



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Inspection of the Further
Education and Work-Based
Learning Provision in the
South West College

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Providing Inspection Services for

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¹ Each of these individual professional and technical reports is accessible through the appropriate weblink at the end of this report.

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

The Education and Training Inspectorate use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

Key Performance Indicators used by the Inspectorate to Evaluate Achievements and Standards

Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The proportion of learners enrolled who completed their courses or are still on their programme.
Achievement	The proportion of those learners completing their course who gained their full target qualification.
Success	The proportion of learners enrolled who gained their full target qualification.
Progression	Proportion of successful completers who progress to further/higher education/training or employment.

PART ONE: SUMMARY

1. Background information and context

1.1 The South West College recruits learners from across a wide and disperse geographical area. The catchment area covers the four district council areas of Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh and Omagh. Although the claimant count for all these district council areas is just below the Northern Ireland (NI) average of 4.9%², the College recruits over one-half of its learners on further education³ and essential skills courses from the highest two quintile areas of social deprivation⁴; this is the second highest figure for all Colleges in NI.

1.2 The College's main campuses are located in Cookstown, Dungannon, Enniskillen and Omagh. In Enniskillen, the College also has a Skills Centre on the outskirts of the town. Over recent years, the College has invested in excess of £4 million in the creation of five sector-leading Innovation Centres: the InnoTech Centre in Cookstown; the Centre for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Technologies (CREST) the Image Centre in Enniskillen; the Idea Centre in Omagh; and the Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Centre in Dungannon. These centres are adeptly designed to provide support for industry but also to enrich curriculum delivery through relevant industry-related project-based learning activities for learners.

1.3 In further education, the College is the smallest in NI as measured by the income generated from funded learning units (FLUs). In 2012/13, learner enrolments in further education accounted for 3,510 FLUs⁵. This was made up of a total of 10,102 learner enrolments, with 1,781 full-time enrolments and 8,321 part-time enrolments. Enrolments on full-time level 1 and level 2 courses accounted for 9% and 31% respectively of total enrolments. Although enrolments on level 3 courses accounted for just under one-quarter of total enrolments, they accounted for over 56% of the FLUs in further education. The College's priority skills provision accounts for 28% of its FLUs in further education. The College is the least dependent in the sector on the Department's Further Education Recurrent Budget. In 2012/13, for example, 60%⁶ of its income came from sources outside of the recurrent budget. This adds considerably to the College's capacity to provide relevant educational and training programmes in the local and regional areas.

1.4 In 2013, the College was re-contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (Department) to provide the Training for Success 2013 and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes, which are offered alongside the Department's legacy⁷ training programmes. At the time of the inspection, 688 learners were registered on Training for Success programmes. A total of 41 of them were registered on the Skills for Your Life strand and 70 on the Skills for Work level 1 strand. A total of 577 learners were registered on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship or Skills for Work level 2 strands. There were 456 learners registered on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, with 136 level 2/3 learners and 320 level 3 learners. Around 70% of the learners in work-based learning were registered on programmes in engineering, electrotechnical services and transport operations and

² Seasonally Adjusted Claimant Count as a percentage of the Working Age Population April 2014 District Council Economic Briefing

³ Further Education refers to provision up to and including level 3 provision

⁴ The Department for Employment and Learning 2013/14 Health Check: Issue 1 Annex 2

⁵ Excluding the College's Essential Skills provision

⁶ The Department for Employment and Learning 2013/14 Health Check: Issue 2

⁷ The legacy Training for Success programme was introduced in 2007 and was superseded by Training for Success 2013.

maintenance; a further 27% were registered in construction and building services. The remaining learners were registered in childcare, hair and beauty, health and social care management and using ICT. In addition, 20 learners were registered on advanced apprenticeship programmes in computing and engineering. All of the learners on work-based learning programmes undertake their training with the College.

1.5 The College provides an extensive range of programmes for pupils in a large number of post-primary and special schools through the Entitlement Framework, across four area learning communities. Enrolment levels on these programmes have remained steady over the last three years, and at the time of the inspection 1,400 pupils were participating on the programme. Appropriately, the provision is well-aligned to the Department’s priority skills areas, particularly in STEM courses.

1.6 The College’s community provision is delivered in 59 community out-centres to 2,445 learners. The majority of these learners require support to overcome barriers to their learning.

