

Telford College of Arts and Technology

General further education college

Inspection dates

6–9 June 2017

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement	Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement	Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Inadequate	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders' and managers' actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not yet resulted in teaching that is consistently good for students and apprentices.
- Teachers do not use effectively information about students' and apprentices' starting points to challenge them appropriately; too many students and apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not develop students' and apprentices' English and mathematics skills well enough in lessons to support their future progression into work.
- Despite fewer students and apprentices leaving their courses before the programme has finished, too many students still do not complete and achieve their qualifications on time.
- Too few students aged 16 to 18 routinely attend planned English and mathematics classes.
- In a minority of vocational lessons, students and apprentices do not receive teaching of a consistently good enough standard to ensure that they make good progress.
- Managers do not analyse the destinations of students sufficiently well, and so are unable to evaluate accurately whether students progress towards their intended career aim.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers have responded quickly to ensure that governors and staff receive timely and accurate information about the attendance and achievement of students, enabling them to secure improvements.
- Teachers promote safeguarding and fundamental British values well; as a result, students feel safe, know how to report their concerns and understand how to protect themselves from the threat of extremism.
- Specialist teachers and support staff design highly effective personalised programmes for students with severe and profound learning difficulties, enabling each individual to make good progress.
- Students and apprentices develop good levels of practical, personal and social skills that prepare them well for the world of work.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT) is a large general further education college serving Telford and Wrekin. It operates from a single campus in Wellington, in Telford. Just over half of the college's provision takes place in the community and on employers' premises.
- Around 8,500 students attend the college; of these, approximately 15% are students aged 16 to 18 who attend on a full-time basis. A further 20% of students are on apprenticeship programmes. The remainder are adult students who mainly attend on part-time and industry-specific courses. About 40% of students aged 16 to 18 join the college without a grade C or above in English or mathematics. Unemployment in Telford is slightly below the national average of 5.2%.
- In June 2016, the Skills Funding Agency issued the college with a 'notice of concern' as a result of an inadequate Ofsted inspection. This assessment is in addition to the previous 'notice of concern' for an inadequate rating for financial control in January 2016.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Consistently ensure that all teachers and assessors use the outcomes of students' and apprentices' initial assessment of their starting points to plan teaching, learning and assessment activities which meet their specific needs and potential, so that they may make the progress of which they are capable.
- Ensure that the individual targets and actions set for students and apprentices, as well as teachers' and assessors' feedback on marked work, are sufficiently detailed and precise, so that they know what they need to do to improve further.
- Develop teachers' practice in challenging and inspiring students and apprentices to ensure that they make consistently good or better progress in lessons and increase their confidence to learn independently to achieve their full potential.
- Increase the range of opportunities for students and apprentices to develop confidently their English and mathematical skills for their chosen careers by making sure that all teachers and assessors pay close attention to promoting high standards in spelling, punctuation and grammar and the skilful use of numeracy in their work.
- Ensure that teachers routinely promote to all students the importance of high attendance at all scheduled English and mathematics sessions.
- Ensure that leaders and managers routinely collect and analyse the destinations of all students and apprentices and compare these with their intended destinations. Investigate where gaps exist and develop suitably challenging actions to ensure that the curriculum matches local and regional needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous full inspection, there has been considerable change in the management of the college. Managers responded well to the recommendations of the inspection team and have steadily increased the pace of improvement. A new principal joined the college in early May. The college continues to experience financial difficulty. Leaders are currently working to secure the merger of the college with its near neighbour, New College Telford, so that they can sustain the quality and breadth of provision.
- Managers have given an honest and accurate view of the college's strengths and weaknesses in their self-assessment report. In January, the management team produced a revised improvement plan, including recommendations from the previous inspection and the emerging areas for improvement. These actions, coupled with revised quality improvement processes, have begun to improve the standards of teaching, learning and assessment. However, these actions have not yet resulted in consistently good teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders have established a clear set of performance targets leading to improvements in, for example, students' attendance, the proportion of students who complete their programmes, and the progress they make towards achieving qualifications. However, despite the substantial gains made, many of the targets, including those for attendance and student retention, will not be achieved in the current year. Additionally, the proportion of adult apprentices and students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 programmes completing their courses remains too low. Managers' attention has not focused sufficiently on the progress made by all students and apprentices in developing their skills and achieving the grades of which they are capable.
- Managers' quality assurance of teaching, learning and assessment is robust. Records of observation are evaluative and clearly identify teachers' strengths and areas for improvement. Underperforming teachers receive an improvement plan and appropriate professional development. As a result, a number of teachers have improved the quality of their work. However, where an observer judges a lesson to be good enough, but with areas for improvement, managers do not take action to help teachers develop their skills further. As a result, the quality of teaching has not improved quickly enough.
- Since July 2016, significant investment in professional development has begun to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Staff value this training. They recognise the benefits of the regular weekly sessions that focus on key priorities such as target-setting, providing assessment feedback and meeting the needs and potential of individual students. However, this activity has yet to secure consistently high-quality teaching, learning and assessment across the college.
- Managers take appropriate action to deal with staff whose performance is not good enough. They have introduced a new performance development review process; with improved access to accurate performance data, managers are able to identify underperforming staff more easily. Since the start of the year, they have taken action over the performance of seven members of staff, all of whom have either improved or left the college.

