

York College

General further education college

Inspection dates		9–13 December 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Outstanding-1
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding-1
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding-1

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is outstanding because:

- The college's success rates for long courses at all levels have been consistently above national averages for five years, especially for students aged 16 to 18. Success rates are high on most apprenticeship programmes.
- Students and apprentices make good progress relative to their starting points. Students needing extra help with their studies and those with learning disabilities achieve particularly well.
- Participation by students in the very wide range of enrichment and extension activities that the college provides helps them to develop excellent personal, social and employability skills.
- Progression to higher-level study and into jobs is outstanding. The large majority of students on advanced-level courses progress onto university programmes or onto higher-level programmes within the college, including onto the college's undergraduate programmes.
- Tutors are highly motivated and have very high expectations. They give unwavering attention to ensuring that students remain at the heart of all college activity, which results in teaching and learning that are consistently good or better.
- Outstanding support arrangements help all groups of students to achieve, especially the most vulnerable and those with significant barriers to learning. As a consequence, students stay on programme, achieve their goals and progress well.
- Outstanding initial advice and guidance result in the very large majority of students being on a programme that meets their needs, interests and aptitudes. Progress tutors monitor and support students carefully throughout their studies and, consequently, most students succeed.
- The Principal, senior team and managers are relentless in their pursuit of excellence. The college has realised its ambition to provide outstanding provision for its stakeholders.
- Governance is outstanding. Governors provide exceptionally rigorous challenge and support for the college's senior management team.
- The college has excellent partnerships with local stakeholders that contribute effectively to meeting the city's learning, employment and community priorities. The college has a very high profile in the community, which helps it to provide an extensive enrichment programme for students, as well as work placements and opportunities for voluntary and community work.

Full report

What does York College need to do to improve further?

- Take swift action to reverse the low success rates on foundation and intermediate qualifications in English and mathematics, so that students on those courses achieve to the same high standards as students in the rest of the college.
- Improve the quality of the few lessons that require improvement by ensuring that tutors make better use of all of the available information about students to plan learning to meet individual needs.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The college's overall success rates have been consistently above national averages for each of the last five years and in the case of long courses at all levels, well above. For students aged 16 to 18, who make up the very large majority of the college's population, success rates are outstanding. The college's data for 2012/13 indicate it has sustained this trend. Outcomes for students aged 14 to 16 are outstanding. ▪ Overall success rates for adult students on long courses are good. The college's success rates on functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics courses dipped in 2012/13 and are now below national averages, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. However, the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades in GCSE English is high. ▪ Apprenticeship success rates, especially in engineering, are high and have been above national averages for the last three years, despite a slight dip in 2012/13. The proportion of apprentices who complete within the planned period is also good. ▪ Students make very good progress relative to their starting points. On the majority of advanced-level courses, students achieve grades that are higher than would be expected of them given their grades at GCSE. The proportion of students who gain high grades at advanced level is good. The performance of students from disadvantaged areas is also good. ▪ No significant performance differences exist between different groups of students and work-based learners. Males do as well as females, though the college's data suggest that males are performing slightly better in 2012/13. Students needing extra help with their studies and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve particularly well, especially at foundation and intermediate levels. ▪ The college's extensive range of enrichment and extension activities and the many opportunities for volunteering and community work ensure that most students and work-based learners develop excellent personal, social and employability skills. Students participate in community projects, charity work, skills competitions and visit places of interest relevant to their course. The college's extensive collaborative work with the local council to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training has been particularly effective in re-engaging these groups into productive activity. ▪ Progression to higher-level qualifications and into jobs that meet local and regional needs is outstanding. The college has accurate destination data for the very large majority of students and apprentices who completed in 2013. Of these, most have progressed into employment or onto a higher-level programme within the college, including the college's undergraduate programmes. Progression to university for advanced-level students is excellent. Apprentices gain additional responsibilities at work and become valued employees. Many progress from intermediate to advanced-level programmes. 	

