college services provides mentoring and counselling support, particularly for the more vulnerable students. Weekly group tutorials contain varied events and visiting speakers that add good value to the students' experience. Individual tutorials offer good academic support to assist students' achievement.
- Leadership and management are good. The head of school and programme managers use monthly meetings to consider success and retention rates in detail. They also discuss and act on causes for concern regarding curriculum and students. Staff morale is high and team working is good. Staff provide a respectful and professional learning environment for their students.
- Safeguarding has a very high priority. Teachers and students discuss safeguarding issues at induction and then reinforce them through tutorials. They relate well to students' current situations and their expected future role as an employee. College security is highly effective. Students value and have confidence in the safety of the college environment.
- Staff promote equality and diversity well. Teachers are highly effective at integrating equality and diversity into the content of lessons. They use learning activities and materials carefully to ensure students have a broad and unbiased view of different cultures. Staff encourage respectful behaviour very effectively. Students are sensitive to religious and cultural differences.

### **What does Telford College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?**

- Monitor students' progress more rigorously by agreeing precise targets for the standard of their work and setting clear deadlines for completion. Compare students' progress with their prior attainment to ensure they are on course to achieve their expected outcomes.
- Use different learning processes so that students of all abilities can engage in challenging and interesting activities that raise their expectations and enable good progress.

## Engineering

## Grade 1

### Context

30. The range of programmes at college and on employer's premises is from foundation to advanced levels. Included in just over 5,000 enrolments are 556 students on college-based programmes, of whom 468 are aged 16 to 18 and 88 are adults. Nearly half are full-time students. Of the students on employer-based programmes, 62 are on apprenticeship programmes and the rest are on Train to Gain programmes. Approximately one fifth of the students is female and 680 students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

### Key findings

- Success rates are very high. Most success rates on college courses are outstanding. Apprentice and advanced apprenticeship success rates have increased over the last three years and are high. Train to Gain success rates are outstanding and have been so for three years. Young Apprenticeship success rates are very high.
- Students develop good practical skills. They develop their trade skills to industry standards. Most students benefit from individual development plans that provide planned learning experiences for the different skill areas. Students value the acquisition of the practical skills which enable them to achieve their full potential.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies to engage students. In a few lessons, they make excellent use of information and learning technologies to aid learning. They make good references to practical applications to reinforce theory. Occasionally, theory lessons are less effective than practical lessons because they lack variety and pace.
- Teachers plan frequent assessments well. Assessment in the workplace is very effective and uses a wide range of methods which maximise opportunities for gathering evidence. Portfolio evidence is of a high standard. Internal verification of assessment is thorough. Monitoring of students' progress is particularly strong in college and in the workplace.
- Resources to support learning are outstanding. Students benefit from using high technology specialist equipment in a very modern manufacturing facility. Resources in the 'Auto Academy' and electrical areas are very good. Teaching rooms are well equipped with modern electronic presentation equipment and specialist electronic learning materials are available in all areas. These reinforce students' understanding of their specialist technologies.
- The college has a very wide range of provision to meet students' and employers' needs. Young students on taster days, school link students and Young Apprentices benefit from experiencing the modern manufacturing environment. Apprenticeships are available in many specialisms. The college

offers a very large and successful provision on employers' premises across a wide range of engineering and manufacturing skill areas.

- The college's responsiveness to employers' needs is outstanding. It has links with a wide variety of local and national engineering and manufacturing companies and other local training providers. Young Apprentices gain from having very effective work experience with these companies. Students benefit by using current industrial power tools and measuring equipment provided through sponsorship from local companies.
- Support for students at college and in the workplace is outstanding. Teachers have detailed knowledge of students' needs and teach accordingly. Dedicated support staff assist students who have additional learning needs very well. Success rates for these students are at least as good as their peers. Support for students on employers' premises is excellent.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Communication is excellent. Data management is very good; staff are aware of performance indicators and work very effectively to improve provision. Teachers are appropriately qualified and benefit from good and relevant staff development. Accurate self-assessment involves all staff. Systems to monitor training on employers' premises are excellent.
- The promotion of equality and diversity and health and safety is good for college-based students. Staff check students' understanding of equality and diversity and health and safety at workplace reviews frequently. These reviews, however, follow a checklist and do not help to develop students' understanding of health and safety or diversity.