- Managers have given much greater priority to the development of students' and apprentices' mathematics and English skills. A greater focus on the importance of these skills, an increase in the allocation of time to functional skills lessons, and the professional development of staff have all contributed to the improved progress made by students. However, attendance at English and mathematics lessons remains too low, and vocational teachers do not do enough to help students learn how to apply these skills within their occupational area.
- Curriculum planning is effective. Staff carefully consider the available labour market information, the extent of demand from potential students, the quality of existing provision, and financial viability when developing business plans. This, coupled with their work to align the curriculum with that of New College Telford, is helping to develop a range of courses that matches local needs well. Managers often use their knowledge of local employers to good effect when planning courses, such as those to help prepare adults for work with local firms. However, this is not consistently the case, and as a result, they do not always plan programmes that closely meet employers' specific needs.
- Managers have taken very effective steps to improve the quality and availability of data about students and apprentices. They have extended the use of online individual learning plans and developed an excellent centralised data dashboard that allows all staff and governors to review in-year student performance data. Staff and governors now have increased levels of confidence in the information available to them, and teachers make increasingly effective use of this information to identify courses and students that require their intervention. This is contributing to improving outcomes for students and apprentices.
- Leaders have ensured that students receive specialist and impartial careers advice. However, managers do not have access to sufficiently detailed information about the destinations of students and apprentices to gauge fully the effectiveness of this guidance, or how effectively learning programmes help students and apprentices progress successfully to their next steps in learning or into employment.
- Managers now place sufficient emphasis on equality and diversity. They have reinstated the equalities committee and developed a set of improvement actions. As a result of careful monitoring and intervention, gaps in the retention of different groups of students have narrowed and teachers frequently integrate current 'hot topics' within their lessons, for example the recent election, voting rights, the living wage, terrorism and freedom of speech.
- Teachers of classroom-based programmes, including those for students who have high needs, develop students' understanding of British values well. They integrate relevant topics in vocational lessons and the tutorial programme includes sessions on appropriate themes. However, assessors do not reinforce apprentices' knowledge of these subjects well enough and most apprentices' understanding remains at only a basic level.

The governance of the provider

- Governance has improved since the previous inspection; governors now know the college well and challenge leaders effectively. Five new members with a range of expertise have joined the board; members have received training in the characteristics of effective teaching, learning and assessment. Access to the recently introduced data dashboard has

enabled them to review in-year performance information across a range of key performance indicators that they now use to hold senior leaders to account. However, governors acknowledge that they need to do more to develop further the culture of high expectations, and to ensure that staff help all students and apprentices to reach their full potential.