1.7 The College is the lead contractor for the Western Steps to Work contract area. This aspect of the College’s provision was not included in the inspection.

1.8 Over recent years, the College has been very successful in the achievement of a wide range of awards for the quality of its provision from sectoral groups representing the further education and training sectors in the United Kingdom and internationally. It has, for example, been awarded a number of Beacon awards, including one for the development of school partnerships to support the uptake in STEM subjects. Notably, it is the only college in NI to have been awarded the prestigious STEM-assured status by the National Engineering Foundation.

Table 1: Enrolments in the College

Type of provision	Number of learners enrolled
Total Enrolments (Further Education)	10,102 ⁸
Further Education	Full time: 1,781 Part-time: 8,321
Entitlement Framework (14 – 19)	1,400
Work-based Learning (Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI)	1,144
ApprenticeshipsNI:	Level 2: 136 Level 3: 320
Training for Success:	Programme-Led Apprenticeships/Skills for Work Level 2: 577 Skills for Work: 70 Skills for Your Life : 41

⁸ 2012/13

2. Scope and method of the inspection

2.1 In April 2014, the ETI carried out an inspection of the College's further education and work-based learning provision. The further education provision covered a representative sample of professional and technical courses up to and including level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework. In work-based learning, the inspection focused on the College's provision under the ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success programmes.

2.2 The inspection focused on leadership and management of the curriculum, including the College's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement, the quality of the provision for learning, and achievements and standards. The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation are available in the Inspectorate's publication '*Improving Quality: Raising Standards*' which can be found on the Inspectorate's web site at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards.htm>.

2.3 A team of inspectors observed 315 lessons and directed training sessions. Discussions were held with the Director, other members of the Senior Management Team, representatives from the Governing Body, deputy heads of department, curriculum managers, course team co-ordinators, lecturers, research lecturers, associates, imagineers from the STEM centre, interns and a sample of employers. The inspection team also examined samples of the learners' work, progress reviews, personal training plans, minutes of team meetings, course planning and other development documentation, self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans, and other relevant documentation, policies, and reports.

2.4 The inspection also focused on the provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance. The arrangements for the care, guidance and support and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups were also inspected.

2.5 The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the learners to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection.

Questionnaire	Number returned	Number with written comments	Percentage with written comments %
Total Number of Learners	999	138	14

In addition, inspectors carried out focus group meetings with a wide range of learners in the College. The ETI reported to the Director and representatives of the Governing Body the main findings emerging from the questionnaires and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within this report.

3. Overall effectiveness

3.1 In further education and work-based learning, the quality of education and training is outstanding. The College has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

4. Table of performance levels

Overall Effectiveness	Further Education and Work-Based Learning Provision	Further Education	Work-Based Learning
		Outstanding	Outstanding

Contributory Performance Levels:	Further Education and Work-Based Learning Provision	Further Education	Work-Based Learning
Leadership and Management	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Provision for Learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

Professional and Technical Areas (Further Education and Work-Based Learning)

Beauty Therapy/Complementary Therapies	Outstanding
Construction(including plumbing and wood occupations)	Very Good
Essential Skills	Good
Engineering	Outstanding
Hospitality and Catering and Travel and Tourism	Very Good
Students with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities (Discrete Provision)	Very Good

Professional and Technical Areas (Further Education)

Applied Science	Very Good
Art and Design and Creative Media	Very Good
Childcare (Early Years)	Very Good
Information Technology (IT) and Media Gaming	Good
Sports Studies	Very Good

Professional and Technical Areas (Work-based Learning)

Electrotechnical Services (Electrical Installation)	Very Good
Transportation Operations and Maintenance	Outstanding

5. Summary of main findings

5.1 The Director and Deputy Directors provide outstanding leadership and management of the curriculum; much has been achieved in realising the aims of a dynamic and innovative regional College. Leadership and management of the curriculum is very effective at all levels in the College. Effective distributive leadership is a strong feature of management in the College.

5.2 A strong ethos of 'value- based' leadership puts the learner at the centre of the work of the College. Inter-disciplinary team working at all levels in the College is very strong. The use of reliable management information to aid decision-making in the College is outstanding. Governance of the College is highly effective, and the Governors have played a significant role in setting an ambitious vision for the College. They are well-informed about the work of the College and undertake an effective challenge function. They report high levels of endorsement of the management of the College.

