

Boston College

General further education college

Inspection dates		2–6 June 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- The very large majority of learners achieve their main qualifications. Learners' achievement is particularly high for learners who study on functional skills in English and mathematics and on the subcontracted workplace programmes.
- Learners develop valuable skills to support their future employment through a range of successful and innovative initiatives; the majority go onto higher-level courses or subject-related employment.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners receive good academic and pastoral support. Effective advice and guidance ensure the very large majority of learners, including those learners who have English as an additional language, make good progress.
- The well-coordinated approach to managing staff performance and to improving teaching, learning and assessment has brought about rapid and sustainable improvement.
- The college has a strong culture of respect and tolerance, and managers and staff play a particularly effective role in promoting harmonious relationships in the community.
- The strong and visible leadership by the principal and senior managers has enabled them to improve provision for learners.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Too many of the minority of learners on A-level and apprenticeship courses and a small cohort of adults on courses at entry level and level 1 do not make sufficient progress in achieving their qualifications.
- Not enough teaching and learning are outstanding and the development of information learning technologies by managers and staff to stimulate and support learning and assessment is underdeveloped.
- Teachers do not always develop learners English and mathematical skills sufficiently in vocational lessons.
- Teachers' tracking, recording and monitoring of learners' progress is not thorough enough to ensure all learners receive adequate challenge and reach their potential.
- In a minority of key areas of the college's work, managers do not use data and information well enough to improve provision rapidly.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure more teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding by making all teachers use information on learners’ prior attainment better to plan lessons effectively, in order to deepen knowledge and to speed up the progress of all learners. In addition, improve teachers’ skills in the use of information learning technologies to extend learning and assessment both in and outside of lessons.
- Strengthen the setting and reviewing of learners’ subject and wider-skills development targets, including in English and mathematics, so that all make at least good or better progress and continue to attain higher grades. Ensure that targets are challenging and achievable with ambitious timescales, and set high expectations for all groups of learners.
- Increase all teachers’ development of learners’ English and mathematical skills in lessons. Ensure teachers check learners’ spelling, punctuation, grammar and the presentation of portfolios and provide clear feedback and encouragement to learners on how they can strengthen these skills.
- On the minority of courses where achievements are weak, urgently identify and remedy the barriers to learners’ success.
- Reinforce further managers’ use of all relevant data to monitor the impact of actions to improve all aspects of the college’s work and identify actions for further improvement.
- Ensure that all the actions of managers and staff to improve teaching, learning and assessment are strengthened to include the use of information learning technology and the reinforcement and development of learners’ skills in mathematics and English in all lessons

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Over the past three years, the proportion of learners on college and workplace courses that complete their courses and achieve their main qualifications has improved and it is now high. This improvement has taken place in most subjects and at all levels, although, a small cohort of learners on A-levels do not achieve as well as those on courses at levels 1, 2 and 3.
- The very large majority of learners make good progress and a minority achieve high-grade passes. The small number of A-level learners make the progress expected based on their prior attainment at GCSE. While still low college data show that the number of learners on AS and A2 levels who gain high grades is steadily increasing.
- Learners enjoy studying at college. A high proportion of learners remain on their courses, this is particularly high in sports courses. Learners’ attendance and punctuality are good.
- Workplace learners, including those on subcontracted provision, consistently achieve their qualifications well. Having shown a sharp decline in 2011/12, overall achievement results for the small number of apprentices have improved significantly. However, they remain below the national rate. Recent changes in the management of apprentices have brought a sharper focus to ensuring that learners achieve their qualifications on time; in-year college achievement data is showing good levels of improvement.
- Learners’ work is good. In art and design, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and construction their practical skills are particularly good. The standard of learners’ work in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), law and health and social care is high. They gain a sound knowledge of theoretical concepts and develop good standards of research skills.