- Governors participate in a programme of useful visits to different curriculum areas. These visits enable them to become more familiar with the work of teachers and other staff, and have allowed them to contribute to improvements. For example, one governor has been able to help staff establish links with local employers, another has been able to share their professional expertise with students, and another has contributed to college marketing programmes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The college has clear and detailed policies, aligned with those of the local authority, that ensure that students and apprentices are safe. These policies take into account the college's responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty.
- Managers ensure that students and apprentices adhere to safe working practices. Teachers and assessors ensure that students and apprentices apply to strict health and safety regulations. For example, all construction and engineering students and apprentices wear appropriate protective clothing in workshops and practical sessions.
- College information technology systems include appropriate processes that block students' access to inappropriate online content. Managers make effective use of monitoring software to deal with occasions when students' online activity gives cause for concern.
- Staff make effective use of an online system for recording safeguarding concerns and the actions taken to address them. This system allows them to share information with a range of partners as appropriate to ensure that students receive the support that they need.
- Managers follow safer recruitment practices effectively. The single central register of staff is accurate and up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good. Too few teachers use the information about students' and apprentices' starting points to develop learning activities that enable students and apprentices to excel.
- Too often teachers plan learning activities that are delivered at the same level and pace for all students, regardless of ability. As a result, some students and apprentices lose interest and motivation because tasks are not challenging enough, while others are not given sufficient time for reflection and consolidation of their learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers ask whole-group questions to which the same students or apprentices respond. Therefore teachers are not consistently aware of how much learning has taken place.
- The quality of written feedback is not yet consistently good enough to enable all students and apprentices to make swift and secure improvements in their learning and skills

development. The majority of teachers and assessors do not routinely provide detailed and informative feedback that challenges students to achieve high grades, or to develop their technical skills and vocational knowledge at a sufficient pace. However, in a minority of areas such as health and social care and early years education, teachers and assessors do provide helpful and detailed feedback that enables students and apprentices to make good progress.

- Teachers and assessors do not set sufficiently specific and challenging targets for students and apprentices to help them to develop quickly the skills and knowledge needed for them to achieve in the planned time. Too many short-term targets set by teachers and assessors relate to the achievement of grades and tasks rather than focusing on the skills to be acquired and developed. However, students with high needs benefit from precise and challenging individualised learning targets that enable these students to progress and achieve well.
- The teaching of English and mathematics requires improvement. Students refer to improving skills in their essay writing, comparing and contrasting complex documents; students in mathematics develop their understanding of algebra and shape. However, this skills development is not consistent across all curriculum areas. The quality of teaching of English and mathematics is not consistently good as too few teachers are skilled in integrating the development of learners' English and mathematics skills in their lessons, so that students can apply skills in a vocational context. Additionally, for a minority of mathematics students, periods of extended staff absence have disrupted their learning and hindered their progress.
- In the workplace, assessors do not challenge apprentices sufficiently to improve their verbal communication skills or correct spelling, punctuation and grammar errors sufficiently in their written work, so apprentices continue to make the same mistakes.
- The large majority of teachers and assessors are knowledgeable and skilfully use their vocational expertise well to help students and apprentices prepare for their chosen careers. For example, in motor vehicle and engineering courses, teachers maintain occupational competence by working closely with local employers to ensure that they keep abreast of recent developments in automotive technology and advanced manufacturing. They use this knowledge to help students and apprentices to develop good practical and work-related skills that help them to prepare for employment.
- Students benefit from a wide range of support services, including additional learning support and in-class support, which contribute significantly to helping students to learn and to increase their chances of successfully completing their studies. Progress coaches and teachers work effectively to help students – particularly those identified as being 'at risk' – to stay on programme, improving retention rates and attendance. However, in a small minority of lessons teachers do not deploy learning support assistants appropriately to ensure that students receive the support that they need.
- Teachers develop clear assessment plans and ensure that appropriate assessments are set regularly, marked accurately and recorded centrally. However, the quality of assessment feedback to students and apprentices does not always precisely identify areas where they need to improve or how they can improve their performance. In a small number of programmes, teachers have changed the structure of courses to enable early assessment, leading to quicker formal feedback to students. As a result, students are more motivated to stay on their course.