### **What does Telford College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?**

- Share the outstanding teaching and learning practice in a minority of theory lessons and in most practical lessons more effectively with all teachers so that the variety and pace of theory lessons improve.
- Plan and implement apprenticeship workplace reviews more rigorously, so that they develop apprentices' knowledge and understanding of health and safety and diversity.

## Literacy, numeracy, key skills and English for speakers of other languages

Grade 1

### Context

31. The college provides literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses from pre-entry level to intermediate level at the main campus, in community venues and in the workplace. Courses run in the day, evening and at weekends. Nearly 1,700 students are on literacy and/or numeracy courses and 393 on ESOL provision. All study part-time, 843 are male and 1,508 are adults. Nearly a quarter of the students is from a minority ethnic background. Approximately 700 students follow courses in key skills.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for students are outstanding. Success rates are very high on all Skills for Life courses. Most key skills students are at intermediate level and their success rates are high. Success rates for the few key skills students at foundation and advanced level are low. Students produce extremely high standards of work and become able to work independently.
- Students progress very well with their learning. Most move on to higher levels of study or to vocational courses and exceed their own expectations. Those with low levels of confidence and self-esteem improve their ability to socialise very well through good group work and highly supportive learning environments. Attending a course is, for certain students, a life-changing experience.
- Students feel safe. Many are vulnerable, but their learning environments are very supportive. Guest speakers provide them with an increased understanding of safe practices. For example, the police visit all community venues and provide information on neighbourhood safety. Formal checks on the understanding of safety by students of lower ability, however, do not take place routinely.
- Teaching and assessment are outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of their students and challenge them very well to succeed. They use high quality assessment tools, linked to vocational areas, to diagnose students' needs and to plan learning. The pace and variety of lesson activities are very good. In drop-in sessions, teachers provide very good feedback and support.
- Teachers give very clear guidance to students through very well planned targets linked to specific paper-based and computer-based resources. Students and staff use individual learning plans very well to plan for, monitor and record learning. In a few ESOL community classes, the level of written English is too difficult for entry-level students to understand.
- The provision is highly flexible and meets students' needs very well. Lessons take place at a very large number of venues and at a variety of times. Most lessons take place in response to students' demand. Staff work very effectively

to engage hard-to-reach groups. All students follow an individual programme of study matched to their specific needs.

- The college's outstanding partnerships with a large number of organisations benefit students. Excellent work with the library service provides books for community venues which encourage reluctant readers. Very good links with local councils, support groups, schools, places of worship and community groups attract hard-to-reach students. A class for deaf students resulted from contact with a community group.
- Support for students is outstanding. Staff have a very good understanding of their students' learning, social and health needs and respond sensitively. They refer students to support agencies or accompany them where appropriate. Staff use reviews and tutorials very effectively to monitor and plan students' learning. Current retention rates are very high.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. A culture of continuous improvement is evident throughout the provision. Staff have addressed all areas for improvement resulting from internal lesson observations. Regular quality checks are highly effective and ensure students receive a consistently high standard of teaching and learning. Managers are involved in national improvement initiatives that benefit students.
- Staff and students celebrate equality and diversity well. Students bring in regional and cultural foods and share them with others. They become more accepting of differences through supportive group working with others from a very wide mix of cultures, faiths, educational and linguistic backgrounds. Managers analyse data effectively and address differences in achievement between different groups of students.

### **What does Telford College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?**

- Share the best Skills for Life teaching, learning and assessment practices widely so that students on foundation and advanced key skills courses progress well and succeed at higher rates.
- In order to engage students fully, ensure that the level of written language used with entry level ESOL students is appropriate to their understanding and meets their needs, including checking their understanding of safeguarding.

