

Macclesfield College

General further education college

Inspection dates

20–23 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- College leaders have fostered a culture of high expectation in the college and have been proactive in addressing most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Learners and apprentices are well prepared for life and work in modern Britain. They are tolerant and respectful, have a good understanding of the threats of radicalisation and extremism, and feel safe and are safe at college and in the workplace.
- Leaders and managers have forged extensive links with stakeholders and local and national employers, developing the curriculum to meet community, local and national skills needs.
- Almost all learners benefit from high-quality external work experience that successfully supports them in making decisions about their future work and career aspirations.
- Close working relationships with employers and stakeholders ensure that apprenticeships based on national standards are implemented skilfully, valued by employers and meet local, regional and national skills needs.
- Learners benefit from very good impartial careers guidance and, as a result, make accurate and informed decisions about their next steps.
- Support for learners is highly effective. As a result, learners such as care leavers and those with high needs, mental health difficulties or other significant personal barriers to learning complete their courses and achieve their qualifications.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not of a consistently high standard on adult learning programmes, or sufficiently challenging for the most able 16- to 19-year-olds on study programmes. As a result, a significant minority of learners do not make sufficient progress towards their targets.
- Learners on 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learning programmes do not attend their lessons regularly enough.
- Managers and governors do not challenge their teams enough to analyse weaknesses accurately and identify specific actions for sustained improvement. As a result, the self-assessment report and quality improvement plan are not precise enough.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Macclesfield College is a medium-sized general further education college in the borough of Cheshire East. It serves the town of Macclesfield and the surrounding borough. The college provides 16 to 19 study programmes in a wide range of vocational areas. It also provides adult learning, apprenticeship standards and apprenticeship frameworks.
- Cheshire East is a predominantly rural borough in the North West of England. The unemployment rate is lower than the national and North West rate. Cheshire East has a large number of grammar schools and schools with sixth forms. The proportion of students leaving school with five GCSEs at grades A* to C or levels 9 to 4 including English and mathematics in Cheshire East is higher than the national rate.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. To do this:
 - take swift action to improve the attendance of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learning programmes who do not attend their lessons regularly
 - improve staff development for teachers, particularly those on adult learning programmes and those identified as underperforming. Offer high-quality training and enable teachers to share good practice across all areas of the college, so that they improve their teaching skills and provide consistently good teaching and learning
 - make good use of the information on individual learners' starting points and progress to plan lessons and activities that constantly challenge learners, particularly the most able, and which enable them to achieve or exceed their targets.
- Improve the effectiveness of self-assessment processes and quality improvement planning to ensure that leaders, managers and governors have an accurate view of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Ensure that managers challenge their teams to analyse weaknesses accurately and regularly, and identify specific actions for improvement, rather than merely complying with procedures.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The governors, principal, leaders and managers are ambitious for the college. They successfully communicate their vision, which is understood and shared by staff throughout the college. A consistent expectation of high standards, and shared college values, underpin their focus on improvement. Most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been rectified.
- The principal and senior leaders nurture highly effective partnerships with a range of key local and regional stakeholders and employers. This results in a curriculum that meets local and regional needs exceptionally well. For example, leaders and managers have responded successfully to local health sector needs and a shortage of nurses. They have developed a higher-level qualification that enables local people to gain the skills and qualifications they need to progress onto nursing degrees.
- Leaders and managers have worked closely with employers to implement standards apprenticeships successfully. Good working relationships with employers and stakeholders mean that standards apprenticeships are valued by employers and meet local, regional and national skills needs.
- Leaders and managers have successfully improved learners' achievements since the previous inspection. The principal has been instrumental in securing improvements in the culture and ethos of the college and in the college's finances.
- Leaders and managers have dealt successfully with the few instances where the quality of teachers' work was below standard, using rigorous and effective performance management. Consequently, staff members whose performance did not improve after support have left the college.
- Leaders and managers effectively manage the subcontracted provision. As a result, learners on subcontracted courses achieve as well as learners at the college.
- Governors, leaders and managers actively champion the improvement of English and mathematics skills for all learners. The English and mathematics strategy has resulted in improving outcomes for English. The decision to take on a new teaching team in this area has had significant effect in the proportion of learners improving their English skills and achieving better GCSE and functional skills examination results.
- Learners' achievement in mathematics has not improved to the same extent as in English. Consequently, leaders and managers have put actions in place that have begun to improve the progress that learners are making in mathematics.
- Leaders, managers and staff successfully promote the value of diversity, and learners demonstrate mutual respect and tolerance towards each other. Staff and learners demonstrate the college's values and expected level of behaviour very well. Activities and events promote a broad understanding by learners of their expected responsibilities and contributions to society. For example, learners in hospitality and catering raised money for the Rwanda appeal by putting on an event based around foods from Rwanda. Staff prepare learners very well for life in modern Britain.
- Governors, leaders and managers embed a culture of equality across the college. They