- In apprenticeships, employers are now more actively involved in the planning and review of their employees' performance within the workplace. As a result of the better planning of on- and off-the-job training by teachers, assessors and employers, an increasing proportion of apprentices are now completing and achieving their apprenticeship on time. Managers, assessors and employers now monitor effectively the progress of apprentices and target those who are making slow progress in their learning.
- Teachers develop students' and apprentices' understanding of diversity well. For example, in a level 3 course in creative media, the teacher adeptly challenged students' understanding of life in modern Britain by looking at how themes such as ethnicity, disability and gender are portrayed in different media. During workplace reviews with their assessors, apprentices confidently describe the importance of following company procedures when challenging and reporting any incidents of discrimination, bullying and harassment that they may witness at work.
- Students and apprentices display high levels of understanding of diversity and respect and value each other's contributions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Students' attendance in lessons is not yet consistently good. Although attendance has improved since the previous inspection, it is still below the college's own expectations in a majority of subject areas. However, the vast majority of students and apprentices arrive on time to lessons, ready to learn, both at the start of the day and throughout the day.
- The large majority of students and apprentices develop positive attitudes to learning and behave well in classes, workshops and salon areas. Students on full-time programmes understand fully the expectations of them regarding their behaviour when in college and while out on work placement. However, in a small minority of lessons, students engage in low-level disruptive behaviour that affects the learning for others; staff do not always challenge this behaviour effectively.
- Students' and apprentices' work is of an appropriate standard for their level of study, and practical work meets the standards required by employers and of awarding organisations.
- The large majority of students aged 16 to 18 on study programmes benefit from appropriate external work experience. Student participation rates have increased significantly from a very low number in the previous academic year. Students now consolidate and further develop the skills they learn at college while out on placement, such as timekeeping, teamwork and communication. For example, a number of public service students have spent a week with the Royal Marines on a residential placement, learning about careers within the military; students in carpentry and joinery gained useful onsite vocational experience by participating in a television programme to construct suitable accommodation for a disabled child. Where students cannot access external work experience, the college organises suitable internal placements that provide realistic working environments such as the college 'pop-up shop'.
- Students receive extensive advice and guidance that help them to enrol on courses that match their abilities and career aspirations. Most students receive appropriate ongoing advice and guidance from college staff and a partner organisation that help them to plan for their next steps in learning or employment. Access to higher education students

receive extensive support in how to complete their applications for university and suitable tailored guidance regarding their progression options. As a result, most students have been able to plan for their next steps in learning or employment.