- Learners develop at least appropriate and sometimes good English and mathematical skills, which prepares them well for the next step into employment or education. The majority of learners make good progress. The proportion of learners who complete their qualifications in functional skills has significantly improved and it is high. Provision for GCSE in English is good and for GCSE mathematics, it is adequate.
- Learners develop good work skills that meet industry standards. Most benefit from the wide range of initiatives at the college to improve these skills. For example, two professional cookery learners on courses at level 3 recently won a national cookery competition; learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities secured roles as heritage stewards at Hussey Tower, a local historical site, as a result of voluntary work.
- The majority of learners on study programmes undertake meaningful work experience. This helps to develop their commercial awareness, as does the numerous opportunities for learners to meet employers at cross-college events. Learners develop creative and entrepreneurial skills by participating in a number of learning activities in the Enterprise Zone, a new learning facility at the college. For example, advanced level business learners develop new business ideas, present them to local employers and gain invaluable feedback.
- The majority of learners progress to further levels of study at the college, into training and/or employment. A high number of learners move into subject related destinations when they leave college and the proportion progressing to higher education is now good. However, managers and staff are aware they require to do further work to capture comprehensive data on all learners' destinations.
- Disparities in the achievements of different groups of learners have reduced significantly in 2012/13. Most Eastern European learners now achieve at a higher rate than other groups. However, the achievement of a small cohort of adult learners at entry level and level 1 remain below the national rate. Learners identified as needing extra help with their studies go on to achieve as well as their peers. Looked after children and those young people leaving care achieve well.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which mirrors the good and improving results for most learners, and particularly the improving trend of learners on work-related programmes gaining higher grades. However, while the quality of classroom-based learning is improving, not enough is outstanding. Although historical data show that apprentice' attainment is poor, the current trainers and assessors have improved the standards of assessment and training, and the number of apprentices completing their qualifications has significantly increased over the last year.
- Teachers plan learning well and the majority of lessons enable learners to develop their subject skills and knowledge effectively. Most staff make good use of the training and support from the advanced practitioner team to improve their classroom-based teaching practice. Teaching and assessment in subcontracted provision is mostly good.
- In the majority of lessons, learners are able to develop good team-working skills. In a sports lesson, learners worked particularly effectively in groups to produce and make a short presentation to their peers about how to organise a sporting event. The teacher applied an element of competition to increase learners' motivation, with learners formally assessing each presentation against a set of criteria and voting for the best one. This increased learners' enjoyment and encouraged them to strive for higher standards of work.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of their learners, either allowing too much time on an activity, or setting tasks that are too easy for them. As a result,

the pace of learning becomes slow and teachers are not able to extend learners' knowledge and skills sufficiently.

- Where learning is particularly successful, teachers use probing questions and encourage learners to think for themselves. In a revision lesson for A-level law learners the teacher skilfully structured the session to enable learners to hold a professional debate on whether judges should be involved in influencing legislation. The resulting session saw a lively discussion between learners who were able to analyse each other's work and ideas constructively.
- The college's virtual learning environment is underdeveloped. Teachers' use of wider information learning technologies to stimulate and support learning and assessment are effective in a minority of areas, such as the use of social media as a discussion forum in health and social care. However, this is not widespread across all subjects.
- Staff carefully assess learners' abilities and support needs at the start of their course, to identify if they require extra help with mathematics or English. The vast majority staff provide good guidance to learners to ensure they progress onto the most appropriate course.
- At course level, staff appropriately monitor learners at risk of not achieving. However, the support team do not track these as comprehensively throughout the year to check the effectiveness of the support received by learners.
- Checking of learners' progress is fair and accurate. Teachers mark work promptly and most provide appropriate feedback on how learners can improve. However, a minority of teachers and work-based learning assessors do not always clearly outline how learners can improve, or provide enough timely milestones to guide improvement and progress.
- Support is good for learners whose first language is not English. The newly introduced English 'lab' effectively provides planned and impromptu support for learners, including advanced-level English speaking learners, to improve their reading, writing and speaking skills.
- The setting and reviewing of learners' targets, while strengthened, requires further improvement. Most learners are aware of their target grades and what work they need to do to reach them. Teachers are using a new process to track and set long and short-term targets for learners, but too many of these focus on completing a unit as the target rather than extending learners' skills. Currently, too few targets focus on developing learners' literacy, numeracy and skills for employment further.
- The number of learners undertaking functional skills and GCSE has risen significantly. In the majority of lessons, teachers are developing learners' reading and research skills well. However, the development of English and mathematical skills is too uneven across subjects. For example, learners develop numeracy skills well in construction and visual arts and media, but less so in other areas such as health and social care.
- In too many cases, teachers do not routinely comment on or set targets to improve learners' spelling, grammar or the presentation of work folders where these clearly require improvement.
- Initial advice and guidance are good. Staff provide appropriate guidance to learners to ensure they progress onto the most appropriate course. Subsequently, this year fewer learners have transferred to other courses and college data and the current rate of learners' progress shows a greater proportion of learners are due to complete their qualifications on time, including learners from the European Union. Careers guidance is comprehensive.
- Most lessons ensure learners have a good appreciation and awareness of topics such as disability, cultural tolerance and sexual orientation. Learners' behaviour in lessons and around the college is good and respectful. The promotion of working with people from diverse backgrounds through work-based learning progress reviews is adequate.