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Outstanding teaching, learning and assessment correlate well with the outstanding success rates for students and the consistently good success rates for apprentices. Tutors give unwavering attention to ensuring that students remain at the heart of all college activity. They are highly motivated, aspirational and have high expectations of their students.
- Tutors use their skills and expertise to set exceptionally challenging learning activities, especially at advanced level, that promote students' higher-order thinking skills and preparedness for further study. The very best lessons are characterised by tutors' infectious enthusiasm and their ability to bring topics to life through the use of real-world illustrations and questioning techniques that challenge students to develop in maturity and understanding.
- The college's recently established initiative of encouraging all teaching staff, especially the best tutors, to participate in 'professional learning communities' has contributed to extensive professional development that has seen many more tutors willing to take exciting risks with the teaching strategies they use. As a result, students benefit from tutors exploring and trying out innovative teaching and learning strategies, such as peer assessment, that help them to engage actively with learning and to succeed.
- In a very few lessons, tutors do not challenge the most-able students sufficiently. For the very small number of off-the-job learning sessions, a few tutors use a limited range of learning strategies and apprentices quickly become bored.
- Outstanding care and support arrangements help highly vulnerable students to achieve their potential and make excellent progress. Intensive wrap-around care is extremely effective in helping those students who find themselves in difficult personal circumstances, or in acute need, to stay on their programme and results in improved retention rates for these students.
- Good, timely initial assessment ensures that students study a course that best meets their needs and aspirations. Progress tutors monitor progress assiduously and set challenging targets. Work-based learners benefit from frequent and well-planned assessment with good involvement from work-place mentors, resulting in learners having plenty of opportunities to apply their learning and develop vocational skills to a good standard.
- A very wide range of extremely well-integrated and accessible personal, academic and financial help means students with significant barriers to learning receive assistance to overcome these. Students speak extremely highly of the support they receive and say that without it they could not continue with their studies or make the progress expected of them.
- The college identifies students with additional learning needs very carefully and provides flexible bespoke assistance that best suits their identified learning needs, including discrete high-quality learning support in class. As a consequence, students receiving support succeed just as well as their peers, particularly at foundation and intermediate levels. However, it is not always evident in lessons how tutors use all of the available information about students to inform planning or to identify learning activities that best suit particular students and their individual learning needs.
- Study programmes include a wide range of enrichment activities including opportunities for students to participate in volunteering, work placements and in a variety of clubs and sporting activities.
- Assessment is frequent, rigorous and highly effective in promoting learning. Very good in-class assessment provides students with constructive feedback on their progress and development and, as a result, many students go on to achieve very high grades, especially at advanced level.
- Students develop good skills in English and mathematics. The discrete teaching of functional skills is generally good and occasionally outstanding. Students develop very good skills in manipulating language and understanding the different uses of mathematics in everyday life, which prepares them well for employment and higher education.
- Outstanding initial advice and guidance means the vast majority of students enrol on the right programme, where they are likely to succeed. Very well-planned transition arrangements, including open days, taster events and visits to college, mean that students, including the most

vulnerable, know what to expect when they first arrive at the college. Progress tutors discuss progression opportunities carefully with each student. As a consequence, many go on to further study or into employment.

- The college is highly inclusive in all aspects of its activities. High levels of respect permeate across the whole college environment and students feel their views are valued and taken seriously. Walls are decorated with inspirational student case studies and motivational quotations encouraging all students to aim high. Staff have high expectations of their students, irrespective of ethnic, social or class background. The college’s initiative to stretch and challenge gifted and talented students, known as the Sirius Group, has supported high achievers from diverse backgrounds successfully to gain places at prestigious universities.