## Business management and administration

## Grade 2

### Context

32. The college provides full-time courses in business administration and business studies and part-time courses in accounting and finance, customer service, administration, management and professional studies. Students study in college, or off-site on apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. Programmes are available from foundation to advanced levels. Nearly 70 students are on full-time and 400 on part-time programmes, of whom 123 are aged 16 to 18. Nearly 80 apprentices and advanced apprentices and 325 Train to Gain learners study business administration. About one fifth of the students is from a minority ethnic background.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates are high on most college-based courses and on apprenticeship programmes. They are outstanding on Train to Gain courses. Success rates are low on advanced level management courses.
- Students develop good academic, administrative and professional skills that enable them to produce high quality work. These skills help them to progress at work. Students develop good personal and social skills that build their confidence and help them work well with others.
- Students feel safe and secure. They know how to report their concerns. Staff promote health and safety matters at induction, through the college curriculum and during assessments and reviews in the workplace. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons carefully and manage learning very effectively. The pace of most lessons is brisk and students engage in purposeful activities. Most teachers introduce tasks effectively to match their students' abilities. They use information learning technology well to aid learning. Links between theory and current business and management practice are satisfactory. Attendance is low.
- Assessment practice is good. Teachers' detailed and constructive feedback improves and develops students' understanding and skills. Assessment in the workplace is thorough and helpful to both students and employers. Checking of understanding in lessons is good. Teachers review aims and objectives routinely at the start and end of lessons.
- The monitoring of students' progress compared with their individual targets is satisfactory. Students' individual action plans contain their own goals and targets and which they review with teachers. Targets often lack clarity, precision and sufficient challenge to aid students' progress. The monitoring of the progress of apprentices and Train to Gain learners is good.
- The range of provision is good and it meets most students' and employers' needs, but full-time foundation and intermediate level business studies

programmes are not available. The college has strong partnerships with public and private sector organisations that help to develop wider opportunities for students, such as the training to provide long term unemployed people with business administration skills.

- Support for students is good. Information, advice and guidance staff are helpful and enable students to choose the most appropriate programme. Induction is thorough. Tutorials are effective. Staff identify and provide good additional support and specialist help for students. Teachers and assessors are approachable and they help students with a wide range of personal and academic issues.
- Curriculum management is good. Managers have high expectations and share their culture of improvement with staff. Morale is good and communication is effective. Managers hold frequent and productive meetings and set targets for improvement. They take prompt action to improve poor teaching. The effective use of data to monitor performance and improve provision by course team leaders is inconsistent.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Teachers include equality and diversity themes in tutorials. Lesson plans refer to equality and diversity themes, but in many lessons teachers miss opportunities to develop them in depth. In a few lessons, however, the integrated promotion of equality and diversity is excellent.
- Managers use a wide variety of quality assurance measures, including students' and employers' feedback, to check progress and to set targets. These are effective in consolidating strengths and setting targets for improvements. The self-assessment report, however, is too descriptive.

### **What does Telford College of Arts and Technology need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that teachers refer to examples of current business developments more often in lessons so that students understand better the connections between theory and practice.
- Embed the promotion of equality and diversity more fully in assignments and lessons so that students develop a greater awareness of a variety of cultural backgrounds, practices and influences.
- Ensure that students have more precise and exacting individual targets in their action plans so that they have greater challenge and are clearer about what they need to do to improve.

## Information about the inspection

33. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's director of student services 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 Skills Funding Agency, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
34. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires that students and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed lessons, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in many of the subject areas the college offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Telford College of Arts and Technology**  
**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 <b>using the 4 point scale</b><br>1: Outstanding; 2: Good;<br>3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate                              | Overall  | 14-16    | 16-18<br>Learner<br>responsive | 19+<br>Learner<br>responsive | Employer<br>responsive |
|--|----------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>   |          |          |                                |                              |                        |
| Full-time learners   | 1917     | 0        | 1628                           | 21                           | 0                      |
| Part-time learners   | 27,205   | 331      | 827                            | 5,687                        | 16,467                 |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>                       | <b>2</b>                     | <b>1</b>               |
| <b>Capacity to improve</b>   | 2        |          |                                |                              |                        |
| <b>Outcomes for learners</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>                       | <b>3</b>                     | <b>1</b>               |
| 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?   | 1        |          |                                |                              |                        |
| <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>  | 2        |          |                                |                              |                        |
| <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>  | 2        |          |                                |                              |                        |
| <b>Quality of provision</b>  | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>                       | <b>2</b>                     | <b>1</b>               |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?   | 2        |          |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?  | 1        |          |                                |                              |                        |
| How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?                        | 1        |          |                                |                              |                        |
| How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?                                    | 2        |          |                                |                              |                        |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>                       | <b>2</b>                     | <b>1</b>               |
| 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?  | 1        |          |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? | 2        |          |                                |                              |                        |
| 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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