Health and social care

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in health and social care are good which is reflected in the high proportion of learners who complete their qualifications on most courses. Most learners make good progress compared to their starting points. The number of learners who progress to related, sustainable employment and further study is high. Work-based learners organise their portfolios of evidence very well.
- Staff are ambitious for their learners. Most teachers set their learners challenging targets. The standard of learners' written work is at and sometimes above the requirements of awarding bodies.
- Learners' contributions to class discussion are thoughtful and insightful. They confidently discuss complex issues and support their argument with appropriate evidence. In one lesson, for learners on a course at level 3, they discussed the validity and reliability of research relating to the integration of complementary and alternative therapies into science based medicine. Learners are able to apply ethical principles and relevant legislation to a discussion of frequent moral dilemmas faced by health care professionals.
- In most lessons, teachers effectively plan to ensure that learners make good progress. The well-planned and well-chosen interactive teaching and learning include well-managed group and paired work, the completion of individual written tasks, and the development of practical caring skills. In a lesson for learners on a course at level 2, following a discussion of the range of service users who might communicate using sign language, teachers introduced learners to the Makaton system of signs and symbols for the first time. They worked productively with their teacher and with each other in developing sign language skills.
- Teachers use interactive technologies particularly effectively to support teaching, learning and assessment. Learners use interactive technology well in the research and presentation of their assignments. Teachers and learners use social media productively to support discussion forums and to manage learning. Learners used their mobile phones applications effectively in lessons to check and confirm information.
- Learners and staff make good links between theory and work-related practice. Teachers draw on their extensive professional experience well to illustrate theoretical points and to provide clear guidance. Learners develop good subject knowledge and skills that will be useful in future employment, which are highly valued by employers in the sector.
- Through the particularly well managed and carefully monitored work experience programme, learners develop a good understanding of best practice in the care sector. A successful specialist group for care employers, convened by college staff, provides a forum for discussion of important issues in the care sector. The forum is effective in sharing concerns and it has strengthened professional practice in care settings, provided commercial training for college staff, offered new openings for apprentices and provide realistic work opportunities for other learners.
- Teachers mark learners' written work carefully and provide appropriately detailed feedback. They routinely correct errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Learners develop a good understanding of specialist vocabulary. Teachers' development of mathematical skills in vocational subject lessons is insufficient.
- Support on apprenticeship programmes is insufficient for learners with a standard of English that does not fully meet the needs of the care sector.

- Initial advice and guidance have improved substantially and they are now good. The rigorous selection process and the well-managed induction programme ensure that learners progress onto appropriate courses. Early identification of learners requiring extra support enables staff to provide appropriate support to ensure they are successful on their programme of study.
- Promotion of working with people from diverse backgrounds on health and social care courses is good. Learners develop a high standard of understanding of the needs and the rights of minority and vulnerable groups in the community and teachers challenge prejudices well. At reviews for work-based learning, staff do not fully confirm or extend learners' knowledge and understanding of equality, diversity and safeguarding.