- Students at risk of leaving the college early because of poor attendance, poor punctuality or with personal issues receive particularly effective support from progress coaches, who work very closely with teachers and assessors. This includes arranging bus passes, facilitating bursaries and financial support, and supporting students with examinations, job interviews and work placements. Students value greatly the personalised support that helps them to continue attending college.
- Adult learners and students aged 16 to 18 participate in a wide range of enrichment activities that help them to develop work-related, personal and social skills. For example, students in hairdressing and beauty therapy attended a creative event hosted by a major retailer. Other students participated in a range of charity fundraising events. Engineering and motor vehicle students took part in an event linked to promoting careers in advanced engineering through learning about a vehicle designed to break the world land-speed record.
- Students and apprentices feel safe in the college and the workplace. They know whom to speak to if they have a concern, including accessing specialist support on such matters as sexual health. Most students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of contexts, including online and when using social media. Students and apprentices have a basic understanding of radicalisation and the dangers associated by others who hold or promote extremist views. Staff closely monitor and are vigilant to any changes in students' behaviours that may indicate that they are 'at risk'. Students with high needs benefit from good levels of reinforcement on the 'Prevent' duty and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation, delivered in cooperation with parents and carers.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The proportion of students and apprentices who successfully achieve their qualifications has declined significantly over the last three years, and was low in 2015/16. Leaders and managers correctly identified that too many students were leaving the college without achieving their qualification. They quickly implemented a range of strategies to rectify this situation; as a result, the number of students and apprentices who now remain on their course and who are on target on to successfully complete their qualification is starting to show signs of improvement.
- Most students and apprentices do not develop their vocational skills and knowledge quickly enough and therefore do not make sufficient progress or achieve in line with their identified potential, particularly the most able. However, students with high needs make good progress from their starting points and achieve appropriately challenging qualifications.
- Too few students successfully achieve their qualifications in English or mathematics. In 2015/16, only one in 10 students achieved grades A* to C in GCSE English; in contrast students' achievement of GCSE mathematics at A* to C grades was in line with the low national rate. In-year college data indicates that, as a result of the actions taken by leaders and managers, an increasing proportion of students are now making good

progress towards successfully completing their GCSE and functional skills qualifications in both English and mathematics.

- Too few apprentices complete their courses within the allocated time. Although most apprentices achieve their vocational qualification, only around one in three achieves their functional skills English and mathematics qualifications. Managers have recently redesigned the apprenticeship curriculum; this has resulted in a significant increase in the proportion of apprentices aged 16 to 18 who complete their functional skills qualifications; however, too many adult apprentices do not complete or achieve their qualifications on time.
- Based on the college's own data, the proportion of students who progress to the next level of learning was low, particularly between levels 1 and 3. Managers have recently implemented a number of strategies to increase the number of students who intend to continue to study at the college. Data presented by college managers indicates that the large majority of students plan to return to study at the college next year, but it is too early to judge how many learners will re-enrol at the next level of their learning.
- Students and apprentices develop a good range of practical and employability skills and are able to work to the standard and speeds required by employers, preparing them well for future employment. However, the number of students progressing into employment, apprenticeships or higher education is below that of other similar providers.
- Achievement gaps between different groups of students are narrowing over time. However, students aged 16 to 18 who have a disability and/or learning difficulty do not achieve as well as their peers; on adult programmes, male students outperform females. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including children looked after, do not progress as well as their peers.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The college provides programmes of study for 1,078 students aged 16 to 18 from entry level to level 3 in most subject areas. The largest areas are information technology, health and care, public services, service enterprises, construction, and foundation studies.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across different subjects and levels is not consistently good. In too many lessons, students' attendance is too low and below the college target. Too many teachers do not plan learning activities well enough to ensure that all students develop a comprehensive understanding of their subject or make swift progress in their learning. In these lessons, teachers do not always draw upon information about students' achievement to plan learning activities that consistently maintain all students' interest and attention.
- Teachers in the vast majority of vocational areas do not reinforce sufficiently to students the importance of high standards of English or mathematical skills in their lessons. Too few students are aware of how well they are developing English and mathematical skills as part of their vocational learning or how these skills are used in the workplace and other settings. For example, while students use work-specific language confidently during

classroom discussions, teachers do not routinely identify and challenge them to correct misspelled words within written work.