5.3 The strategic management of the curriculum is outstanding; the curriculum offer is well-aligned to the economic priorities in both the local and regional economy, as well as focussing on measures to address social exclusion. The College Development Plan is both outward-looking and learner-centred; it is based on detailed research on best practice, both nationally and internationally. Operational planning processes to meet key targets are robust and applied systematically.

5.4 The curriculum is comprehensive and inclusive and provides clear pathways for the 'hardest to reach' to engage with relevant education and training programmes; there are excellent opportunities for learners to progress from entry level programmes right through to the extensive provision of economically relevant higher education programmes. Curriculum innovation in the College is very strong.

5.5 Quality management of the curriculum is highly effective at all levels in the College. The provision is very well-led and delivered by a very capable team. Self-evaluation processes are underpinned by the effective use of reliable management information that is both benchmarked across the College and nationally. Target-setting and ongoing monitoring arrangements are very strong. Effective arrangements are in place to identify and share best practice in curriculum management across the College. Performance management of the curriculum, through the management effectiveness team, is very well-managed to help course teams identify and implement appropriate strategies to build on existing strengths but also to address any areas of underachievement or underperformance.

5.6 Overall, the quality of the provision in further education and in work-based learning is outstanding. With the exception of the essential skills and Information Technology (IT) and media gaming, the quality of the provision in all of the professional and technical areas inspected is very good or better. The quality of the provision in beauty therapy, engineering, and transportation operations and maintenance is outstanding.

5.7 The quality of economic engagement is outstanding. There is a very clear strategic vision and rationale for economic engagement at regional, national, European and wider international levels. Stakeholder and partnership engagement is a key strength of the economic engagement provision, with effective and complementary strategic partnerships with key stakeholders throughout NI and beyond. Research and Development is a key focus across all of the provision and covers, for example, technical and business mentoring, bespoke training solutions for employers and industry and an extensive range of engineering technology projects. The College works with a wide range of business and industry sectors, community and statutory agencies and collaborates very effectively with a wide range of other key stakeholders, resulting in very high levels of economic engagement across the provision.

5.8 The InnoTech Centre is exceptionally well-managed and led and is resourced with a highly capable team of staff. It is sector-leading and has been developed, very appropriately, as the hub of the economic engagement provision across the College. The opportunities to develop further the College's economic engagement strategies through the four other state-of-the-art Innovation centres are also outstanding; they too all very well co-ordinated and managed. There is clear evidence that economic engagement impacts extensively and significantly on the whole-College curriculum, to the clear benefit of learners.

5.9 Leadership and management of the College's community provision and its links with schools are of a very high quality. The College has forged close strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, with many examples of innovative provision. There are excellent progression pathways for learners on these programmes.

5.10 The arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the learners are outstanding, underpinned by a strong inclusive ethos which aims to overcome any barriers to learners enrolling on, participating and succeeding in College courses. There are robust systems in place to identify and provide tailored assistance for those learners who require additional support. There are comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding.

5.11 The quality of careers, education, information, advice and guidance is outstanding. The provision is very well-integrated within the learner pathway, addressing effectively potential barriers to learning, from admissions and pre-entry advice through to pathway progression planning. The progression pathways are clearly articulated and learners are very well informed of the full range of career options available to them.

5.12 The quality of teaching, training and learning was good or better in 90% of the lessons observed, with nearly one-half of them being very good or better. The exceptional high quality of the teaching and learning is a feature of the provision in art, design and media, beauty therapy, engineering, discrete SLDD and sports studies.

5.13 The use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance the quality of teaching, training and learning is very well used in most of the professional and technical areas inspected. The College has made outstanding progress with its sector-leading Virtualisation initiative. This has been underpinned by a significant and ongoing investment in the systematic development of staff technical skills and their e-pedagogy. The leadership of the Virtualisation initiative is dynamic, innovative and highly effective.

5.14 In all of the professional and technical areas inspected, the learners achieve at least very good standards of work; the standards achieved by learners in beauty therapy and in transportation operations and maintenance are outstanding. Across the provision in further education and in work-based learning, the learners typically achieve well beyond their prior levels of attainment, and are encouraged to target outcomes which are beyond the minimum standards; the levels of value added attained by the learners are significant.

