

South Gloucestershire and Stroud College

General further education college

Inspection dates		17–21 November 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding-1

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- a consistently high proportion of learners successfully complete their courses
- learners' standards of work and their development of vocational and employment skills are often good
- teaching and learning are predominantly good, with an increasingly significant proportion that is outstanding
- learners benefit from the college's culture of high expectations and receive outstanding support in their studies
- resources and accommodation for learners are excellent, with outstanding facilities for sport
- governors and managers lead a relentless and successful drive for quality improvement, fully supported by college staff
- the college's highly effective strategic vision and direction place it at the heart of its local communities, to serve the best interests of learners
- excellent partnerships with employers and local enterprise partnerships are highly productive for learners.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- too much teaching, learning and assessment still require improvement, and not enough is yet outstanding
- teachers do not always ensure that their teaching meets learners' individual needs, including those of more able learners
- the teaching of English and mathematical skills, and learners' development in these subjects, although improving, require further improvement to become good or better
- learners' successful completion of their qualifications is poor in foundation English and mathematics, in too many AS-level subjects and for learners aged 19 and over on level 2 courses.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the continued improvement of teaching, learning and assessment, so that most is outstanding, and little requires improvement. Do this by building on the existing best practice of teachers, especially in outstanding areas of performance, in meeting the needs of all learners in lessons, and paying particular attention to providing sufficient challenge for more able learners. Help teachers to become fully accomplished in the use of information technology, to support learning as well as possible in lessons.
- Ensure college-wide improvement in teaching, learning and assessment in foundation English and mathematics, and increase learners' successful completion of qualifications in these subjects, by providing all teachers with the necessary skills and confidence to help learners improve. In particular, make sure that teachers improve learners' understanding of the relevance of English and mathematical skills by integrating them into vocational studies, and by emphasising their importance in achieving qualifications, employment and places in higher education. Further ensure that teachers fully exploit naturally occurring opportunities in lessons to reinforce the relevance of English and mathematics, and that they always provide constructive feedback to learners on these aspects of their written work.
- Ensure the continued and consistent improvement of learners' successful completion by rigorous application of existing detailed quality improvement plans, both for level 2 courses for adults and for those AS-level subjects where success rates are low. In particular, build on the college's best practice, in relation to initial advice and guidance for learners, and to personalised action plans for learners, after their probationary period.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- The vast majority of learners are enrolled on vocational courses, with substantial numbers on AS- and A-level courses. Many learners aged 16 to 18 are on study programmes at level 3, although courses at levels 1 and 2 now account for just over half of the college's classroom-based provision. The college has a large, and growing, number of apprentices, on programmes delivered in close partnership with national and local industries and sector bodies. A small number of learners aged 14 to 16 and early college placement learners study part time and full time respectively.
- Over the last four years, with significantly increased enrolments, a consistently high proportion of learners have gained their qualifications, having made very good progress with their studies. In 2013/14 the overall proportion of classroom-based learners successfully completing their qualifications improved further, to significantly above the national average.
- This positive picture reflects good improvement by both younger and adult learners on most levels of course. Successful completions improved well overall in 2013/14, both for learners aged 16 to 18 and for learners aged 19 and over. However, on level 2 programmes, outcomes for both age groups are too low and require improvement; in particular, successful completions for adults at level 2 have fallen over a three-year period.
- At level 3, learners' overall successful completion of AS- and A-level subjects continues to improve. However, learners' success rates are low in too many AS-level subjects, such as biology, mathematics, English literature, history, physics, geography and film studies. Learners on level 2 and level 3 vocational diplomas are highly successful and a high proportion of learners on the college's main vocational qualifications complete successfully.

- The large number of apprentices do increasingly well in their studies and often achieve good standards in their work, especially in sport. The proportion of apprentices overall who successfully complete their programme has been improving well and is now good, although this success varies too much between subjects. The number completing successfully within agreed timescales, although improved, is still low, and requires improvement. Learners aged 14 to 16 gain good levels of confidence, and many take up their learning and career aspirations again in a positive way, after troubled times at school. However, success rates require further improvement.
- Learners often make very good progress on their courses. Based on their attainment before coming to the college, many exceed their expected progress. At level 3, this is most notable for A-level and vocational diploma learners, but progress is less marked at AS level.
- Learners' work is often good or better and many develop excellent skills, especially relating to their vocational studies, as, for example, in the arts and sport.
- Learners' success in foundation English and mathematics, including for GCSE, is poor overall, and within each subject, and requires improvement. Learners' development of a good range of skills in English and mathematics, within their main studies, also requires improvement. Inspectors identified improvements in the development of learners' skills, but too many do not yet use English and mathematical skills to the best effect as part of their main courses of study.
- Opportunities for learners, including those on 16 to 19 study programmes, to understand employability and to develop skills for employment are excellent, with a well-rounded and employment-related curriculum. Most courses are organised around a central core of real work activities, links with employers and learning for work. Employers' feedback about what the college does to prepare learners for their working lives is particularly positive. Learners' attendance is good overall and varies little across the college's different faculties.
- The college has successfully eradicated significant differences between the performance levels of different groups of learners; previously, these included differences both across the college and between campuses. Some groups continue to underachieve slightly on different courses; the college is taking steps to tackle this.
- The large majority of learners progress to higher level qualifications or into employment. A high proportion progresses within the college, often to higher level courses. Progression to employment is particularly high on the employability course, known as 'Suited, Booted and Recruited', with a good proportion overall gaining jobs. A significant proportion of level 3 learners are successful in entering higher education.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- As part of this inspection, inspectors sampled and graded a proportion of the college's provision in the subject areas of science and mathematics; building and construction; sport, leisure and recreation; public services; visual and performing arts; foundation English; foundation mathematics; and business.
- Good teaching and learning predominate, leading to good outcomes for learners overall. A growing, and significant, proportion of teaching and learning is outstanding, but a small proportion continues to require improvement. Teaching and learning in a small minority of subject areas are of significantly lower standard than in the best quality of provision. Teaching and learning for employability learners are outstanding; for apprentices, they are good.
- Enthusiastic and skilled teachers often make good use of their extensive occupational experience to plan stimulating and challenging lessons, promoting learners' progress well, and reflecting the demands of employment and higher education. For example, teachers of health and social care use their extensive experience in the management of nurseries and of pre-school education to enrich learners' understanding of their future professions. Learners are required to wear smart and appropriate dress for their vocations and are aware of the standards required by their