respond very effectively to the needs of their staff and learners. For example, in response to an increasing number of learners with mental health difficulties, leaders and managers have provided mental health awareness training to staff and have appointed a mental health nurse to the college. Leaders and managers have effectively improved the achievement of male learners so that it is more in line with that of female learners, and the achievement of learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, bringing it more in line with that of their peers.

- Management of careers guidance is highly effective. External independent careers guidance advisers work with learners and the college's learning support team on a weekly basis to ensure that learners benefit from effective and accurate careers guidance.
- Staff development activities, for example on challenging learning and questioning to check, develop and extend learners' understanding, have not yet led to the intended improvements in these aspects of pedagogy, which remain an area for improvement.
- Leaders and managers have recognised that the self-assessment process requires improvement. The self-assessment report and quality improvement plan do not identify exactly what leaders, managers and staff need to do to sustain future improvements. Managers do not challenge their teams sufficiently during the self-assessment process; as a result, although teams comply with the process they do not identify weaknesses and possible actions in enough detail to support overall planning for improvement.
- Leaders and managers have improved quality improvement systems and the tracking of learners' progress. These improvements have not yet been implemented consistently across all areas of the college.

The governance of the provider

- Governors know the college well. They are highly motivated and work hard, with a commitment to ensuring a successful college. They contribute to setting the strategic direction of the college, its vision and values, and fully support the leadership team in pursuing ambitious plans for the future. Governors contribute to, and fully support, the college's partnerships with external stakeholders and employers locally and regionally.
- Leaders and managers do not provide governors with sufficiently detailed reports about the college and the performance of its learners, to enable them to ask challenging questions. Consequently, governors' monitoring is not sharp or focused enough to hold leaders to account in improving quality across the whole college.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors and senior leaders ensure that safeguarding receives the highest priority. The safeguarding link governor monitors the effectiveness of the safeguarding policy and the full board receives an annual report. Staff and governors receive regular update training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Managers and staff effectively promote to learners an awareness of the threats of radicalisation and extremism.
- Learners and apprentices feel safe. They have a very good understanding of potential risks and know how to keep themselves safe in college, at work and online. Managers resolve safeguarding concerns efficiently through very effective partnerships with a range

of external agencies. Managers ensure that they support and protect their learners from various safeguarding concerns, including mental health difficulties, homelessness and bullying. They take swift action when issues arise and monitor and support learners closely to enable them to remain at college and achieve their qualifications.

- Managers carry out appropriate checks on all new staff, including disclosure and barring service checks. Comprehensive scrutiny of job applicants' suitability by leaders and managers results in the swift withdrawal of job offers if references or safeguarding checks are unsatisfactory.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection. The majority of learners enjoy their lessons and work closely with their teachers and assessors to make at least the progress expected of them. Learners' behaviour in lessons is good and they show confidence in their learning. Teachers and managers have created a college-wide learning environment where activities are planned to respect the needs of the individual, build upon prior attainment and prepare learners well for future employment, training and progression to further study.
- Most teachers use their industrial expertise and experience skilfully to motivate and develop learners' vocational and employability skills. For example, learners on early years programmes plan a range of highly successful activities for children, based on the early years foundation stage, which they then use in their work placements. Learners in hospitality and catering work with a master chef to create new meat dishes and explain gross profit margins. In addition, the college has developed extensive links with local and national employers, such as prestigious motor manufacturers, engineering companies, pharmaceutical research companies, hotel chains and website application developers, to provide learners with high-quality work experience placements that enhance learners' practical skills.
- Teachers competently use a wide range of resources, including interactive technology, to involve and enthuse learners with the curriculum and the content of apprenticeships. Learners value the extensive range of resources to which they have access. Those on vocational programmes have 24-hour access to the virtual learning environment for the submission of material for their portfolios and feedback from teachers following assessment. As a result, most learners act upon teacher feedback quickly and know what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. In a minority of apprenticeship lessons and adult learning programmes, tutors' feedback does not always identify how learners could improve their work. This is especially evident for the most able and, as a result, these learners do not realise their full potential.
- Teachers work very effectively with learning support assistants to ensure that learners with additional learning needs are skilfully challenged and supported in lessons. Learners, including those who have autism spectrum disorders, anxiety or a range of physical disabilities, benefit from an inclusive and social environment in which they are treated with dignity and respect. As a result, most learners achieve their individual targets.
- Teachers encourage learners to work together in lessons and evaluate the quality of each other's work. For example, learners in level 3 public services use their collective knowledge of exercise regimes to plan for client consultation. Learners in art and design