5.15 According to the most recent data provided by the Department, the College has been performing consistently above the sector average in its further education provision. Retention rates are outstanding, and achievement rates are good or better.

5.16 The outcomes on the Training for Success programme are high. Over the last four years, average retention and achievement rates on the Skills for Work strand of Training for Success programme are very good at 74% and 82% respectively. On the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand, the average retention and achievement rates are good at 82% and 89% respectively, with evidence of sustained improvements in outcomes over the last four years. Across the Training for Success provision, the very high average progression rates to employment or further education and training programmes is a significant achievement.

5.17 Outcomes on the ApprenticeshipsNI provision are very good; they are particularly high on the level 2 strand. Over the last four years, the average retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI level 2 programme is very good at 82% and the average achievement rate is outstanding at 96%. Progression rates to level 3 apprenticeship training and further education and training programmes are outstanding. On the level 3 strand, the average retention rate is good at 77% and the achievement rate is outstanding at 96%.

5.18 In the essential skills, the learners achieve very good standards of work. They make very good progress in their learning, often from a low baseline on entry, particularly in work-based learning. It is significant that most of the learners are encouraged and supported to target a level 2 in each of their essential skills, where appropriate.

5.19 In further education, the average three year achievement rates for the full-time, part-time and community essential skills provision are good. In the work-based learning provision, the average achievement rates in literacy, numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are outstanding at 98%, 98% and 93% respectively.

5.20 What does South West College need to do to improve further?

The College needs to:

- continue to implement the strategy to enhance the quality of teaching, training and learning and to provide the lecturers, including part-time lecturers, with appropriate professional support to develop further their pedagogic skills.

PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

6. Leadership and management

6.1 The quality of leadership and management of the curriculum is outstanding in both further education and in work-based learning.

6.2 The Director, along with the Deputy Directors, provide outstanding and 'value-based' leadership of the College. They have articulated very well a strong commitment for all learners, irrespective of the programme they are enrolled on, to achieve to their full potential. The senior management team along with the Governing Body have been very successful in setting and implementing an ambitious long-term plan for the College. On the basis of the inspection evidence, it is clear that the College has a very positive impact on learners, and on the local and regional economy. The public value of the College is significant, both regionally and beyond, and much has been achieved in realising the aims of a dynamic, innovative and relevant regional College. Learners and key stakeholders from industry and the wider community can have high levels of confidence in the effectiveness of the management and governance of the College.

6.3 Leadership of the curriculum across the College is outstanding; distributive leadership is a strong feature of the College. The senior management team, supported very well by the curriculum leaders and the heads of curriculum administration and support services, are highly effective in managing their complex and challenging areas of responsibility. In addition, skilful inter-disciplinary team working is a particular feature of the management throughout the College, which has positive outcomes in exceptional curricular management and in the quality of the learners' educational and training experiences. At all levels in the College, there is a strong learner-centred ethos in curriculum planning that is reflected in the behaviours of management and staff.

6.4 The strategic management of the curriculum is outstanding and the College curriculum offer is responsive to skill needs in both the local and regional economy, as well as focussing on measures to address social exclusion. The College Development Plan provides a clear vision for the curriculum over the period 2012-15, and it is very well-aligned to key external policy drivers, and the needs of the local and wider economy. It is both outward-looking and learner-centred and based on detailed research around best practice, both nationally and internationally. The key themes of the College Development Plan, including e-learning, entrepreneurship, innovation, and internationalisation, are all well-embedded into all aspects of the curriculum. Operational planning processes to meet key targets are robust and are applied systematically. The college development planning process provides a clear coherence for management decision-making in the College. The operational planning of the curriculum, through the curriculum governance process, is also very well-planned and implemented. Lecturers and administration staff are well-informed of and support strongly the strategic priorities for the College, as expressed in the College Development plan.