industries. Managers ensure that teaching in lessons is supported well by relevant work experience for learners.

- Teachers insist on high standards and have high expectations of learners. They often plan lessons which foster learners' critical thinking and analysis skills, particularly on courses at level 3. Learners are frequently required to present their findings through oral presentations and they develop a high degree of articulacy and confidence. Teachers encourage independent learning, where it is helpful, and learners are motivated to develop both their subject-specific and wider personal, social and employability skills.
- Staff conduct comprehensive initial assessment of learners' skills, and teachers maintain good profiles about individual learners' needs and progress. However, where teaching and learning are not yet outstanding, or where they require improvement, teachers often fail to tailor tasks sufficiently to match learners' identified strengths and areas for development in lessons; this leads to insufficient challenge for more able learners, and too little attention to the needs of learners requiring more help. As a result, these learners make slower progress.
- Teaching, learning and assessment for foundation English and mathematics, and the systematic development of learners' English and mathematical skills, require improvement. Good college initiatives are beginning to ensure learners' better development of these skills. However, too many variations still exist in the quality of teaching and learning across courses, especially in the integration of English and mathematical skills within vocational areas.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not identify what specific vocabulary is essential to ensure that learners can confidently spell their occupationally-related words, and they do not routinely point out spelling and grammatical errors, thus hindering learners' progress towards workplace standards. In such lessons, learners are insufficiently self-critical about this aspect of their written work and do not appreciate how weaknesses in written English may affect their future careers.
- Resources, particularly in practical lessons, are of industry standard, fully enabling learners to develop professional skills. In hairdressing, for example, learners quickly adapt to the demands of commercial hairdressing with employers, as a result of the college's salon equipment. The college's sports facilities are outstanding. Teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) appropriately to reinforce learning, although a minority needs to develop further their confidence to be more adventurous. Some content on the virtual learning environment (VLE) is insufficiently developed.
- Support for learning is outstanding. Teachers provide very good pastoral support, and learning support workers assist learners discreetly and highly effectively. Study skills and learner services staff provide high quality support for individual learners and groups. This is particularly beneficial to, for example, looked after young people and young carers. All learners develop a good degree of independence.
- Assessment practices are good. Teachers ensure that learners understand what assessment involves and what assessors' expectations are. Many use peer review well in lessons, enabling learners to comment on each other's work. On most courses, teachers assess learners' work carefully against qualification criteria, and enter into written dialogue, encouraging learners to reflect on how they might improve further. In a minority of cases, teachers' written feedback, whilst offered in an encouraging manner, insufficiently identifies what learners need to do to improve.
- Information, advice and guidance for learners are very good. Teachers and specialist staff generally place learners on the right courses at the right level, and retention is high. Very well presented course handbooks describe each course in detail and give guidance on approaches to learning and assessment. Initial interviews and induction with managers and teachers in each department further clarify learners' expectations.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well through teaching and learning, although specific planning for this in lessons requires further improvement. The effective tutorial system ensures that all learners have an appropriate understanding of issues related to equality and diversity,

and many curriculum areas build on this well. For example, the inclusion in sport enrichment activities of learners with disabilities is exemplary, and gender stereotyping is tackled effectively in a wide range of sports. Learners' behaviour across the college is excellent, with learners treating staff, visitors and other learners with courtesy and respect.