work together harmoniously to help each other prepare for interviews.

- Since the previous inspection, teachers and managers have improved the tracking of learners' progress in 16 to 19 study programmes and apprenticeships. Where learners are not progressing well, staff intervene swiftly and purposefully; learners who are at risk of not achieving are monitored carefully. For example, assessors on apprenticeship courses increase the frequency of their visits to apprentices identified as needing additional support. Learning mentors work closely with learners not making the expected rates of progress in vocational courses. As a result, a higher proportion of learners stay on their courses and achieve their qualifications.
- Learners and apprentices have an excellent working knowledge of health and safety in the workplace, the values of living in British society and the threats of radicalisation and extremism. As a result, they are prepared for work in modern Britain and understand the importance of equality. Learners enthusiastically celebrate diversity; they treat each other with respect and work together harmoniously.
- Managers and teachers have worked hard to improve the development of learners' English in all of the provision types. As a result, learners can use technical vocabulary related to the workplace and are confident in their oral communication. College-wide strategies are having a clear effect on improving results in GCSE English and functional skills qualifications for learners on adult programmes and those on vocational courses.
- Too many teachers do not effectively assess learners' progress and learning well enough in lessons. Teachers' questioning techniques are superficial, and do not sufficiently challenge learners to develop their learning further. Consequently, learners in these lessons do not reach their full potential.
- Managers have high expectations of what their learners can achieve. However, teachers do not routinely use initial assessment data about learners to plan accurately for the diverse needs of learners. In a significant minority of lessons in 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learning programmes, teachers do not provide sufficiently challenging activities for the more able. Too often, learners do not know what they need to do to improve their grades and, as a result, achieve only the minimum expected grades that were set on entry, rather than their aspirational grades.
- Too many learners on vocational pathways do not develop their mathematical skills well enough, focusing on simple calculations rather than extending learning through, for example, problem-solving related to their vocational studies. A minority of learners achieve their GCSE mathematics target grades.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners and apprentices enjoy their learning programmes, gain high levels of confidence and develop the good technical skills, knowledge and attributes required for learning and the workplace. Behaviour in classes and around the college is good. Learners and apprentices are courteous and respectful. They value the opinions of others, are tolerant, have positive attitudes to learning and are well prepared for classes.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Learners and apprentices are placed onto the correct courses to meet their educational needs. As a result, most learners remain at college until the end of their programme and achieve their qualification or apprenticeship.

Very good impartial careers guidance is highly effective in helping learners and apprentices make the right choices about their education and career aspirations. Careers guidance is further supported through well-planned college events such as careers fairs, industry week and apprenticeship week.

- Learners benefit from well-planned and meaningful work-related learning, external work experience and enrichment activities that further develop their vocational skills and help them make informed decisions about their futures. For example, learners on creative and media courses work on 'live' briefs such as developing marketing materials for small and large employers. They attend work experience in settings such as community art spaces where they create artwork and installations, and organise art exhibitions that accurately reflect the work of creative and media enterprises. Leaders and managers work closely with the National Citizenship Service (NCS) to provide work experience, and large numbers of learners participate in NCS activities.
- An extensive enrichment programme develops learners' practical, social and personal skills. For example, learners benefit from guest speaker visits, additional workshops to support the development of employability skills and trips to industry settings. Learners regularly compete in and often win awards at national competitions. Learners complete additional units or qualifications to complement their programmes. For example, health and social care learners complete anatomy and physiology units from the applied science course, which support them well in broadening their understanding of the functions of the human body, and strengthen their applications for radiography courses at university.
- Support for learners is very good. Additional learning support assistants work highly effectively with learners and apprentices, particularly learners with high needs. Learners with significant barriers to learning, such as financial problems or potential homelessness, receive high levels of support or are referred to relevant external agencies. Learners with mental health difficulties are able to obtain support from a specialist mental health nurse employed by the college. As a result, most learners and apprentices with additional learning support needs make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Learners and apprentices have a very good understanding of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, and know to whom they should report any concerns or issues they may have. Learners and apprentices follow health and safety procedures assiduously in workshops and on the college premises.
- Learners are punctual to lessons. Attendance of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learning programmes remains too low and is below the college's target. Apprentices attend off-the-job training sessions regularly and value the opportunity to develop their technical skills outside the workplace.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The proportion of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes who achieve their qualifications, according to college internal data, improved in 2016/17 and is now high. Most learners make swift progress. The standard of their written work and the development of technical skills are good.
- Adult learners make good progress in developing their mathematical and English skills and, as a result, a higher proportion of learners achieved their English and mathematics