6.5 The curriculum is well-aligned to Government priorities, particularly in developing the STEM provision; this is done strategically and sensitively without negating the quality of provision in other professional and technical areas. Over recent years, much has been achieved in developing a 'future-proofed' curriculum offer that is matched to key strengths within the College and the needs of the economy, and the wider community. Its provision in key areas, particularly in engineering, is extensive and the inspection has identified no gaps of any significance in the College's overall provision. The curriculum is inclusive and provides clear pathways for the 'hardest to reach' to engage with relevant education and training programmes. Excellent opportunities are provided for learners to progress from entry level programmes right through to the extensive provision of economically relevant

higher education programmes. Curriculum innovation is very strong, particularly the creative use of the Innovation Centres, where learners can develop and apply their skills in industry relevant and contemporary contexts. In addition, through the College's 'flipped curriculum' initiative, a number of course teams have radically changed their course delivery with a focus on project-based learning that provides learners with excellent opportunities to develop a wide range of independence, employability and enterprise skills through their work.

6.6 The College has robust measures in place to capture and analyse up to date and reliable management information; this does much to enhance decision-making, as well as curriculum planning across the College. The quality of the management information along with the sophisticated reporting tools that are provided to curriculum leaders at all levels in the College are of a very high standard.

6.7 The management of the curriculum in work-based learning is outstanding. The College provides a broad and balanced range of training programmes from the Skills for Your Life provision to level 4 apprenticeships across an appropriate range of professional and technical areas. The provision is responsive to the needs of industry. It is also inclusive and is accessible to learners with a diverse range of abilities and personal development needs. Other key features include the high quality initial assessment and pre-entry advice arrangements, the very strong careers provision, and an appropriate focus in helping learners on the Training for Success programme to achieve and progress to relevant employment pathways.

6.8 Governance of the College is highly effective. The governors are very well-informed about the work and performance of the College, and have played a significant role in setting a fit-for-purpose and ambitious vision for the College. Their business approaches and strategic focus are impressive. While supportive of the staff in the College, they exert an appropriate challenge function to management at all levels. They report high levels of endorsement on the management of the College.

6.9 A focus on continuous improvement is a strong feature of the management of the College. Self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are applied systematically across the curriculum and in cross-College support services. The leadership and management of the quality management team is highly effective and delivered by a very capable team. A key strength is the deployment of quality performance officers to each of the four academic departments to support and challenge course teams in their self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes. The follow-up arrangements to these processes are rigorous and effective. The processes are underpinned by the effective use of reliable management information that is benchmarked both across the College and nationally. Target-setting and ongoing monitoring arrangements are very strong. Effective arrangements are in place to identify and share best practice in curriculum management across the College. The College has recognised appropriately through its recently implemented lecturer observation programme that there is a need for further professional development to achieve higher levels of excellence in teaching, training and learning more consistently across the different professional and technical areas.

6.10 Performance management of the curriculum, through the management effectiveness team, is very well-managed to help course teams identify and implement appropriate strategies to build on existing strengths and to address any areas of underachievement or underperformance. These processes are followed through sensitively but rigorously.

6.11 The quality of the accommodation and specialist resources is mostly very good, with many aspects outstanding. The buildings are well-presented and maintained and learners have access to high quality workshops and an appropriate range of specialist resources and industry-standard high specification equipment to support their learning. The estates

strategy is well-embedded into the curriculum planning process, and as such the investment in estates supports directly curriculum development and innovation, particularly with the investment in the Innovation Centres in each campus. The ICT infrastructure is robust and very well-managed and supports the management of the curriculum across the College.

6.12 The staff in the College are well-qualified and experienced, highly committed in their professional work and almost all of them go the 'extra mile' to support the learners. The pastoral care they provide to learners is of a very high standard. The inspection evidence shows that staff relationships are very strong with clear evidence of mutually supportive and harmonious relationships and collegial working across the College.

6.13 Staff development is extremely well managed. The workforce development team has high levels of clarity in their roles in supporting the curriculum and learning. At the heart of this is the strategic vision of developing people and achieving potential to meet the aims of the College Development Plan. There are high levels of engagement with staff and managers to determine staff development needs and priorities. The programme of staff development is extensive, well-resourced and the opportunities for staff to enhance and develop their professional skills are outstanding. A feature of best practice is the annual Curriculum Conferences that are now frequently delivered by staff in the College. The opportunities for staff to develop and apply management skills are also outstanding.