Construction

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes
Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching learning and assessment are good which reflects the high proportion of class-based learners who complete their qualifications and the high numbers of on workplace programmes who complete their programmes within the agreed timescales. The standard of learners' practical work is high and they develop good work-site skills. The proportion of apprentices completing their programmes is improving and although low in number, the current cohort is making appropriate progress. The numbers of learners progressing onto higher-level courses or into secure employment are good. The small number of local school pupils also achieve well.
- In the best lessons, teachers use their recent industry knowledge and experience to motivate and inspire learners. They plan a wide range of practical activities and tasks that challenge and take account of learners' site experiences and rate of progress. Learners are able to evaluate their work and identify what they could do further to improve very well.
- Teachers support learners well in the development of their understanding of often-complex practical skills. Teachers and employers are quick to move learners onto more challenging tasks as soon as they are ready. For example, brickwork learners at level 2 move into advanced work early in the summer term and joinery learners at level 2 are expected to produce sash rather than casement windows to compliment the architecture in the local region. Learners speak highly of staff and of the standards of work expected from them.
- A minority lessons are less effective as teachers do not plan activities and tasks that are sufficiently demanding for all learners. Targets set by teachers are not sufficiently challenging and this restricts the more able opportunities to tackle more inspiring tasks. In these lessons, the pace of learning is slow; failing to maintain the learner's interest and attendance is low. A minority of teachers have low expectations of their learner's written work and their files and portfolios are often disorganised.
- Teachers' checking of learner's progress is reliable and fair. Staff assess all learners' literacy and numeracy skills before starting a course well. Teachers effectively use the information from this to identify the learners' starting points and to plan learning based on individual need. Following reviews and assessment, teachers provide learners with detailed and accurate feedback on how to improve further their work. In workshop sessions, teachers continually pose questions and set problems for learners to solve which promotes high standards and the extension of learning. However, assessors produce work-based apprentice assessment plans too late in the programme, slowing apprentice's rates of progress.
- Teachers and assessors use information learning technology (ILT) well in the checking of learner's progress and to record learners' professional discussions and skills. For example, one

subcontractor, Allenby Training, makes good use of video footage to record the learners’ skills when using heavy construction plant in the workplace.

- Teachers develop learners’ mathematics well. They develop accurate measuring and setting out skills in lessons and use their work-related knowledge well to illustrate their importance on site. For example, apprentices routinely interpret architects drawings and site plans to create building works and artefacts that meet the high levels of regulation. The majority of teachers correct spelling and grammar on learners’ work. However, their advice to learners on how to improve is often unclear and hinders the quick development of their English skills to meet the needs of employers.
- Teachers provide good support, advice and guidance. Teachers provide learners with useful handbooks to formalise the requirements of their programmes of learning and to reinforce the importance of developing good skills that will be useful in future employment. Class-based learners benefit from site visits, talks from industry specialists and enterprise projects where they make and sell products. However, few have taken part in work experience on site. Staff are piloting a project with a national homebuilder, with a view to all learners having the opportunity for formal work experience from September 2014.
- Accommodation and training resources at college are of an appropriate standard. All trade areas provide industry relevant training equipment and materials that reflect modern industry practice. Most learners on work-place learning and apprenticeships benefit from working on large building projects and producing high-standard joinery, using the latest plant and equipment. Learners find internal and regional competitions motivating, displaying their skills to the community and employers.
- Teachers and employers help to foster good working and social relationships. Teachers know their learners well and work hard to support learners through difficult personal issues and to help them to stay on programme. Learners are confident to work in a diverse workforce and community and they respect others beliefs and opinions. Learners’ behaviour and attitudes to work are good. Teachers and assessors discuss diversity thoroughly in class and at progress reviews, to widen learners’ knowledge and understanding of this subject.

<p>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which reflects the in-year improvement in the proportion of learners on college-based courses who complete their courses and achieve their qualifications. Although, a small cohort of hairdressing learners on courses at level 3 do not achieve as well as their peers and achievement rates have declined. However, the majority of those who do not complete their course progress into subject related employment. Intermediate apprentice achievement rates are markedly higher than the national rate and all learners complete within the agreed time scale.
- Learners make good progress on most programmes and develop high levels of skills. Well-qualified teachers use their up-to-date knowledge and experience to support and inspire learners well in lessons. Learners are enthusiastic and demonstrate creative hairdressing and professional beauty skills. Teachers encourage learners to achieve high vocational standards during practical lessons, which effectively prepare them for employment. In most lessons, teachers use a variety of activities to motivate and challenge learners. Teachers make good use of directed questioning to assess learners’ understanding and increase their confidence.
- Learners’ development of knowledge and practical skills is good. Beauty therapy learners perform manicures and facial treatments to a high standard and hairdressing learners provide

colouring and perms within commercially expected times. Hairdressing learners on courses at level 3 develop good skills. However, a minority make slow progress in the completion of their practical assessments. This is partly due to access to too few clients, particularly those requiring specialist services, such as colour correction.