<p>Early years and playwork</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment in the very large majority of lessons are good, as reflected in the good and improving success rates. Tutors plan lessons well and use a variety of effective learning resources to stimulate learning. They use realistic examples to assess students’ understanding and make good links with previous learning.
- Tutors’ expectations are high and support for students in the college is very good. This helps to develop students’ positive attitudes and behaviour. For students on advanced-level programmes, tutors focus strongly on developing essential workplace skills such as communication, professionalism and safeguarding. College classrooms and learning spaces are bright, welcoming and well resourced.
- Students have good access to their tutors and assessors both within college and through visits to their placement, which supports their progress and learning. Students are motivated and committed to their studies and work placements. Tutors are approachable, supportive and flexible in meeting students’ individual needs.
- In the best lessons, tutors use questioning effectively to link theory with practice and to extend learning. Students enjoy learning and play an active role in class activities. Tutors are enthusiastic and make good use of their knowledge of childcare practice to motivate students. However, a few tutors on advanced-level courses fail to plan learning effectively so that it meets the needs of the most-able students.
- Initial assessment processes are robust and used to identify and meet students’ additional support needs. As a result, students follow programmes of study that meet their needs and career aspirations.
- Individual target-setting for students is good. Tutors agree action plans with students and set targets to help them achieve. For a small number of students, tutors set targets driven by assessment requirements rather than linked directly to the promotion of learning.
- Feedback on students’ work is supportive and develops learning. Attention to correcting and improving spelling and grammar is good. Tutors promote the development of English and mathematics during sessions.
- Teaching and assessment of English and mathematics skills at all course levels are good. In better lessons, tutors use a range of resources that capture naturally occurring opportunities in the classroom to develop vocationally relevant skills. In a few lessons, tutors do not use all of the available opportunities fully to integrate the development of skills in English and mathematics with childcare topics.
- Advice, guidance and support are good. The college has good links with a range of employer and careers-guidance partners, which students can access. The planning of information and guidance to meet individual needs is particularly effective as evidenced by the high proportion of

students who progress to higher study or into employment. Employers are involved actively in the design, delivery and assessment of students within the work placement.

- Students are valued and respected. Tutors promote students’ understanding of equality and diversity effectively. Students display confidence and maturity in their understanding of equalities and are able to apply this understanding to the workplace. They have a good understanding of their responsibility for maintaining their own safety as well as the safety and well-being of the children in their placements.

<p>Science, mathematics and statistics</p> <p>16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics and science are good. This reflects the very high success rates in AS and A-level mathematics and further mathematics, and the high success rates in A-level sciences. The success rate in AS mathematics is outstanding. In a few AS science subjects, success rates are below national averages. Success rates for GCSE mathematics are low but improving. Punctuality and attendance are very good.
- Mathematics teaching is outstanding. Tutors are especially good at inspiring their advanced-level students and giving them the confidence to succeed. They are highly motivated and work with great intensity in lessons. Students comment on how much they enjoy the subject and the success they experience. Students who achieved only modest GCSE grades when they left school flourish at the college.
- The mathematics timetable allows AS students to have a free choice of their applied module, often one that fits best with their other subjects and career aims. In further mathematics, many students take additional modules to extend their learning. This wider experience of mathematics equips students with an exceptionally strong basis for the study of the subject in higher education.
- In mathematics lessons, tutors question students well. This helps to probe and clarify students' understanding. In all mathematics classes, tutors challenge students to think, not just about solutions to problems, but about the best approach to take and, in this way, they gain a full understanding of the best techniques to use. Students present their work to the highest standards. This makes it easy for students and their tutor to check their solutions and to find errors.
- In the best science lessons, students work hard and show good levels of application. Tutors use imaginative ways to help students learn. For example, in one particularly effective biology lesson, students used a matching cards activity to reinforce their understanding before working on examination questions. Work booklets across the science subjects are of high quality and give students a good framework for their learning. Experimental work is generally good and is a strong feature of the extended diploma in applied science. Tutors set homework regularly.
- In a few science lessons, tutors’ expectations of the most-able students are too low. Lesson planning does not always take sufficient account of the detailed information available to tutors on each of their students’ individual needs. As a consequence, a few students fail to make sufficient progress in lessons. Tutors do not make sufficient use of information and learning technology to help students visualise more complex scientific models such as the fluid mosaic model of cell membranes.
- Tutors arrange additional support promptly for those students identified through initial assessment as requiring extra help. In both science and mathematics, tutors have good systems in place to monitor students' progress. Through this, underperforming students in all AS and A-

level science subjects are directed to additional support classes. Students value the high-quality informal support that tutors provide.