6.14 The work of the lecturing staff is complemented to good effect through the deployment of a wide range of staff to support curriculum development, including imagineers, interns, economic engagement technology associates, e-technologists, research lecturers and technical support staff. The staff are very capable, well-informed about the strategic vision of the College, and provide a fresh and dynamic approach to the projects they undertake. They have clear roles in supporting curriculum development to enhance the management and delivery of the curriculum and learning.

6.15 The College has a very strong international focus; its international links to support curriculum development and to enhance the experiences and skills of the staff and learners are outstanding. Key benefits include learning from best practice internationally, the development of enterprise skills, widening career options and learning from other cultures. The range of international projects that learners and staff engage with is extensive, and the participation in these projects by learners is high. The quality of staff exchanges with international partner organisations is of a very high standard.

6.16 The College has developed effective collaborative partnership arrangements with sector-leading Colleges outside NI. These close partnership arrangements have delivered clear tangible benefits in curriculum development across the College. The College plays a leading role in the Gazelle Group of colleges and the Intelligent College Network. It is the only NI College that is a member of these partnership arrangements.

6.17 Across the College, the quality and impact of the economic engagement provision is outstanding, as is the leadership and management at both senior and middle management levels. There is a very clear strategic vision and rationale for economic engagement at regional, national, European and wider international levels. Research and Development is a key focus across all of the provision, and covers for example, technical and business mentoring, bespoke training solutions for employers and industry and an extensive range of engineering technology projects. The College works well with a wide range of business and industry sectors, community and statutory agencies and collaborates very effectively with a wide range of key stakeholders, resulting in very high levels of economic engagement across the provision. The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes for this aspect of the College's work are well-developed, and are very effective and insightful in identifying key areas for development to enhance the provision further.

6.18 The InnoTech Centre is sector-leading and has developed, very appropriately, as the hub of the economic engagement provision across the College; it is very well-focused on the three key areas of sustainability, design and electronic software. Since 2009, the Centre has delivered a significant number of innovation vouchers and Research and Development projects, reflecting a wide range of local and regional business needs; it has very successfully facilitated business competitiveness and export potential for companies across the local and wider economy. The support provided by the College both on-site and in-house is of exceptional quality; the businesses involved report considerable added value, including sector-leading solutions in the areas of product design, waste management and energy, e-commerce and computer-modelling technologies.

6.19 The InnoTech Centre is exceptionally well-led and managed. The innovation and development manager leads a team of dedicated, highly experienced and very-well qualified staff, including technology associates who have very high levels of credibility in their appropriate sectors. There are outstanding working relationships between and across all of the staff.

6.20 The College provides an extensive and impressive range of bespoke business training programmes to a wide range of local and regional businesses, including for example, high levels of focused and quality support through its business improvement techniques programme to a number of engineering manufacturing companies.

6.21 The opportunities to develop further the College's economic engagement strategies through the four other state-of-the-art Innovation centres are outstanding; they are all also very-well co-ordinated and managed. The CREST centre is an exceptional resource which provides unique curriculum and training solutions in new renewable energy products and sustainable technologies. The Image Centre is also sector-leading providing access to high level technical equipment and resources in the creative technologies sector; the workshops for local businesses are very well-delivered and are a significant feature of the provision. The Idea Centre is also sector-leading with a focus on product design and development. The master classes provided for businesses are outstanding; the speakers are highly regarded innovators and entrepreneurs. The STEM Centre is an internationally recognised resource, delivering a leading edge, STEM-focused curriculum to a wide range of learners.

6.22 Stakeholder and partnership engagement is a key strength of the economic engagement provision. The SMART Region Committee, of which the College is a key partner, is unique and innovative; it is a key strategic driver for economic engagement and development across the South West region, and is chaired by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (NI). There are effective and complementary strategic partnerships across a range of councils and enterprise centres throughout NI. The College has developed a very effective working relationship with Invest NI. A range of collaborative networks has been developed and are active, including the Global Wind Alliance and the SENSE Energy Storage Network, with a clear strategic focus on the local small to medium-sized enterprises (SME) sector.

6.23 There is clear evidence that economic engagement impacts extensively and significantly on the curriculum in further education and work-based learning. In nearly all of the professional and technical areas inspected, levels of economic engagement in curriculum planning and delivery are very strong. They are outstanding in construction, engineering, and in transportation operations and maintenance.