Science and mathematics

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement; while success rates are high for the GCSE in science and for A levels overall, they are low for AS levels and for the access to higher education in science course. Learners gain good wider employability skills through the college's enrichment programme and many develop good mathematical skills. However, practical skills in science are underdeveloped. Most successful AS-level science learners progress to A level, but a much smaller proportion progresses in mathematics. An improvement action plan was introduced last academic year and many new improvement initiatives are starting to have positive impact.
- Much teaching and learning in lessons require improvement. In their planned activities, teachers do not challenge learners sufficiently, allowing them to be too passive, and they make slow progress. Teachers make insufficient use of the good information they have about individual learners' skills and needs to plan for individual learning, sometimes resulting in the more capable learners dominating.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers set learners challenging and motivating tasks, so that learners progress well. For example, in one lesson, learners were asked to research the environment and global warming and the presentations they produced were detailed and of a high standard.
- Managers and teachers have introduced more rigorous arrangements for learners' target setting for improvement. All learners have clear targets set and are expected to achieve them, but it is too early to judge the impact of these recent changes. Assessment is regular and effective. Teachers mark learners' work well and their feedback is detailed and constructive. Underachievement is monitored and learners attend one-to-one sessions to support the improvement in their grades.
- Support for learners is good. Teachers, tutors, coaches and mentors are generous with their time and work tirelessly to give the learners the help they need to achieve. Learners benefit from one-to-one sessions, which are readily available when they need to complete missed work or when they need help to achieve higher grades. Regular catch-up sessions support learners at risk of underachievement.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. As a result of the improved interview process, learners are given good advice about which courses to choose. Once on their chosen course, staff provide learners with good advice about their future careers and university courses, and help them with their applications.
- Teachers use technology effectively to monitor learners' progress and to support teaching and learning. Schemes of work, digital presentations, past examination papers and mark schemes are all available through the VLE. However, interactive and inspirational learning materials are underdeveloped.
- Wider opportunities for learners to support their studies are excellent. For example, physics learners have the opportunity to work alongside Bristol University and Amsterdam University to undertake research into cosmic rays. Previous learners built and installed the climate detection and monitoring system on the college roof. Current learners are monitoring and analysing the data collected and sharing these with numerous other colleges throughout Europe. This enables

learners to develop their employability skills as well as a variety of study skills, such as analytical skills.

- Teachers develop learners’ English well in many lessons. Learners develop their oral skills through making presentations of their work; teachers routinely correct spellings in written work. English is also developed well through the tutorial system. For example, learners have written essays on Ebola, how it is spread and its impact. As a result, they are developing higher-order English skills essential to their careers.
- Learners work in an inclusive and safe environment which encourages international dimensions of science and mathematics, and where the contribution to scientific knowledge from other countries is acknowledged.

Building and construction

16-19 study programmes
14-16 part-time provision
Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected in the good outcomes for learners on most substantial programmes. Overall success rates are consistently high for both learners aged 16 to 18 and for those aged 19 and over. Apprenticeship success rates have improved to above national rates, and current successful completions indicate further improvement.
- Teachers and trainers have high expectations of learners and they respond well to this, with the vast majority making good progress. Staff genuinely care about their learners, ensuring highly effective pastoral support; learners feel safe. These factors enable learners with a range of complex support needs to stay on their courses and achieve.
- Teachers and trainers use their up-to-date industrial knowledge well and often plan good quality sessions, to meet the needs of learners of differing abilities. Learners often have a deep understanding of the subjects studied and thoroughly enjoy their learning. In the most effective sessions, creative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, including the use of the college’s VLE, are used to excellent effect. For example, learners in a maintenance lesson benefited from ‘teaching tiles’ that were highly effective at encouraging them to peer assess each other’s work and to work towards individualised targets related to their own jobs.
- In the vast majority of sessions, teachers and trainers set learners realistic timings for their work, which are industry relevant and develop skills to industry standards. For example, learners studying brickwork benefit from individual tasks that are personal to the learner’s own ability and are achievable in the timescale agreed with staff. In the small minority of sessions, which have less industrial context, learners make slower progress and do not readily understand what is required of them to improve.
- Managers are continuing to expand the area’s partnerships with employers. Currently, too few learners have access to real work experience. However, innovative and good examples of close working with employers exist in the form of high quality work placements for learners on study programmes. For example, learners on electrical courses have work placements with a local employer, and the partnership with this employer sponsors the electrical department.
- The tracking and monitoring of learners by staff are effective. Learners in trade areas benefit from significant tutorial support, and reviews of learning are frequent. In these groups, learners are set multiple, meaningful targets. Teachers and trainers support learners well, in pursuit of targets; they provide positive reinforcement and learners feel valued. Staff intervene swiftly and effectively to tackle underachievement or to improve learners’ behaviour. However, the system the area uses to record reviews with learners is at an early stage of development, and staff do not all use it consistently well.

- Teachers' and trainers' verbal feedback to learners, on their work and progress, is good and learners speak positively about the development points that they are given. However, in the majority of sessions, teachers provide too few useful written comments on learners' written work to enable the learners to know how to improve. In too many cases, staff do not correct spelling and grammar errors, and learners do not appreciate how limited English ability may adversely affect their progress.
- The effective development of learners' functional skills overall, particularly in relation to the achievement of qualifications, requires improvement. Teachers ensure that learners' development of embedded mathematical skills is good in the majority of their practical sessions. However, the inconsistent quality of teaching, learning and assessment in relation to these skills in too many sessions impedes learners' progress with them.
- The promotion of diversity through teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. In a small number of sessions, staff make subtle references to diversity, for example to highlight the regional variations in working practices and terminology, but more often than not opportunities to explore and celebrate diversity are overlooked. As a result, learners do not develop sufficient appreciation of varying working practices across construction trade areas, nor how under representation of women and of minority groups in the construction industry could be tackled. However, teachers ensure that learners work in an inclusive environment in their sessions.