- Teachers' expectations of most students are too low and consequently students do not receive the encouragement to achieve high grades. Feedback is often too narrow, for example in art, IT and sport, feedback to students focuses on the achievement of the next task and does not routinely direct students to the skills and knowledge needed in order to achieve high grades. As a result, too many students do not make the progress expected of them.
- Since the previous inspection, managers have significantly improved the tracking and monitoring of students' progress. Teachers are now able to use this information incisively to monitor closely students at risk of falling behind and ensure that they receive the additional support needed to get them back on track with their studies. As a result, most students in the current year are near to completing their programme.
- Most students complete well-planned and purposeful work experience. As a result, they demonstrate good subject knowledge and up-to-date industry expertise that prepare them well for the workplace. Teachers reinforce well to students the importance of good employability and social skills through whole-class discussions and in practical workshops and salons; examples include an appropriate attitude for the workplace, and working to time and within a fixed cost.
- Students develop their digital skills well through using a wide range of information technology to support their learning. For example, creative media students develop commercial web-design skills to promote products and invite customer feedback. Consequently, students are more confident to work independently and continue learning outside of lessons, preparing them well for their next steps into further learning or employment.
- Initial assessment of students' skills and attainment on entry ensures that students are placed on the course most suited to their needs, interests and future aspirations, and they receive appropriate support with their learning. Students benefit from impartial careers advice provided by specialist college advisors that helps them to make informed decisions about their future as they approach the end of their course. As a result, most have a secure level of understanding regarding their planned next steps. Staff actively encourage progression to apprenticeships; students have the opportunity to complete a work trial before making their decision.
- Teachers promote safeguarding and fundamental British values well. Consequently, students know how to report concerns and to keep themselves safe from the threat of radicalisation and extremism. For example, motor vehicle maintenance students confidently explained the reasons why they would check for suspicious packages, illegal substances and weapons in customers' vehicles before completing a car service and what they would do should concerns arise.
- Students develop their understanding about the diversity of different groups well through the celebration of festivals and discussion of themes such as tolerance and respect for others within vocational and tutorial lessons. Consequently, they develop a good understanding of the diverse culture of modern Britain. For example, sport studies students participated in a lively and informative discussion evaluating the potential health

and fitness implications for the performance of Muslim athletes who fasted during Ramadan.

- Most students access a broad range of non-accredited enrichment activities that widen their knowledge and help them to prepare for employment. For example, hairdressing and beauty therapy students visit national exhibitions and benefit from regular guest presentations and demonstrations by industry experts that enhance their vocational skills, such as the latest hair attachment techniques for hair extensions to customers' natural hair.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- At the time of inspection, there were 296 full-time and 1,763 part-time adult students, studying across most subject areas. Many courses are based at the college but a very large number of adult students study on part-time programmes that take place in employers' premises across Shropshire and the West Midlands region.
- Attendance is low in many lessons and is below the college's own target. While attendance is often very high on a significant number of employability and work-based courses that take place off-site, low attendance in many lessons delivered at the college has contributed to low achievement. Managers have implemented an appropriate range of measures to address this, but while overall attendance has improved in-year, it is not consistently high and so requires further improvement.
- The quality of teaching and its impact upon learning is not yet consistently good. In too many lessons, teachers do not plan learning well enough to take account of students' individual needs and prior attainment. Consequently, students do not make the progress of which they are capable. For example, in an English foundation lesson, the least able students struggled to understand a review activity of simple words while the teacher did not challenge those most-able, who became bored waiting for the next activity.
- Teachers check students' progress frequently, but the verbal and written feedback that students receive in theory lessons is not sufficiently helpful to support their further improvement. In a minority of lessons, teachers' questions often clarify what students know. However, they are not challenged enough to think carefully and deepen their understanding of the subject. Teachers give good verbal feedback to students on their skills development in practical sessions.
- Students are conscientious and hard-working, and are keen to learn. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects, and students value the support and encouragement that they receive. Students receive good advice and guidance from teachers and other college staff and use the information they provide well to plan for their next steps.
- The majority of students make good progress. They develop good practical, personal and social skills and attitudes that relate well to the requirements of their chosen vocational area. Students are proud of their achievements and feel equipped and ready to apply for jobs, strive for more-demanding positions in employment or progress to higher levels of education. However, too many students do not make the progress expected or successfully complete their course.