- Subject-based support for students in mathematics is outstanding. Students with a grade B in GCSE take an additional qualification, 'foundations of advanced mathematics', to help them develop their basic algebra skills. The open area in mathematics, where many students work, is close to mathematics classrooms and tutors' workrooms. The result is an almost continual debate about mathematics throughout the day between students and, when they need help, between tutors and students. The result is an outstanding learning environment for students.
- Formal assessments are good in both mathematics and science. Assessments are at the right level and help students to understand examination requirements. Work is marked regularly with helpful comments on how to improve. Tutors correct poorly constructed sentences and obvious spelling mistakes in students' work. They promote the correct use of specialist vocabulary effectively, which helps students to perform better in examinations.
- The college provides comprehensive information, advice and guidance to help science and mathematics students decide which courses and subjects to choose. Attractive displays throughout the teaching and learning spaces celebrate destinations and successes of previous students and help to show the wide range of careers that they can follow.
- Mathematics tutors inspire their students to be ambitious and pursue careers in mathematics-based subjects. Science tutors also give students a good awareness of available careers. Progression from advanced-level study to higher education and employment is very good in science and mathematics, but the low success rates in the sciences inhibit progression from AS to A level. The college enhances students' career prospects by providing them with opportunities to complete an extended mathematics project or studying additional qualifications to extend and stretch them.
- Students work well together and feel equally valued. The way in which students work together in lessons shows maturity in their approach to learning. Appropriate health and safety procedures are in place and routinely reinforced. Tutors promote equality and diversity satisfactorily, though schemes of work and lesson plans do not always incorporate equalities within the taught subjects.

<p>Engineering</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, and reflect the very large majority of students achieving their qualifications. Long-course success rates have been very high and consistently well above the national average for the last three years.
- Tutors are highly competent and very knowledgeable, and have high expectations of students. They use their good industrial experience very effectively to introduce commercial practices and illustrations in their teaching. As a result, students enjoy their lessons and make very good progress.
- Tutors use a very wide range of teaching and learning methods to enliven learning and to interest and motivate students. In the better theory lessons, students develop creative engineering design skills and produce high-quality work. In one lesson, students worked on a project to develop and manufacture an excellent programmable prototype vehicle with integrated lights and signals. In the very few less-effective lessons, tutors do not use directed questions to engage students well or check their understanding and extend the knowledge of the more able.
- The quality of students' practical work is very good and meets industry standards. In a lesson on advanced turning, students worked independently, productively and safely, and manufactured

high-quality components of a piston in low-carbon steel. Most of the products were well within the specified dimensional tolerances.

- Engineering students use technology very well, including specialist computer software and the college’s web-based learning resource. This helps them to widen their understanding, develop independent skills, complete assignment work and increase their employability prospects. For example, in using proprietary computer-aided design software, students were able to create two-dimensional and three-dimensional engineering drawings to exacting industry standards.
- Tutors and learning assistants provide excellent support for students. Tutors use students’ individual learning plans effectively and set challenging time-bound targets to improve performance. They monitor students’ progress very well. In workshops, tutors use good tracking sheets that they display on the walls of the workshops. Tutors take prompt action for improvement and plan additional supervised studies sessions for students who fall behind with their work. Learning assistants have good technical knowledge and guide and help students very effectively.
- Assessment is thorough, accurate and consistent. The quality of students’ written work is very good. For an assignment on the principles on which a machine tool operates when controlled by computer numerical control machines, students wrote high-quality comprehensive reports. The reports were well-organised, technically sound, supported by annotated photographs and incorporated a list of references showing evidence of good background research. Tutors write detailed feedback to help students improve their work.
- The development of students’ mathematics and English skills is very good. Tutors devise good-quality task sheets that incorporate written work and correct students’ English thoroughly. In one lesson, students interpreted engineering drawings correctly and used digital callipers to measure accurately the engineering components that they were manufacturing. Tutors correct students’ grammatical and spelling mistakes routinely.
- Tutors provide students with good information, advice and guidance on progression opportunities to higher-level courses and to employment. Students value highly the support and guidance they receive from their tutors and support staff.
- Tutors promote students’ awareness of equality and diversity very effectively. In lessons, students discuss gender and disability legislation in the context of recruitment and employment in the engineering industry. Tutors promote and reinforce safe working practices in workshops and in teaching rooms.