Sport, leisure and recreation

16-19 study programmes
Apprenticeships
Community learning

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. As a result, most learners achieve their qualifications well and often with high grades, while developing excellent skills which prepare them for higher education or employment. Learners make excellent progress in both theoretical aspects of sport and in practical sports skills, for example developing basketball skills on the court and then analysing performance in class.
- Teachers plan programmes exceptionally well to develop employability skills suited to the sports industry. For example, learners are able to gain fitness instruction and coaching qualifications alongside academic qualifications. Elite sports performers participate in an apprenticeship programme specific to their needs, combining expert coaching in their sport with their preferred academic course.
- Teachers are very well qualified, with high levels of academic qualifications supported by sports industry experience and sports expertise. They use their skills effectively to motivate and inspire learners and challenge them to produce work of a high standard. For example, learners plan talent identification schemes for sports clubs, producing highly professional posters and presentations detailing their plans. Apprentices receive intensive coaching to develop elite performance skills in their 'talent pathway', for example in boxing, fencing or football.
- Teachers use a good variety of methods in lessons to involve and interest learners and to ensure their very good progress. Peer assessment is used well to encourage learners to work collaboratively and build their knowledge. Teachers and coaches use effective targeted questioning to prompt learners' reflection and more explicit answers. For example, in a training session, whilst one apprentice demonstrated rotation of joints in overarm bowling, the coach prompted another to explain power and velocity in action.
- Sports facilities at the college are outstanding. Learners and apprentices benefit from access to indoor and outdoor artificial football/rugby pitches of the latest specification, a fully sprung sports hall and an Olympic-size running track. One of the pitches is used by Bristol City Football

Club for its practice sessions. Learners develop good skills in their choice of an exceptional range of sports at Academy or recreational level, from table tennis to taekwondo. Many learners represent clubs at national and international levels.

- Information, advice and guidance for learners are outstanding. Teachers assess learners’ aspirations and prior attainment very well when learners arrive at college and make sure they are on appropriate programmes. Initial information sets out responsibilities and very high expectations of behaviour to which learners respond very well. Reviews at regular intervals further ensure that learners’ needs are being met well and that they receive good advice about future progression.
- Assessment is good, with stringent deadlines met by learners. Teachers provide a wide variety of assignments that challenge learners to apply their skills and knowledge very well in realistic work situations. For example, learners study a unit about planning an event in class and then organise a seven-a-side football tournament for local schoolchildren.
- Learners benefit from excellent support through regular tutorials, where they monitor their progress with their tutor and agree targets for improvement. Apprentices work constantly with their coach assessors, who monitor progress very closely. Very good additional support is also provided by teachers to those who need it, so that they achieve at the same rate as their classmates. Learners value highly the resources and links to research materials provided on the college’s VLE.
- Mathematical skills are embedded well in many lessons. For example, learners calculate the revenue brought to a gym from membership fees, or work out their resting heart rate. Teachers remind learners of the importance of good English in most lessons, but do not always ensure that skills are improved as well as practised.
- Teachers promote a very inclusive and safe environment where all are respected equally and enabled to participate in sports practice, whatever their ability or background. Learners develop a very good understanding in lessons of how to overcome barriers to sports participation, for example by taking part in a blind football game or adapting roles for disabled players.

Public services	Good
16-19 study programmes	
Apprenticeships	

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good; most learners achieve their qualifications, although success rates are too low on a small minority of courses. Attendance and punctuality are good in most lessons and learners make good progress. Teachers support learners well to choose an appropriate course, although the college’s reduced provision of level 2 courses means some learners cannot join at the level they require.
- Teachers have high expectations of learners, which lead to excellent behaviour both in lessons and on external trips and visits. Learners take part in learning activities well and enjoy their lessons. They are good ambassadors for the college. In better lessons, which predominate, teachers ensure a good mix of activities, including well-linked theory and practical work, to consolidate learning. For example, in one lesson, learners made effective use of compasses and practised orientation with maps, which put previous theory teaching into a practical context.
- In too many lessons, teachers make insufficient use of extended questioning or other methods to check learning and assess learners’ progress. In a small minority of lessons, learners spend too much time completing assignments in lessons. A significant minority of teachers use targeted questioning well.
- Teachers present assessments clearly, resulting in a very good standard of work from learners, with high grades achieved on most programmes. Teachers’ feedback on learners’ work is positive and motivational and identifies poor spelling and punctuation; this promotes workplace

standards. However, teachers do not always provide learners with clear guidance on how to improve. In a small minority of cases, teachers’ assignment briefs contain errors which damage learners’ understanding of the correct use of English.