functional skills in 2016/17. Adult learners' achievement of GCSE English and mathematics at grades A* to C improved in 2016/17 but is still low.

- The proportion of apprentices, across all age groups, who achieved their apprenticeships within the planned timescale improved substantially in 2016/17, and is now high. Apprentices on apprenticeship frameworks and standards-based programmes make good progress towards their apprenticeships. They develop a wide range of practical and technical skills that benefit their employers' businesses well.
- Leaders and managers have been successful in improving the achievement of under-performing groups of learners, particularly male learners and learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learners across all groups now achieve their qualifications and apprenticeships equally well. For example, leaders and managers provide high levels of very effective support to help learners such as care leavers and those in receipt of high needs funding to achieve their qualifications. All of the small number of learners who received high needs funding in 2016/17 achieved their qualifications.
- Managers gather and analyse data accurately on the destinations of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes. The vast majority of learners remaining at the college progress to the next level of their programme. The rate of progression is particularly high between level 2 and level 3 programmes. Approximately half of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes at level 3 progress to university, the majority to their first choice of university. Most learners who choose not to progress to higher levels of study or go to university at the end of their programme progress either to an apprenticeship or to employment, often with employers with whom they have completed their work experience placement.
- Most apprentices continue in employment at the end of their apprenticeship. Many gain extra responsibility or promotion in the workplace.
- The majority of adult learners on short courses and English and mathematics programmes improve their confidence, personal and social skills and employment prospects. Most adult learners on access to higher education programmes progress to higher education in their chosen disciplines.
- Learners' achievement of GCSE English at grades A* to C on 16 to 19 study programmes improved significantly in 2016/17. Although the proportion of learners who achieved GCSE mathematics A* to C was very low in 2016/17, most learners made progress or improved their grade.
- Although the proportion of learners on adult learning programmes who achieved their qualifications in 2016/17 increased, the progress that current learners make on many adult learning programmes, particularly access to higher education courses, is too slow.
- The progress of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes, particularly those on level 3 programmes, who are more able or less able than their peers, is too slow. Consequently, these learners do not achieve the grades of which they are capable, given their starting points.
- Following the previous inspection, leaders and managers identified accurately that A-level programmes performed poorly. Leaders and managers made the decision to stop offering A-level programmes from 2017/18. Most of the small number of learners taking A-level qualifications in 2016/17 achieved low grades in their final examinations.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Currently 907 learners are enrolled on 16 to 19 study programmes from entry level to level 3. The largest areas are art, design and media, information technology (IT) and engineering.
- Learners behave well, take pride in their learning and produce work to a high standard. Learners have good relationships with their teachers and their peers. They are proud of their work and can talk confidently and competently about their learning. Learners' files are well structured and organised, showing the good progress that learners make over time.
- Highly skilled teachers and good links to industry provide learners with high levels of challenge and support in practical lessons. For example, catering learners learned how to butcher a deer from a specialist butcher and chef. They were then challenged to prepare a range of meat cuts from the animal that they were later to serve to paying guests at a special dinner at the college.
- Learners develop highly effective practical, vocational and employability skills that prepare them well for the workplace. For example, hairdressing and beauty therapy learners created professional relationships with clients during a 'pamper day' to raise money for charity. They booked in clients, conducted consultations, performed treatments and provided advice on aftercare.
- Almost all learners benefit from valuable work experience that prepares them very well for future employment. Leaders and managers have established strong links with local employers and many employers seek to employ learners on completion of their course. For example, motor vehicle learners who completed work experience at prestigious car manufacturers, business studies learners who completed work experience in banks and hospitality learners who completed work experience with large hotel chains have secured employment or an apprenticeship with their work experience provider.
- Learners develop good vocational, employment, personal and social skills through high-quality enrichment activities. For example, learners on creative and media programmes recently competed in the digital skills category of World Skills UK and won a silver award for their planning and production of a short video.
- Very good careers advice and guidance ensure that learners are enrolled on to the right course of study to meet their career aspirations. During their time at college, learners benefit from a wide range of accurate internal and external independent and impartial careers guidance to help them make informed decisions about their next steps.
- Learners have a good understanding of health and safety requirements across the college and observe these well. Learners feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including from cyber bullying and the threats of online radicalisation and extremism.
- Staff provide feedback that supports learning effectively for most learners. Teachers and learners successfully use electronic systems to record feedback, support independent learning and enable learners to act upon feedback to improve their work. As well as helpful oral comments, learners receive detailed and timely feedback that supports progress and achievement. However, too many learners do not act upon feedback and, as