<p>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</p> <p>16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
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- Teaching and learning are outstanding, which correlates well with students’ consistently high retention, achievement and success. Motivated tutors have high expectations, which they share with students constantly. They pepper their teaching with industrial comparisons and scenarios, inspiring students to match commercial time restraints, protocols and professional standards. Students take responsibility for their own learning and actively support the development of their peers.
- Tutors plan effectively a particularly wide range of activities that promote the acquisition of knowledge. Students on the intermediate diploma in hair and beauty accomplish design briefs on bridal themes enthusiastically through the careful selection of products and techniques. Learning materials are of a high standard, well presented and designed to engage and motivate students. In the majority of lessons, tutors use well-phrased questions to extend themes, prompt discussion and assess students’ understanding.

- Tutors know their students extremely well and adapt lesson content to meet their needs. Students who were preparing hesitantly for their first external clients benefited from the tutor spending additional time providing detailed guidance on process and practice.
- Students benefit from a good and varied range of enrichment and incentives. Beauty therapy students appreciate the college’s progressive attitude, inviting a cosmetic surgeon to the college as a guest speaker. The college recently made employer placements a mandatory component of the course but it is too early to judge its effectiveness.
- Students make good use of the college’s web-based learning resource to help them with homework. The intermediate media make-up tutor has developed an innovative blog where students and the tutor share their college and external work. The feedback students receive is excellent. Students evaluate other members of the group frequently and very effectively as they complete client services. This provides an astute and insightful critique that students use effectively as an aid memoire. Tutor feedback is frequent, detailed and identifies clearly how students can improve their work.
- The monitoring of students’ progress is particularly effective. Frequent progress reviews record explicitly the skills and related theoretical principles that students have acquired. Tutors record progress and achievements in language students understand and make use of incremental development targets to move students effectively towards their ultimate goal.
- Tutors integrate English and mathematics with taught lessons effectively, for example, through activities in which students calculate the profit margins of the treatments they provide. During learning sessions, tutors correct students’ written English sensitively.
- Initial advice and guidance are excellent. Highly effective recruitment processes identify the skills and characteristics that students bring to their programmes. College staff use this information particularly well to help students choose the most appropriate course of study. Parents and carers are involved fully and kept well informed of their children’s progress. Students benefit from high-quality advice regarding careers in the hair and beauty industry.
- The division promotes a culture of care, respect and inclusivity. Support for students is outstanding. Staff respond quickly to any unauthorised absence. Tutors provide extra sessions for students who have missed classes. Students have individualised timetables, including weekend attendance if necessary, to accommodate part-time working or childcare responsibilities. Tutors promote a team ethos that extends to clients effectively. Intermediate beauty therapy students reflect on how they can modify body massage procedures for male clients and for those with back and spinal conditions.

<p>Performing and visual arts</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, as reflected in the very high and improving success rates. Tutors are demanding and have high expectations of students. Assignments, specifically matched to the assessment criteria for each learning goal, are bold and challenging. Tutors are well qualified, display excellent subject knowledge and are skilful at identifying their students’ potential.
- The standard of students’ work in lessons is consistently very good. Visual arts students paint, draw and design with exuberance and panache. The standard of presentations that focus on event management by advanced-level music students is outstanding. This curriculum area has a vibrant presence both within the college and in the local community. Students work towards ambitious public events such as productions, exhibitions and fashion shows, where learned and acquired skills are tested in front of a critical audience that includes industry practitioners and employers.