- Teachers make good use of their knowledge of learners’ prior achievements to provide appropriate support. However, the setting of individual targets in lessons needs to be developed further to ensure that all learners fulfil their potential. Learners know their target grades, are motivated to achieve them and have a good understanding of how well they are progressing towards them. Teachers provide good opportunities for the development of independent learning skills.
- Teachers have very good experience in the public services, which enhances learning, provides real life experiences and brings learning to life. However, teachers do not always use their first-hand knowledge to best effect, to deepen learners’ knowledge and understanding. Teachers are very enthusiastic and the good relationships between them and learners generate a culture of mutual respect, which teachers use well to motivate and encourage learners.
- Very good partnerships with employers and other external organisations enhance learning and develop learners’ employability skills. Learners take part in a wide range of external visits including ‘riot training’ at Gloucester Prison and police dogs’ drug training to improve their understanding of the working environment. Learners develop wider employability skills through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme.
- Learners with additional learning support needs, including high needs learners, receive very good support from their teachers and learning support workers. Learners benefit from access to a ‘drop in’ service and find the support that they are given highly beneficial in helping them to achieve their learning goals. Teachers meet the needs of learners with specific needs well, for example through the use of printing on coloured card and the use of overlays for learners with dyslexia.
- Teachers ensure that learners’ use of technology is developed to an adequate standard. Learners use the well-structured VLE effectively to locate lesson notes and presentations, although a few assignments are out of date.
- Teachers and learners recognise the importance of English and mathematical skills and build these into lessons. For example, in one lesson, learners calculated the cost of materials to build a bridge. However, the extent of English and mathematical skills development is inconsistent across lessons and teachers do not fully exploit opportunities for skills development to ensure that learners make sufficient progress in these areas.
- Learners feel safe at college and are positive about the respectful culture in which they work. They know how to keep themselves safe and are confident to tackle issues that might arise. Teachers manage health and safety well, with risk assessments in place for practical activities which they share effectively with learners.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity is very good. Awareness of diversity is promoted well in specific course units and through participation in the National Citizenship Service. In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not fully develop the learners’ understanding of diversity.

Performing and visual arts

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding as reflected in the highly successful achievements for all learners. A significant proportion achieves high grades and the vast majority acquire excellent performing and art and design skills.
- Excellent and exemplary teaching by professionally qualified and vocationally practicing teachers is inspirational and highly motivates learners, who respond enthusiastically, work hard, produce

work to very high standards and progress well. Learners' attendance and punctuality are excellent.

- Teachers ensure that the development of learners' knowledge and technical skills in performing arts and art and design are excellent. Carefully planned curricula leading to imaginative, and often 'real life' assignment briefs provide learners with experience of a broad range of techniques and practices within each assignment. Teachers successfully promote the complete creative process from conception, through research, design and development to final pieces and the sharing of work; this is highly valued by learners and teachers.
- Teachers require learners to contribute fully to shaping their own learning and to make well-informed decisions about their course of study. In art and design, the options workshops, which learners undertake in the first part of their course, enable them to identify their key strengths and interests. This ably supports their decisions for further study within their course and future study or work.
- Teachers use well-chosen difficult questions that make learners think hard and relate their theoretical knowledge to the technique or performance they are executing. Learners are encouraged to become independent within their work, to experiment and take risks. Through skilful use of peer assessment, learners develop essential critical analysis skills. Learners respect each other's feedback and respond to it positively. Learners develop valuable communication skills and articulate effectively their own evaluative thoughts and judgements in relation to performance and artistic works.
- Teachers and learners use high-quality industry-standard teaching resources to support learning very well and to contribute to the diverse range of work learners produce. Accommodation is excellent and learners benefit greatly from access to professional specialist art and design studios, theatres and rehearsal spaces.
- Managers are aware that curriculum developments and the increase in learner numbers have created a pressure on specialist resources, such as printing equipment and information technology (IT) printers. Highly qualified technicians provide exceptional support for both learners and teachers.
- Learners gain huge confidence and essential performing and exhibiting skills through the diverse and inspirational opportunities the college and community partners provide. These include Halloween performances, art exhibitions in Stroud Museum and the displaying of work in a local hospital. Learners confidently utilise 'smart' technologies to share work electronically through 'blogs' and sharing platforms.
- Teachers ensure that assessment activity is thoroughly planned, carefully moderated and fully recognises learners' achievements. Teachers identify learners' skills and knowledge exceptionally well at the beginning of courses, use thorough assessment methods and set aspirational targets which they and learners regularly review in tutorials.
- Learners benefit greatly from teachers' knowledgeable, immediate feedback about their current work or ideas. Much feedback is informal and creates further challenge for learners to develop ideas and critical thinking. Assessment often includes learners' personal review of their own work, for example use of video to review a dance show performance. Feedback on assignments is detailed and clearly tells learners how to improve their work. Learners value the feedback they receive and strive to develop their work further.
- Learners' development of English and mathematics is good, with the majority of learners gaining their qualifications. Teachers thoughtfully embed English and mathematics within both theoretical and practical activities. Learners confidently apply their skills to activities such as the building of stage sets and understanding the complexity of carpentry joints.
- Equality of opportunity is assured and diversity is celebrated through the varied individualised activities and projects learners undertake. Learners feel very safe.
- Managers and teachers ensure that pastoral care for learners is excellent. Learning support in classrooms ably supports all learners to produce work of the required standard. Individualised

support by learning mentors helps learners with often complex personal matters, enabling them to succeed. Teachers provide well-informed and highly relevant advice, which guides learners very well in their progression to university or employment.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Apprenticeships