- Most learners have a professional image and a mature, confident attitude when communicating with clients. Learners enjoy participating in good external work placements.
- Learners' written assignments are good. They present their written work well and it shows extensive research. Learners use this to good effect when presenting their findings to their peers, demonstrating a good understanding of their subject.
- Resources to support teaching and learning at the Spalding campus are good. The modern commercial salon helps to prepare learners well for industry. The more experienced learners make particularly good use of the salon through the opportunity to 'rent a chair' on Fridays and during holidays. This opportunity allows them to gain additional commercial experience. Modern resources at the Boston campus are appropriate. Teachers use information communication technologies (ICT) effectively to develop learners' subject knowledge in theory lessons. However, learners' use of ICT in the salons is insufficient in supporting the development of a wider range of practical skills.
- Thorough assessment of learners' abilities before starting a course, advice and guidance ensure learners enrol onto the right level of course. However, teachers do not use sufficiently the information on learners' achievement before starting to ensure that those enrolled on to hairdressing and beauty therapy courses at level 1 have the opportunity to fast track onto the next level of study. Staff identify early the additional support needs of learners and they ensure those needing extra support receive help and make good progress.
- Learners are fully aware of how they are progressing. Teachers encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning and to set personal targets to ensure that they achieve their qualifications on time. Learners benefit from regular reviews that help to keep them on track. Tracking systems are robust and allow teachers and learners to monitor effectively their progress. Learners are aware of the progression opportunities in their chosen subject. The majority of learner's progress from one level to the next and a high proportion move into employment, with a small number of learners having successfully obtaining employment on cruise ships or health spas.
- Teachers link mathematics to the vocational subject well and learners enjoy these lessons. However, English lessons are less interesting and insufficiently linked to the core subject.
- Teachers provide good feedback on written work. It is detailed and helpful and informs learners of what they could do to improve further. Learners receive extensive verbal feedback on practical observations. However, written feedback on practical work is insufficiently detailed and helpful.
- Teachers promote the working with people from diverse backgrounds well. Learners have a mature attitude in class and treat their peers and teachers with respect. In practical lessons, learners participate in role-plays to help prepare them for working on a diverse range of clients in the workplace. For example, adapting massage movements when performing a facial on a client with mobility difficulties.

Visual arts and media**16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes**

Good

- Teaching learning and assessment are good, which contribute well to the skills learners gain, their good progress and the high proportion that complete their qualifications, which have improved significantly over the last three years to above the high national rate. Achievements on courses at level 3 are very high, but have fluctuated over the last three years for courses at level 2, due to the varying number of learners who leave before completing their course.
- A high proportion of learners on courses at level 3 attain high grades and progress to university. Attendance is mostly high.
- Teachers' very good care, support and encouragement enable learners to develop a wide range of technical and practical skills that they use highly effectively to develop their own personal style. For instance, a photography learner used experiments with long exposure of night-time city scenes to refine his ideas and another used the idea of gravity, centrifugal force and magnetism to create interesting and original photographs. Excellent support from staff enabled one learner to improve substantially his sketchbook annotation.
- Teachers use their excellent skills and industry knowledge to plan and provide lessons that capture interest, motivate and encourage learners. Effective tracking and monitoring of progress ensures that learners know how to improve their work and raise their grades. Learners have access to good accommodation and specialist resources and regularly use these outside of lesson times to do extra work.
- Teachers know their learners very well and use the highly detailed information on learner's previous attainment and support needs, to develop their strengths and specialist interests. Learners are able to work very well on their own and take responsibility for their learning. Standards of work are high and progress over time is good. They routinely set their own short-term targets in lessons, but a minority of targets are too broad and do not focus learners sufficiently well on priorities.
- Learners develop a wide range of creative, personal and skills that meet industry standards of work very well. "Creative Fridays" give the learners the opportunity to become involved in highly experimental work. Through work experience competitions, working on commissions and projects such as the international "Big Draw", learners develop good skills that will be useful in future employment. Learners' successful application for funding has helped them to obtain financing to put on an exhibition of their work at a local venue. Learners use digital technologies well to create and record work, including web sites, compact disc covers and presentations. Art and design learners make digital portfolios to display particularly effectively their work when applying to university.
- Learners receive comprehensive, detailed and very regular feedback on the quality of their work. They make good progress due to teachers providing helpful individual interviews, audio recordings, written feedback and tutorials. However, a few learners find the audio feedback difficult to understand and teachers do not use alternative methods of feedback that may be better suited to meet the individual needs of these learners.
- Learners are very clear about what they need to do to strengthen and maximise grades. In a photography lesson, learners developed good analytical and reading, writing and speaking skills through assessing each other's work.
- The development of English skills is good in the majority of lessons. Learners express themselves with confidence, present information, express opinions and use subject specific vocabulary in context. Learners develop good mathematical skills in print-based media and

photography. However, this is too often underdeveloped across the subject areas. Teachers mark formal written work well and correct spelling and grammatical errors. However, in the majority of learner sketchbooks, spelling is very poor and teachers do not have a consistent strategy for ensuring improvements.