a result, fail to achieve the higher grades of which they are capable.

- The quality of teaching and learning varies between subject areas and between teachers in the same subject area. A minority of teachers do not use learners' starting points well enough to plan lessons that ensure that all learners receive sufficient challenge in their learning. The pace of learning is too slow, particularly for the most able learners. Teachers do not effectively check what learners have learned in the session. As a result, a significant minority of learners do not make the swift progress of which they are capable.
- Attendance at classes is too low. Although learners attend classes punctually, a minority of learners do not regularly attend their classes. Although leaders and managers have implemented a range of strategies to improve attendance, this has not yet had a discernible effect.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Currently 309 adult learners are enrolled, most of whom study part time. The college provision for adult learning includes vocational provision, pre-employment courses and courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Thirty learners are on access to higher education programmes, while 68 are on mathematics and English programmes.
- Although improvements have been made since the previous inspection, teachers still do not take sufficient account of learners' individual needs or abilities when planning for learning. They do not take sufficient account of learners' prior knowledge, results of initial assessments or the different starting points of individuals in the group. As a result, the most able learners are not challenged sufficiently and fail to make the progress of which they are capable. The least able struggle to keep up with the rest of the class, making little or no progress because the work is too difficult.
- Managers recognised in the 2016/17 self-assessment report that the setting and monitoring of target grades for learners required improvement. Although a new system for setting and monitoring learners' targets has recently been implemented, this has yet to have any effect. Targets set with many learners do not reflect their starting points. Learners, particularly those on access to higher education programmes, often self-select targets for achievement, usually a pass grade even when their starting points and current abilities indicate that they can achieve merit or distinction grades.
- Attendance to lessons is too low and has a significant effect on the progress that learners make. For example, lessons planned carefully by teachers are amended hastily due to low attendance. As a result, learners experience significant disruption due to low attendance, for example during the formal assessment of group projects, particularly in access to higher education classes.
- In a minority of adult learning programmes, tutors' feedback to learners following assessment does not identify sufficiently what learners need to do to improve their work. Many learners on access to higher education programmes make basic spelling and grammatical errors that they constantly repeat because teachers do not help them to identify and correct errors.
- Learners enjoy their lessons, are actively involved in learning activities and develop high levels of confidence and self-esteem. They take pride in and produce a high standard of

work. Most learners reflect very effectively on their previous knowledge and competently link theory to workplace practice. For example, learners on AAT accounting programmes are able to link the topic of profit and loss analysis to their job roles.

- A minority of teachers employ questioning techniques skilfully to extend learners' understanding, successfully develop their debating skills and broaden their thinking skills. Learners use accurate technical vocabulary to explore complex subjects such as human reproduction and statistical variance.
- Teachers accurately identify learners' starting points in both English and mathematics. Teachers use this information to plan competently for learning and set challenging individualised targets. As a result of accurate assessment against the 9 to 1 GCSE grading criteria, learners understand clearly the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve.
- Learners feel safe and are safe in college. Attention to health and safety is meticulous, both in practical workshops and in the college buildings. A culture of tolerance and respect permeates the learning environment and learners are confident to explore diverse and complex issues.
- Learners benefit from good careers guidance and support to help them progress to employment or further learning. Most learners on access to higher education programmes progress successfully to higher education.
- Leaders and managers work very effectively with a range of employers, stakeholders and external organisations to design programmes to fill skills shortages in Macclesfield and regionally. Managers work closely with Jobcentre Plus to design courses and widen participation in learning, for example they provide courses for accounting technicians, and the hospitality, retail and healthcare sectors in order to reduce unemployment and fill the high number of job vacancies in Macclesfield and the surrounding area.