Employability

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as reflected by low outcomes for learners overall. These are better for learners aged 19 and over than for those aged 16 to 18. Success rates for GCSE English at grades A* to C, and for functional skills qualifications, are below national rates, with a further fall in 2013/14. Learners' retention and attendance are good, resulting in improving in-year achievements, so far, this academic year. Learners are increasingly developing good verbal skills, using technical terms and high level descriptors well, for example when comparing and contrasting characters in a book. Most learners are now making good progress in foundation English lessons. Successful learners progress to higher levels of English study or vocational courses.
- Learners benefit from the recent professional development of vocational teachers, enabling English activities to be set effectively in context, such as mini-business projects dealing with a customer complaint. Teachers encourage and support all learners' individual needs well by creating a positive learning environment which increases learners' confidence and aids their enjoyment of lessons.
- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is not consistently sound. In better lessons, teachers use a good range of teaching methods and activities which adds interest and improves learning and understanding. For example, unusual items, such as a toy duck and a loaf of bread, were used to stimulate a lively discussion on key themes and literary techniques within a GCSE study text. In a functional skills lesson, triangular domino-style cards were used to help learners match features of different styles of learning. Paper-based resources are clearly presented with readable fonts and good use of imagery.
- In a significant minority of lessons, teachers do not challenge learners sufficiently to do better; the pace of the lesson is too slow and learners' progress is hindered. In weaker lessons generally, teachers' consolidation of learning, such as insisting that learners record key points, is often missed. Teachers do not always encourage learners to share responsibility for their learning, such as being fully prepared for lessons or taking notes where relevant.
- In many vocational subjects, English is increasingly well integrated into activities, for example the exploration of Greek mythology and word origins in the performing arts. However, good practice in this is not yet sufficiently secure across the curriculum. Teachers do not always check or reinforce spelling or new language phrases; this hinders learners' improvement of their English. In sport, learners are not sufficiently pressed to improve.
- Teachers use ILT effectively in lessons, such as video clips and presentation slides, although further enhancements, such as interactive quizzes via the VLE are underdeveloped. Learning environments display aspects of English language, such as plurals, as well as key facts showing the importance of English skills to help gain better paid jobs.
- Teachers use initial assessments of learners' English skills effectively and accurately to help plan individual programmes of study for learners. In some lessons, learners benefit from the use of record books to comment on their learning and to set personal targets.
- Learners receive appropriate initial advice and are guided to suitable programmes to support their personal and academic development. This guidance enhances their progression and career

opportunities. Many adult learners comment positively about their improved English and the impact on their daily lives.

- Teachers identify learners’ additional needs well. Extra one-to-one study lessons are very effective, with good use of ILT for ‘mind mapping’ to help learners with assignment planning. Learning support workers work well as a team with teachers, and their strong coaching skills help to increase learners’ confidence. Learning environments are well adapted and changed for learners when necessary, such as the relocation of a particular lesson to the ground floor due to a health concern.
- Teachers mark learners’ work well, identifying clearly the improvements needed. Preparation for assessment is thorough and improves learners’ progress. Learners comment positively on the prompt return of marked work and the helpful feedback it contains, and recognise how their English skills have improved.
- Teachers pay good attention to promoting equality and diversity, carefully considering the needs of learners of different ages, gender and cultural backgrounds. In one lesson, during a speaking and listening exercise, role play cards were used well to explore gender stereotypes and college job roles. Learners feel safe and behave in a positive, respectful way with peers and teachers. However, in a few instances, learners’ use of language in diverse learning settings was inappropriate.

<p>Foundation mathematics</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p> <p>Employability</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which is reflected in the low successful completion rate of learners. Success rates for almost all functional skills courses have been well below the poor national rates, although better for learners aged 19 and over; and for GCSE mathematics, high grades are low, especially for learners aged 16 to 18. The college’s improvement measures, such as the introduction of mathematics champions and the sharing of good practice between teachers, are resulting in early signs of improved progress by learners in lessons.
- In most foundation mathematics lessons, teachers plan and provide learning effectively to interest learners, and an industrious atmosphere prevails. Most learners are motivated to improve their skills and enjoy their learning, gaining in confidence in using mathematics. Punctuality is good and attendance is improving. In the best teaching and learning, well-designed activities reinforce previous learning and build new skills and knowledge. Learners work well with peers to support each other and to solve problems.
- However, while specialist teachers set learning in the context of everyday life, they do not consistently relate the mathematics skills explicitly to learners’ vocational courses. In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not manage group activities effectively to ensure that all learners are able to participate and work productively.
- Teaching and learning of mathematical skills within vocational courses require improvement. In some areas, such as business and the arts, teachers’ effective integration of mathematics with vocational aspects results in good skills development. In other areas, such as public services and construction, this is not the case.
- Teachers’ support for learners is good. Learners benefit from thorough support arrangements which include individual learning support in lessons and wider additional support, which help learners to master specific topics.