- Tutors insist that, where appropriate, students’ adherence to industry standards and practice are non-negotiable. Students recognise and comply with these requirements fully. Excellent partnerships and enrichment activities further learning and understanding extensively outside of the classroom. For example, before auditioning for London conservatoires, including one with which the college has a unique relationship, drama students are first able to audition for the artistic director of the Theatre Royal in York.
- The planning of teaching and learning strategies for students is excellent. Much thought goes into ensuring that students are on the courses best suited to their abilities. Careful consideration goes into staffing levels for intermediate-level art and design students so that they get the best possible support in acquiring the basic skills needed before progressing to higher levels within the college or elsewhere.
- Initial assessment is excellent and swiftly identifies those students requiring additional support. Individual learning plans record the close monitoring of students’ attendance and tutors take prompt action when attendance falls. Tutors record long- and short-term targets carefully in individual learning plans and students can see clearly how they can progress.
- Tutors’ feedback is accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement in students’ performance. Tutors are assiduous in tracking progress against aspirational target grades and current attainment. Feedback and subsequent action-planning are detailed and helpful. As part of their active-learning strategies, course teams place much emphasis on peer assessment which is often effective, with tutors demanding specific and analytical review of peer performance. Awarding bodies are fulsome in their recognition of the integrity and accuracy of tutors’ assessment.
- Wherever possible tutors integrate literacy and numeracy into assignments and they are vigilant in correcting misspellings in submitted work. Performing arts students are required to cost and budget planned productions to further their understanding of the financial aspects of the industry.
- Information, advice, guidance and support for students are very good and help motivate students to succeed in their learning and to progress. Induction activities ensure that each student is on the right course and excellent support strategies help students to progress successfully to prestigious and highly competitive higher-education institutions and conservatoires.
- Equality and diversity issues are covered very effectively. Tutors manage the behaviour of students very well. Students, in turn, are courteous and respectful to others and to each other. The celebration of cultural diversity is good, though tutors do not always record equalities topics in lesson plans.

Teaching and lecturing	Outstanding
19+ Learning programmes	

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, as reflected in the very high proportion of trainees who complete qualifications successfully. Tutors and senior staff have high expectations of teaching trainees and guide them extremely well to gain relevant qualifications within an agreed period and to progress further in their teaching roles.
- Strong relationships and mutual respect between tutors and trainees helps trainees to make good progress in a highly supportive learning environment. All trainees receive good encouragement in the development of independent learning skills and demonstrate these well. Literacy and numeracy assessments carried out at the start of the course provide trainees with helpful individual targets to develop their skills in these subjects if required. Tutors encourage trainees well to integrate activities into their lessons to develop students’ literacy and numeracy skills.

- Tutors are well qualified and enthusiastic. They provide trainees with extremely effective training and development opportunities to meet relevant awarding body standards. Challenge for trainees is very good and exceptionally effective through the high expectations of their tutors throughout their programmes. Trainees receive a wide range of individual support from managers, tutors and mentors. Consequently, trainees build their skills in planning learning and assessment activities very well.
- The good and outstanding lessons delivered by tutors contribute considerably to trainees improving their own practice. These lessons contribute significantly well in connecting teaching theory to practical classroom delivery. Classes are lively, informative and enjoyable. Good practice is routinely encouraged very well and shared amongst trainees throughout the programme.
- Tutors provide trainees with thorough advice and guidance through a comprehensive induction programme and strong direction on all aspects of their course of study. The setting of personal and challenging targets for trainees is particularly good and enables the timely completion of course requirements and outcomes. Trainees say this prepares them well for their course and provides them with confidence to progress and achieve. Trainees critically evaluate their teaching very thoroughly through reflective practice. Tutors encourage trainees very well to widen the range of teaching methods they use.
- Tutors provide a high level of particularly good feedback to trainees verbally and in writing. This includes formative and summative feedback on assignments submitted, with clear and strong guidance on how to improve. Individual learning plans are well structured and include stretching personal development actions, for example the development of improved referencing within assignment work.
- The development of English and mathematical skills has a high priority throughout the programmes and consequently the development of these skills is very high. Spelling, punctuation, grammatical and mathematical errors are corrected routinely on assignments.
- Trainees receive particularly good information, advice and guidance. Tutors have an excellent knowledge of further- and higher-education courses, and progression routes. Trainees receive good advice and guidance during their reviews and are encouraged to reflect as individuals on future development needs. Mentors within curriculum areas provide trainees with highly effective support and feedback out of the classroom.
- Trainees receive excellent equality and diversity training during induction and throughout their programmes. Equality and diversity are vital and integral parts of the classroom delivery to promote further understanding. The assessment and review process covers equality and diversity very well. Lesson planning identifies equality and diversity well with high-quality trainee profiles supporting the lesson planning process and reinforcing the inclusion of equality and diversity in the curriculum.