- Students develop effective speaking and listening skills in English, enabling them to become confident in group discussions and presentations, or when expressing ideas. They use specialist language competently. However, the quality of students' written work is not consistently of a high enough standard. Teachers do not routinely correct grammatical and spelling errors; as a result, students often repeat the same mistakes. Most students apply mathematics skills well in their vocational and academic settings, including demonstrating good levels of numeracy skills in hairdressing and beauty therapy salons, workshop areas, and in accurately using statistical information to convey meaning as part of allocated research projects.
- Leaders and managers respond quickly and use resources very well to develop courses that meet the needs of the local community and businesses. For example, employers and students can access provision when it best suits their needs as a result of appropriately timetabled provision. Very effective partnership working with Jobcentre Plus has led to the development of tailored provision that helps unemployed students to develop quickly their work-related skills and successfully gain employment, or progress on to further learning and training.
- Students feel safe. They recognise potential dangers to themselves and their colleagues and know what to do if any problems occur. Students value the importance of living in an open, fair and democratic society.
- Students demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of equality of opportunity and the diversity of groups living in modern Britain. They behave and work well together and show each other respect. For example, hairdressing and beauty therapy students are knowledgeable and adept in advising clients from differing backgrounds, for example emphasising the differences between European and African-Caribbean hair treatments.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- At the time of the inspection, 1,189 apprentices were in training, of whom 731 are aged 19 or above. Some 446 apprentices study at advanced level and 684 study at intermediate level. Around 60 apprentices are undertaking a higher-level apprenticeship. The majority undertake programmes in health and social care, engineering and manufacturing technologies, and business administration.
- Too many apprentices do not successfully complete their apprenticeship programmes. The proportion who successfully complete their course within the planned timescale is low. College data suggests that, while a higher proportion of apprentices are likely to achieve in 2016/17 within planned timescales than in previous years, the forecast achievement rate is still too low.
- Teachers and assessors do not develop apprentices' confidence with written English sufficiently well. In off-the-job training, teachers do not consistently challenge or inform apprentices on how they can improve their English, punctuation and grammar skills in their course work. In the workplace, assessors do not take advantage of relevant opportunities to develop apprentices' skills in the correct use of technical English; as a result, apprentices continue to make the same basic errors in their work.

- Feedback on most apprentices' written work is not helpful or detailed enough. Consequently, apprentices do not improve their skills and knowledge as quickly as they might.
- Most apprentices develop good mathematics skills and apply them confidently within their work activities. They also develop digital skills well through the extensive use of digital technology in many off-the-job activities; for instance in simulating computer numerical programming and using high-quality accounting software to replicate systems they use in the workplace. The standard of most of apprentices' work is good in the college and in the workplace.
- Assessors carry out their review and assessment visits in a timely manner and most employers are fully involved in the process. However, progress reviews too often focus upon completing documentation related to qualification achievement rather than enhancing skills to improve their work-readiness.
- In a minority of theory lessons, teachers fail to plan and take sufficient account of apprentices' individual needs. Consequently, some apprentices lose concentration, become distracted from learning and do not make sufficient progress, particularly the most able, who find some tasks too easy. In other instances, teachers have expectations of apprentices that are too low, allowing them to work to minimum standards; as a result, they do not make the gains in their knowledge and understanding of which they are capable.
- Employers and assessors use their extensive industrial experience to support apprentices' development of good practical skills. As a result, they quickly develop and acquire a broad range of vocational skills, such as working to exacting tolerances to produce goods or services that meet or exceed the standards expected of them.
- Apprentices closely adhere to 'industry-standard' working practices and health and safety procedures that prepare them well for work at employers' workplaces. They demonstrate good behaviours and technical skills that employers recognise and value. For example, apprentice maintenance engineers skilfully carry out planned maintenance procedures on a wide range of pumps and measuring equipment that help to maintain and improve productivity in the workplace. Almost all apprentices who complete their course successfully progress to sustained employment and a few progress to higher levels of study.
- Apprentices have clear expectations of their apprenticeship and future career opportunities due to the effective advice and guidance that they receive from tutors, assessors and workplace mentors. Induction is useful and informative, providing apprentices with a broad range of information that equips them well for the challenges of their training programmes, and a useful insight into their rights and responsibilities as an employee. Most employers take an active part in planning apprenticeships and contribute actively to planned learner reviews. Consequently, most apprentices use the good advice given to them during their studies to make informed decisions about their next steps in education, training or employment.
- The introduction of improved management systems and procedures to monitor and track apprentices' progress are now beginning to provide managers and assessors with useful information. Assessors and teachers are now able to closely monitor apprentices' progress