- Teachers’ and learners’ use of ILT to support learning require improvement. Teachers do not ensure that learners make best use of the resources available to support self-study outside of lessons. In the best lessons, teachers use ILT effectively, for example by demonstrating step-by-step calculations on the interactive whiteboards.
- Staff use initial and further assessment well to establish learners’ starting points and underachievement. However, the resulting information is not comprehensively used to set targets to promote learners’ achievement, or to provide challenging activities to meet the individual needs of the more able learners.
- Learners receive prompt, constructive feedback from teachers on their work in lessons and from assessment tasks. Work is marked well and this includes a written explanation of calculation methods where answers are incorrect, so that learners know what they must improve and how to accomplish this.
- In better lessons, teachers ensure that learners develop their English skills well, through discussion about mathematics language. For example, teachers discuss with learners the different words and phrases used in everyday life to demonstrate where subtraction is required, such as ‘money off’ or ‘reduced by’. In another example, learners are building a dictionary of mathematics terminology that will become a shared resource.
- Learners receive helpful advice and guidance about course options and staff use initial assessment well to advise on an appropriate level of course. A clear explanation of the study programme structure ensures that learners understand the importance of mathematics to their vocational studies.
- In most lessons, teachers promote inclusion well. Learners appreciate the culture of mutual respect and their behaviour is good. However, teachers’ promotion of diversity within learning activities and materials is underdeveloped. Learners work safely and feel safe.

<p>Business</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p> <p>14-16 part-time provision</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. This is reflected in the exceptionally high learners’ success rates, in both academic and vocational subjects. Learners develop very good analytical and critical skills and excellent business and professional understanding and knowledge. They demonstrate these in the high standards of their assignments, portfolios and other work. Very large numbers of learners progress to higher levels of programme, higher education and employment.
- Teachers are dedicated professionals who are proud of the great progress made by their learners in recent years. Teachers and learners share a strong culture of excellence and very high aspirations. Learners respond very positively to this and value greatly the support and encouragement of their teachers, trainers and learning mentors. Learners work hard and many are inspired to achieve beyond their expectations.
- Teachers plan, prepare and deliver very engaging and challenging lessons, carefully suited to meet different learners’ needs. Lessons are suitably paced and purposeful, although a few activities are occasionally rushed. Learners experience and derive much benefit from a wide range of stimulating and imaginative activities. In a very good AS law lesson, for instance, learners were highly enthused by taking opposing group positions in determining admissible evidence for negligence in pre-trial procedures. In a lively lesson on interview and presentation skills, learners made great progress and had fun practising different body language and tonal

variations with their peers. Individual learners' contributions are greatly respected, and group work is very effective, with much emphasis on peer-support activities.

- Teachers ensure that learners' development of personal, social and employment skills is outstanding. Learning is linked very successfully to current business and professional practice, motivating learners well. All learners benefit greatly from personal and employment-related tutorials which develop their self-confidence and social skills very well, and give them a sharp insight into current employment needs. Employers provide very stimulating encouragement. For example, international accounting companies mentor accounting learners, local law practices interview learners in college, and level 2 business learners recently delivered a successful marketing presentation in a national competition.
- Teachers check learners' progress very thoroughly in lessons and in assignments, as well as in work-based assessments and reviews. Progress is monitored well by good questioning, observation, peer assessment, online tests and other assessment means. Learners receive very helpful, detailed and often challenging feedback, which is closely aligned to examination requirements. This motivates learners well, enabling them to improve and succeed.
- Learners' development of English and mathematics is good. Managers ensure that study programmes help learners to greatly improve their written and verbal communications skills, or their mathematical understanding and practice through budgets and financial calculations. Learners are aware of the need for precise and exact use of language in law, accounting and business administration, as essential for examination and employment success; they develop this effectively. Learners use appropriate professional terminology confidently and present sophisticated analytical concepts clearly. Teachers correct errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling in learners' assignments systematically, promoting workplace standards.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are excellent. Teachers, assessors and learning mentors are very approachable and help learners resolve a wide range of issues. Group and individual tutorials are very effective. Learners have clear and precise individual targets, which are recorded, monitored and discussed with their teachers and mentors regularly, helping them to make very good incremental progress. The college's VLE is a very valuable resource, regularly updated by teachers, helping learners to develop good independent learning skills.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is very good. Teachers have established a very secure, harmonious and respectful atmosphere in lessons, where learners prosper and support each other sensitively. Safeguarding is good. Learners receive very good awareness training on issues such as cyber bullying and sexual health from learning mentors. Business and law programmes develop specific themes relating to equality and diversity, such as global marketing and employment anti-discrimination legislation.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The Principal, senior managers and governors share a passion and relentless drive for quality improvement. They have successfully created and secured the future of the new college, whilst improving already high standards. The ambitious, inclusive mission and vision have been developed for the college, in full consultation with staff. Everyone in the college works with enthusiasm and commitment and strives to achieve aspirational targets for the college and its learners, who are well prepared for their future careers.
- Governors work tirelessly to support the strategic development and educational mission of the college, to support high expectations and the culture of continuous improvement in learners' achievement and teaching and learning. Governors' skills are well developed and relevant to college development, and the governors use their considerable expertise and networks to its benefit.
- Leaders and managers have developed an innovative and far-reaching strategic plan. They work highly productively with local, regional and national partners. They ensure that skills needs are

met and a wide curriculum is developed and well-resourced, to the benefit of learners across Gloucestershire and West of England local enterprise partnership areas. They have skilfully built on expertise and accomplishments from the merged colleges, replicating best practice and established networks and extending strengths, such as community provision around Stroud and sports provision in Bristol.