<p>Foundation English</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as reflected in overall success rates and acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Students benefit from recently restructured programmes taught by well-qualified and motivated tutors. However, tutors do not routinely take into account the individual skills in English that students need to acquire. Consequently, many students make slow progress in functional English. However, students make good progress during GCSE English lessons.
- In better lessons, tutors use questions well to promote discussion, highlight key learning points and consolidate learning. Tutors focus well on students’ future employment needs and they

develop good speaking and listening skills for example, when practising for job interviews. Tutors pay good attention to teaching planning skills in English so that students can plan written pieces effectively, such as a sequenced piece of writing.

- Adult students, at intermediate level, enjoy analysing essay questions and are confident in planning and structuring writing. Adults working at foundation level make substantial improvements in their reading. Some have extended their reading skills so that they can apply their skills at work, while others are beginner readers and are now confident in using their new skills in everyday life.
- Students studying GCSE English make good progress in improving their examination techniques so that they can achieve a higher grade. Tutors use well-directed questions in lessons to ensure students' comprehension of texts and understanding of unfamiliar vocabulary. Recent adaptations to timetables have improved access to GCSE lessons for students across the college.
- Tutors do not make sufficient use of the information contained in students' individual profiles to plan and adapt learning to meet individual needs. Consequently, a minority of students become distracted and insufficiently engaged. Additional learning materials for students to practise the skills they need to develop are not yet available on the college's web-based learning resource.
- Students receive good initial assessment and enrol on courses at the appropriate level. Tutors' assessment of students' individual problems with English do not lead to the setting of clear learning targets on students' individual learning plans. As a result, students do not focus sufficiently on practising skills that they need to develop. The setting of individual learning targets by tutors of adult programmes is good.
- Tutors' verbal feedback to students is good and most tutors use questions effectively to ensure students' understanding of key learning points in lessons. However, tutors do not always write sufficiently detailed comments on written work about what students need to do to improve.
- Tutors' lesson plans, while differentiated by level, do not routinely incorporate activities to improve individual students' English. Consequently, progress for a minority of students is slow. For all students, reviews of progress on individual learning plans identify tasks that students have completed rather than recording the incremental development of students' skills demonstrating improvement.
- Advice, guidance and support for students are effective in ensuring that students have a good understanding of what they can do next. Tutors promote equality of opportunity very well in lessons and celebrate diversity where naturally occurring opportunities arise. Additional support for students in lessons from tutors and support staff is very good. Students value the atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance that the college promotes.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- York College is successful in realising its ambition to be a truly outstanding college, where everyone matters and a successful future begins. The strategic plan, which all staff understand, prioritises students' success and the teaching, learning and support which enable them to achieve. Staff have participated fully in the development of the mission and they understand clearly how their role can contribute to its success.
- The senior team and governors are relentless in the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning. The college's strategy for improving teaching, learning and assessment is clearly articulated and promoted as the 'York College Way' and 'Good to Great'. The college's highly innovative approach to improvement has bravely implemented a fresh alternative to traditional observations of lessons as the key improvement activity. The college's approach is developmental, where tutors work in professional learning communities to improve practice and benefit students. Tutors are enthusiastic about this approach and readily embrace the opportunity to develop their skills that this initiative promotes.
- Governance is outstanding. Governors know the college very well. They are generous with their time and experience and are actively involved in the life of the college. They receive regular

detailed reports on the college's performance, which enable them to support and challenge the leadership team successfully.