and provide support for those who fall behind. However, it is too soon to judge the full impact of these actions, some of which are recent.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college has 79 students in receipt of high needs funding from four local authorities. Of these, 18 are on vocational courses across the college with students who do not need this funding, 41 are following programmes at entry level or level 1, and 20 students attend full-time specialist provision for students with severe and profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- The college uses its funding for students with high needs well to provide high levels of effective support and to develop personalised learning programmes. As a result, the majority of students develop a range of life and vocational skills and improve their social and communication skills. They successfully progress onto higher-level courses and become more independent; they reduce their reliance upon specialist in-class support in lessons.
- Staff have high expectations for their students. As a result of good working relations with local authorities and schools, students make the transition into college very effectively. Where students have complex learning difficulties and disabilities, staff work closely with a range of health and education specialists to design appropriate support, enabling students to settle into their studies quickly.
- Specialist teachers and support staff plan highly effective and personalised learning programmes for students with severe and profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, they are able to integrate quickly into lessons and make good progress. Teachers deliver stimulating and well-paced lessons that match students' individual experiences and interests very well.
- Students with severe sensory impairment participate well and make good progress in vocational lessons due to the good use of a wide range of high-quality assistive technologies such as tablet computers with voice recognition technology.
- Most teachers routinely set students specific and individualised short-term targets and record their progress well in education, health and care plans. Consequently, students confidently self-assess their progress and achievement towards their learning goals at the end of each lesson. Teachers record students' performance well using simple charts and tables that are easy to understand. As a result, students use the charts frequently to track their progress and are motivated to work harder due to the recognition of their achievements.
- Most teachers develop students' speaking and listening skills very well. As a result of good support and encouragement from teachers and support assistants, students with high needs quickly become more confident and can participate well in classroom discussions. For example, students on environmental awareness courses confidently express their views and opinions and identify the key factors that affect global warming, such as the carbon dioxide produced by vehicles.
- Students benefit from extensive work-related opportunities including sheltered work placements within the college, with local employers and supported internships. Students working in the college 'pop-up shop' create products such as items of jewellery that they

sell for profit. Students working in the housekeeping team at a local hotel confidently communicate with staff and as a result, they develop good work-related skills.

- Students are safe and feel safe in their inclusive learning environment. Teachers and support staff have established a culture in which students respect each other and understand the importance of valuing diversity. As a result, students listen to each other, respect each other's opinions and contribute well to group discussions.
- Students receive effective careers guidance from a specialist adviser in a format appropriate to their needs. As a result, most students successfully progress to higher-level programmes or employment.
- While the assessment of students' starting points is very thorough, a minority of teachers of vocational and foundation programmes do not use this information sufficiently well when planning lessons with support staff. As a result, not all vocational teachers set work that is sufficiently challenging for students, including the most able, to achieve the level of which they are capable.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130796
Type of provider	General and further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	19,500
Principal/CEO	Graham Guest
Telephone number	01952 642200
Website	www.tcat.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	290	840	370	3,623	448	196	–	13
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	230	832	128	525	–		67	
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	79							
Funding received from:	Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Richard Deane, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Russ Henry	Her Majesty's Inspector
Denise Olander	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clive Blanchette	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector
Nicholas Sanders	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Crilly	Ofsted Inspector
Lyn Bourne	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Ward	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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