Apprenticeships

Good

- Currently 246 apprentices are working to apprenticeship frameworks across 10 sector subject areas at levels 2 to 5. The largest numbers are in business administration and law, retail and commercial enterprises and engineering. In addition, currently 80 apprentices follow apprenticeships based on national standards, with approximately half of these in science and engineering.
- Apprenticeships are well planned and managed to meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship programme. Managers and staff have good working relationships with employers. Leaders and managers have worked particularly hard to develop standards apprenticeships in response to local skills needs. Employers are integral to the planning of programmes that are closely aligned to the needs of their business and the apprentice. Employers are well informed about apprentices' progress and can clearly articulate how apprentices benefit their company. For example, employers are able to develop the skills of their own staff for hard to fill positions, such as those in science and digital occupations. In this way, they can provide an alternative to graduate recruitment.
- In college-based off-the-job training sessions, apprentices are enthused, involved and motivated by trainers who have good vocational and technical skills and expertise. Apprentices enjoy their learning and ask pertinent questions that teachers often redirect

to their peers. The resulting discussions are highly effective and result in a deeper understanding of the topic. As a result, apprentices are able to apply their knowledge in a range of different contexts.

- Trainers and apprentices, across both frameworks and standards apprenticeships, consistently make good reference to industry. Apprentices talk confidently about the specific skills that they have developed while on their programmes, and give examples of how this has helped them to be more effective in the workplace. For example, engineering apprentices who have developed manual turning skills during off-the-job training at the college are able to use these skills competently in the workplace.
- Apprentices value their learning and attend regularly and punctually across standards and frameworks apprenticeships. Apprentices behave well both in college and in the workplace. Apprentices are highly motivated and arrive to sessions ready to learn. They develop high levels of confidence, are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and build positive working relationships with their tutors, peers and employers.
- Apprentices on frameworks receive good support in functional skills English lessons to improve their written communication skills based on the results of their diagnostic assessments. Apprentices report that they perform better at work because of their increased understanding of the difference between formal and informal documents. They are now confident to write letters to customers and to senior managers and, as a result, their job roles have been extended.
- Trainers use the electronic portfolio system for framework apprenticeships skilfully to track progress of apprentices, and managers use them to track the progress of groups of apprentices. Managers use this information to challenge trainers and assessors where learners are not making good progress, and to implement remedial actions to address concerns. For example, when monitoring the performance of staff in hospitality and catering, managers drew on portfolio data about learners' progress. As a result of subsequent discussions, staff made changes which led to significant improvements in the numbers of apprentices achieving their apprenticeship in the planned timescale.
- Apprentices on both standards and frameworks apprenticeships have a good understanding of legislation relating to the industries they work in, as well as to their specific roles, including legislation about health and safety, equality and safeguarding. The majority of apprentices have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty; they feel safe at college and in the workplace and know how to raise any concerns.
- Apprentices on frameworks receive useful feedback from their trainers who use skilful questioning to encourage apprentices to identify how they can improve. Apprentices use this guidance competently to inform future work. Trainers' feedback on apprentices' assessments does not always identify specific errors in sufficient detail so that apprentices know exactly what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Feedback in the electronic portfolio is entirely focused on the completion and uploading of evidence to meet assessment criteria and does not identify how apprentices can develop their skills or knowledge. As a result, the most able apprentices do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- The tracking of progress for apprentices on standards apprenticeships is not yet fully developed. Managers have yet to prioritise this to ensure that standards apprentices remain on track and achieve their apprenticeships within the planned timescale.

- Managers have worked hard to prioritise numeracy skills development. Trainers now attempt to embed these skills in most vocational sessions but, in the majority of cases, the coverage of numeracy is superficial and does not challenge apprentices to develop a full range of skills.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130621
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1672
Principal/CEO	Rachel Kay
Telephone number	01625 410000
Website	www.macclesfield.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	133	143	226	174	548	112	-	15
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	53	96	27	130	1	19		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	59							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Learning Curve							

Information about this inspection

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

Inspection team

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