- Following recent changes to the arrangements for initial advice and guidance, recruitment is more effective. Learners have a more realistic idea of the demands of the course and more learners stay on the programme and are successful in the achievement of their qualifications.
- Teachers promote the working with people from diverse backgrounds well in most lessons. Learners of different abilities, cultural and social backgrounds work harmoniously together. Learners, through their creative work, explore a wide range of themes including gender, disability and prejudice.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes
19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment on foundation English programmes is good and as a result, the large majority of learners complete their courses successfully, develop good English skills and become more effective in their daily lives, at the college or at work. Despite relatively low starting points, learners achieve high standards of work, build confidence, learn to communicate more effectively with others and enjoy reading activities. They produce effective formal letters and job applications, well-focused essays, and extend their speaking and listening skills to suit a variety of audiences.
- Teachers have high expectations for their learners, and encourage them well to raise aspirations. Teachers have a good knowledge of the taught subject, plan and manage learning well to meet the needs of all learners. They start lessons promptly, keep activities at a steady pace, give clear instructions and challenge inappropriate language well. Consequently, learners attend punctually, make good use of their time, take pride in their work, are eager to participate and complete their work on time.
- Teachers support learners well in the classroom. They empathise with their learners and use directed questioning effectively to capture their learners' interest and probe for ideas and viewpoints. This helps learners develop and use persuasive and emotive language more confidently, for example, when writing letters or during their electronic presentations. Despite a number of considerable barriers to learning such as disability, learners persevere and involve others well into discussing their preferred topic or areas of interest.
- In the minority of lessons, teachers do not set activities sufficiently in the work-related context or take enough account of learners' experiences, and as a result, in these lessons teaching remains uninspiring and is less effective. Although learners have access to the internet in every room, teachers' use of information learning technology is insufficient to stimulate and support learning and the use of too many paper-based learning materials fails to capture learners' interest at times.
- Teachers check learner's progress thoroughly. Learners receive a robust assessment of their skills before starting their foundation English courses and teachers use the results well to plan learning. Teachers routinely check learners' progress during lessons and share information with vocational staff and this helps identify additional learning support. However, target setting and the review of progress do not always capture learners' interest sufficiently to allow them to reflect on how to develop their skills. Learners tend to rely on teachers' guidance from one lesson to the next, and do not develop strong study skills to continue to work on their English skills by themselves, or outside the classroom.

- Feedback to learners is too variable. Teachers praise and encourage learners well, and provide frequent feedback to guide them throughout learning activities. However, they do not focus their learners enough on the need to correct mistakes and too many errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar remain unchecked in marked work or during lessons. Teachers do not always sufficiently direct learners to use dictionaries or reference materials to research and modify their work, when correcting errors.
- Learners understand the importance of extending their English skills and of being ready for work. Teachers motivate learners to achieve and they capture learners’ interest well by using a wide range of learning activities. Learners enjoy and work effectively in teams, learn to present ideas and information clearly and persuasively to others, listen to what other people say and try to respond during formal discussions. However, teachers do not encourage learners sufficiently to extend their mathematics skills during functional English lessons.
- Support for learners is good. Learning support assistants provide timely and useful help for learners with needs that are more challenging, building on their confidence and making sure that they achieve their full potential. Good advice and guidance ensures that learners are on the right course and that they consider moving on the next level of learning. Learners talk highly of the care they receive from staff.
- Teachers provide a safe classroom atmosphere that involves all learners. This helps learners to raise aspirations and to appreciate differences in viewpoints and in being different. For example, learners enjoyed discussing the dietary needs of various groups such as vegetarians or of those from different cultural backgrounds. One learner successfully captured his audience’s attention by discussing gay culture during a presentation. In another effective lesson, the teacher encouraged young male learners to reflect on the sexist comment made in an advertisement. However, teachers do not always use all opportunities that become available to extend fully discussions and reflections on equality and diversity.