- Learners of all ages and abilities benefit from the well-managed and extensive curriculum, enabling good progression internally, to employment and to higher education. The increase in level 1 and level 2 courses and the development of new courses prioritising English and mathematical skills facilitate progression.
- Managers' work with schools is highly effective. Good partnerships in north Bristol, for example, result in a very wide offer of AS- and A-level subjects, both in college and schools. A broader vocational offer now exists for learners aged 14 to 16, and work with schools has improved initial advice and guidance on vocational choices for significant numbers of school pupils.
- The strong links with employers, developed by managers and staff, have enabled a significant increase in apprenticeship opportunities, as well as tailor-made courses for those in work. Significant numbers of adults and young people previously not in education, employment or training gain confidence and good employability skills at the college. The college is successful in an extensive range of innovative bids for funds to support under-represented groups.
- Managers have embraced the opportunities presented by study programmes to develop the employability skills of learners aged 16 to 19 through effective work experience and work simulations. The English and mathematical skills content of study programmes has increased substantially to improve employability; this development is valued and supported by all stakeholders, although implementation is at an early stage.
- Quality assurance is rigorous and very effective. Leaders and managers have significantly improved teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners since the creation of the new college. Self-assessment is thorough and inclusive. Managers and staff accurately evaluate the quality of provision across the college, within subcontractors' programmes and in the community and workplace. Improvement planning for apprenticeship programmes has been very effective. A minority of action plans for improvement lack precision; they do not include milestones for the closer monitoring of progress, and to enable more rapid improvement in the areas not yet outstanding.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the college's data management has improved, and is good. Qualitative data about learners' experience, including from learners themselves, are extensive, and well used for improvement.
- Strategies to improve teaching and learning are wide ranging and successful. Managers ensure thorough lesson observation, supported by targeted and thematic graded learning walks, as well as 'mini inspections' and audits of existing practice. Individual teachers are well supported to improve; they are motivated by peer practitioners who foster the sharing of good practice across the college.
- Managers' performance management of staff is good and supports improvement. The new appraisal system fully aligns to college strategic and improvement themes and is based on a detailed self-assessment, which staff value. Staff development opportunities are relevant, extensive and flexible.
- Leaders and managers assure that the college environment is inclusive and that the promotion of equality and diversity are core priorities of the college, confirmed in its educational charter. Diversity is celebrated, by the inclusive nature of the curriculum, throughout the curriculum, with groups and with individuals, and through a college-wide programme of events. The multi-faith chaplaincy is well established and represents six major world faiths. It is at the heart of the college's good arrangements to advise and protect learners in relation to radicalisation. Learners' behaviour is good and disciplinary processes are based on positive behaviours and restorative justice. The college offers a very supportive learning environment for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

- Managers closely analyse the outcomes and satisfaction levels of different groups of learners to identify any problems. All groups of learners achieve equally well overall, and any underperformance by different groups at course level is tackled promptly.
- The safeguarding of all learners is good. Staff and managers promote safety and well-being well, and learners report feeling safe across the college. Staff receive extensive training and support and are confident in identifying learners who may be at risk and referring them appropriately. Links to external bodies are comprehensive; these organisations assist with training and offering support to staff and learners. The cross-college safeguarding group is active in identifying potential dangers to learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

South Gloucestershire and Stroud College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
		Overall effectiveness	2	2	-	2	-	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	-	2	-	2	2	1	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	-	2	-	2	2	1	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	1	1

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Science	3
Mathematics and statistics	3
Building and construction	2
Sport, leisure and recreation	1
Public services	2
Performing arts	1
Visual arts	1

Foundation English	3
Foundation mathematics	3
Business	1

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	12,159							
Principal/CEO	Kevin Hamblin							
Date of previous inspection	N/A							
Website address	www.sgscol.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+
	538	1051	994	1000	2278	794	54	372
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	205	100	739	139	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	26							
Part-time	218							
Number of community learners	40							
Number of employability learners	223							
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"> ■ Bath Rugby ■ Barking Abbey School ■ British Fencing ■ British Judo ■ City College Brighton and Hove ■ Copleston High School ■ Gateshead College ■ Newcastle Falcons (Rugby) ■ Oaklands College ■ SEEVIC College ■ Table Tennis England 							

Contextual information

This large college was formed from the merger of Filton and Stroud Colleges in February 2012. This is the first Ofsted inspection of the merged college. The college's five main campuses are located within the Stroud District of Gloucestershire and on the border of South Gloucestershire and north Bristol. South Gloucestershire is a prosperous area on many socio-economic counts, although pockets of severe deprivation exist in urban areas, including the City of Bristol. Attainment of five or more GCSEs, grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, for school pupils is below the national average both for South Gloucestershire and Bristol. The college's local communities are diverse, spread across rural Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire, through to highly urbanised areas in Bristol.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

David Martin HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and ten additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal learner services 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. 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.

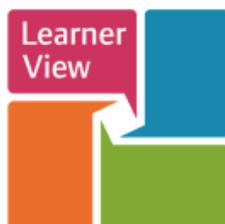
What inspection judgements mean

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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