- The college uses graded lesson observations effectively to monitor the quality of teaching and learning during curriculum area reviews and through risk-based targeted observations. Its extensive continuous professional development programme focuses on classroom practice. Events include prestigious external speakers, staff sharing best practice and courses leading to teaching qualifications.
- Annual performance review of staff, including the senior team and the chair of governors, is rigorous. For tutors, annual performance review rightly focuses on their core activity. Action plans are target-driven and challenging.
- The college has a strong focus on quality improvement through self-assessment, which is rigorous, thorough and based on evidence. Self-assessment is inclusive and managers include the student voice effectively through surveys and focus groups. Self-assessment judgements receive careful scrutiny from governors and peer colleges.
- The college has exceptionally positive and productive relationships with its local community and stakeholders. Strategic and sustainable partnerships, based on regional needs rather than on funding pressures, ensure that the college remains a key partner in the development of the city of York. The Principal shows a personal commitment to making partnerships work, though the college's many successes are not dependent on any particular individual. The college consults widely with partners to ensure that the programme of courses meets local needs, and has additional provision to support local and national employers.
- Strong partnership provides excellent enrichment opportunities for students to develop their employability skills and their confidence through work placement, volunteering, real-life work projects and their participation in prestigious public theatrical performances such as *Blood and Chocolate*. Multidisciplinary teams of students and staff are essential to the success of events such as the *York Mystery Plays* where students perform, build sets and props, and design costumes and make-up. Educational partnerships bring together schools, the college's adult provision and higher education to provide progression routes that meet the needs of the region.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is very good. The college welcomes all students and provides a range of specialist provision to meet the needs of students of all abilities and supports them well to succeed. It promotes equality and diversity actively and nurtures a clear culture and ethos of mutual respect, understanding and tolerance to create a friendly, harmonious and safe learning environment.
- Arrangements for ensuring students and work-based learners are safe are comprehensive and effective. The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students. The college has an open and welcoming environment and encourages members of the community to use its facilities. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place to cover visitors. All staff who work directly with students receive training in recognising when and how to refer potential safeguarding incidents.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

York 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	1	1	1	1
Outcomes for learners	1	1	1	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	1	1	1	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management	1	1	1	1

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Early years and playwork	2
Science	3
Mathematics and statistics	1
Engineering	1
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	1
Performing arts	1
Visual Arts	1
Teaching and lecturing	1
Foundation English	3

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	Full-time: 4,638							
	Part-time: 2,421							
Principal/CEO	Dr Alison Birkinshaw							
Date of previous inspection	March 2008							
Website address	www.yorkcollege.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+
Full-time	292	29	435	72	1,581	244	N/A	N/A
Part-time	92	189	1,084	549	1,259	130	N/A	46
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	15		N/A		15			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	217	84	175	206	1	13		
Number of learners aged 14-16	4							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	4							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
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"> ■ Bradford Teaching Hospital ■ GAP Training ■ HALO Business Safety and Security ■ Tribal education ■ Vital Skills Training Ltd 							

Contextual information

The college delivers most of its provision from its main site in York. Construction training takes place at a satellite centre in Osbaldwick. Around half of all students come from York, with much of the remainder from North Yorkshire. The main traditional industries of rail, engineering and construction have, in recent times, been superseded by tourism, science, retail, education and health. The percentage of individuals on Jobseeker's Allowance is lower than the national average and much lower than in the Yorkshire and Humber region. The proportion of people from a minority ethnic group is lower than in the rest of the country. The proportion of school leavers achieving five or more A* to C passes at GCSE including English and mathematics is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Jai Sharda HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the deputy principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on students' 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 students and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the 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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