<p>Foundation mathematics</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, reflecting the high proportion of learners who complete their course and achieve their qualifications. Achievement for the large majority of younger learners on courses at entry 3, level 1 and level 2 are high. However, achievements for the smaller number of older learners are more variable and are below the national rate at level 1. Achievements for GCSE are adequate with higher grades being slightly above the national rate. However, in-year college achievement data is showing significant improvements on all foundation and GCSE courses.
- Learners’ progress compared with their achievement before starting their course is good. Learners frequently comment on their increased confidence in using their numerical skills in their vocational areas, an example being, hairdressing and beauty therapy learners who realised the importance of using ratios correctly when mixing hair dyes and who now feel able to do this correctly.
- Learners appreciate the high levels of care and support they receive from their teachers in class and outside of lessons. Teachers are available after lessons to provide learners with additional help with their work. GCSE teachers have high expectations of their learners who regularly complete additional work outside of lessons. However, homework is not a regular feature of functional skills programmes and too often teachers do not provide learners with enough guidance on how to find materials if they want to practise skills on their own. Learning support staff work very effectively in most lessons by helping learners to work independently to solve problems.

- Particularly effective teaching in the majority of lessons motivates learners to take part in interesting and enjoyable activities and to succeed in their learning. For example, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are able to sequence fractions correctly having first cut up a series of cakes into different portions. Learners make particularly good progress when tasks are practical, relevant and related to their vocational courses, such as the hairdressing and beauty therapy learners who were able to demonstrate their understanding of time by planning accurately a series of appointments in the salon.
- Teachers plan lessons well. They use information and learning technology confidently and encourage learners to work independently in class. Group work is particularly effective. For example, learners discuss how to go about solving problems, mark each other's work and explain their methods.
- Learners respond well to their teachers, although in the small number of less successful lessons, the more able become bored as the pace of lessons is too slow and the tasks are too easy. Teachers' verbal and written explanations are not always clear enough and practical resources are not always available to help build learners' mathematical understanding, so that in one lesson, learners who were confused about metric units of measurement were not able to fully understand the difference between metres and centimetres as rulers and tapes were not available.
- Teachers' checking of learners' progress in lessons is mostly good. Teachers assess learners' progress well, through a range of activities including simulated examination tests and questioning, although, in a minority of lessons they over rely on handouts to check learners' understanding. In the few less effective lessons, teachers are not able to assess fully learners' understanding, as they are too quick to tell learners their own preferred method for calculating the correct answer rather than encouraging learners to work out how they might go about solving problems for themselves.
- Systematic and timely checking of learners' abilities before the start of the course identifies very accurately their attainment gaps and any extra support needs. Teachers use this information well to ensure that learners are on the correct course and to effectively plan lessons. However, learners are not always fully aware of how well they are progressing as they do not receive sufficiently clear feedback on what has been achieved and what they could do further to strengthen their mathematical abilities.
- Learners' work is of an appropriate standard and teachers provide effective marking and useful annotation. They encourage learners to improve their spelling, although teachers do not consistently provide learners with ways that could help them remember the word correctly in the future. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop good listening skills. Teachers provide good support for learners who need to develop the skills needed for reading for detail.
- Learners have a thorough understanding of the components of their course, including the importance of functional skills. Well-informed learners have a good understanding of progression routes and realise the importance of having good mathematical skills for their future career prospects and employment. Adult learners have appropriate access to careers advice from their teachers and from specialist staff within college.
- Teachers promote working with people from diverse backgrounds well. Although schemes of work show very little evidence of planning for the promotion of equality and diversity, teachers take advantage of opportunities in their lessons to improve learners' understanding. For example, in one lesson on reading scales, learners had to find the difference in temperature between their classroom and the temperature in Latvia, the home country of many learners in college.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Strong and visible leadership by the principal and senior managers is successfully improving provision at the college. The clear aspiration to achieve very high standards, develop a culture of excellence and raise aspirations for learners and the community is starting to show results. Managers are clear about the remaining areas of improvement. Inspectors found that employers and community leaders now see the college is a good choice for work-related training and engagement.
- Governors now demonstrate a good understanding of their role to challenge and support the principal and senior managers. They contribute well to strategic planning and provide a valuable insight to subject areas.
- Managers set rigorous targets for teachers, which support a much-improved strategy for observing and raising standards of teaching and learning. The focus on improvements using the 'Teaching and Learning Hub' has seen significant improvements for learners, particularly in the construction and sport subject areas. Human resources staff support programme managers well to deal with the underperformance of staff, identified through the revised observation of teaching, learning and assessment strategy.
- Senior managers place a strong emphasis on supporting teachers to become outstanding. Staff development is very responsive to the needs of individual staff and programme teams with a clear emphasis on further improving teaching and learning and sharing good practice. The small team of advanced practitioners makes particularly good use of the 'Teaching and Learning Hub' to provide good support and training for staff.
- Managers' well-coordinated approach to improving teaching, learning and assessment has quickly brought about rapid and sustainable improvements, particularly for the new construction team. Robust observations result in detailed actions for improvement. Programme area managers monitor the impact on learners and identify further support needs for individuals and teams from detailed and accurate reports.
- Managers' evaluation of provision involves all staff. This helps to ensure clear links between programme areas and the college self-assessment report. Reports are honest and largely accurate and the grades for all areas inspected have improved from the last inspection. Managers have successfully implemented most areas for improvement from the last inspection. However, they recognise a few issues, including A-levels and apprenticeship courses, still need further work.
- As the result of a restructure in September last year, subject area management is now much more responsive and accountable. Programme area managers work well together to implement improvements. Managers closely monitor subcontractors to ensure learners receive a good teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers' use detailed performance indicators and they closely monitor most areas for improvement using accurate and up to date information. However, they identify a few remaining key areas for improvement in insufficient detail, such as reinforcing mathematics and English in the curriculum. Managers do not use all available data well enough to set targets to improve further the performance in all areas of college work. For example, increasing the number of learners' first time passes in GCSE mathematics and in functional skills.
- Managers plan the range of subjects well to meet the needs of the diverse range of learners and employers and to offer opportunities for learning from entry to higher-education level. The college offers courses in a range of venues to provide good quality education to a dispersed rural population. Managers and college partners have established a care academy, which provides a good network and range of training for care providers including special events, such as food preparation training for carers, to help raise the aspirations in the local care sector.

- Managers plan study programmes effectively to ensure that work experience is appropriate for the range of learners. Teachers make good use of the new 'Enterprise Learning Zone' facility to develop learners' enterprise skills to help them with future employment on many programmes at all levels.
- Managers have a strong focus on equality and diversity to raise aspirations and meet the needs of all areas of the diverse community. Managers and staff thoroughly promote a strong culture of respect and tolerance and take a key part in promoting community cohesion locally.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for the safeguarding of learners. Arrangements for the safer recruitment of both staff and learners are thorough. Learners feel safe and supported, especially on work placements in difficult environments such as the care sector. E-safety is a key feature of induction for learners. Managers and staff do not tolerate bullying and harassment and managers monitor carefully the minority of incident reports for trends.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Boston College				
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-19 study programmes	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	3
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and Social Care	2
Construction Crafts	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Visual Arts	2
Media and Communication	2
Foundation English	2
Foundation mathematics	2

Provider details

Type of provider

General further education college

Age range of learners	14+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	6,529							
Principal/CEO	Mrs Amanda Mosek							
Date of previous inspection	29 January 2013							
Website address	www.boston.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 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	378	401	356	756	712	375	0	22
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	94	92	77	129	1	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14-16	108							
Full-time	2							
Part-time	106							
Number of community learners	659							
Number of employability learners	524							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NDA Foundation ▪ RTS Training ▪ The Training Alliance ▪ Construction Skills Solutions ▪ Allenby Training ▪ Boston United Football in the Community ▪ AH Training. 							

Contextual information

Boston College serves the town of Boston, South Holland and East Lindsey and other neighbouring districts. The areas the college serve have low skills, low wage economy with high levels of deprivation and rural poverty. Over recent years, significant numbers of workers from Eastern Europe have moved to the area and over a fifth of learners at the college are from these groups. Lincolnshire retains a system of selective education and the proportion of learners gaining GCSEs grades A* to C is slightly higher than the national rate. Most employers within the area are small and medium enterprises. The main industries are horticultural production, food processing, tourism, health and care, manufacturing and construction. Although employment levels are high, aspirations are generally low.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Denise Olander HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal curriculum and quality as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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