6.24 The College engages extensively with wider social and community strategies through economic engagement, and is delivering very effectively Government policy in this area. A unique range of provision is offered through the Step Up to Sustainable Employment (SUSE), Connections and Going Places programmes for example, which are very successful; the College has exceeded its targets for recruitment and movement into sustainable employment. The flexible delivery model is learner-centred with excellent links between the three programmes; there are good progression opportunities for the learners. These programmes provide alternative pathways to further education, training or employment for learners who, in the past, have been either disengaged from learning, unemployed or economically inactive.

6.25 The quality of the College's links with schools is outstanding. The College has extensive, high-quality links with many primary and post-primary schools in the local area and beyond. In the STEM Centre, for example, the College offers a suite of innovative learning activities for school pupils to develop further their knowledge and understanding of applied science and engineering, as well as potential STEM career pathways. The level of participation by the schools in these programmes is extensive. In addition, the College is a Confucius Hub and it is currently providing courses in Mandarin Chinese to around 1,000 pupils in the local area.

6.26 The schools partnership programme, as part of the Entitlement Framework, is managed very effectively across the College to the benefit of a large number of post-primary and special schools across four area learning communities. The curriculum offer is both relevant and inclusive at Key Stage 4 and post-16, and does much to enhance the pupils' future career pathways. The provision is well-aligned to the Department's priority skills areas; the provision in engineering, for example, is comprehensive and of a very high quality. Although the uptake of the provision by the schools is mostly good, the participation by grammar schools is limited. The pupils are well-informed about the range of education and training progression pathways that are available within the College, including higher education courses. The College has very good relationships with the participating schools, who report high levels of satisfaction about the quality and extent of the provision for their pupils. There are effective systems in place to track and monitor the progress of the pupils, and a range of events such as open nights, taster days, and career talks are used to inform the pupils about the range of choices available to them in the College. Self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are well-developed and identify appropriately the key strengths and any areas for development.

6.27 The quality of the College's provision of community education is very good. It has devolved appropriately the responsibility for its community and social inclusion provision across the four academic departments. The senior managers and staff at all levels have high expectations for the learners. In addition, they have a sound understanding of their diverse needs and the communities from which they are recruited which informs the curriculum planning and decision-making. Across the provision, managers encourage staff to be innovative in removing any barriers to learning in their programmes, and to involve learners in making decisions about how to progress further.

6.28. The community provision is underpinned through a wide range of mutually beneficial partnerships with external organisations. The lecturers and staff make effective use of these links to recruit and support participants in their learning. However, in the community education and the Learner Access and Engagement Programmes, more action is needed to identify formally the strengths of this provision, and to monitor the impact and uptake of the mentoring support provided for learners.

7. Quality of provision for learning

7.1 Overall, the quality of the provision for learning is outstanding in further education and in work-based learning.

7.2 The quality of the arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the learners is outstanding. The provision for learner support services is underpinned by a strong inclusive ethos which aims to overcome any barriers to learners' enrolling on, participating and succeeding in College courses. Overall, the provision is well-managed and led by the Student Services Manager, who is supported to good effect by senior managers and a dedicated student support team. The resulting coherent team approach to student support focuses the work on empowering and enabling the learners to take responsibility for their own learning and on promoting their independence in learning. There are well-embedded systems in place for the identification of individual learner support needs, and the planning and review of support for each learner enables the gradual and effective development of independence and a resulting and appropriate reduction of support.

7.3 The student support staff at all levels are all effective in their engagement with learners, academic staff, and external agencies to support the care, welfare and progress the learners. They have effective collaborative links with a wide range of external organisations and agencies to facilitate the smooth transition of learners to the College, and to provide clear guidance and support on a wide range of personal, social, financial and educational issues, including the provision of specialist equipment. The profile of the learner voice has been enhanced in the College through the appointment of a dedicated student development officer and the subsequent embedding of an ethos of representation and democracy, both within the College and across the community.

7.4 Equality and diversity are well-embedded and integrated into the provision of learner support and there is equity in the service provided for both further education and work based learning learners. A range of mechanisms are in place for learners to express their views on all aspects of the life and work of the College, and an effective method of feeding back to learners through "You said, We did" responses in newsletters and on notice boards.

7.5 The monitoring and evaluation of learner support services has been implemented at all levels, and includes an increased use of data to measure and evidence the impact of the service. The student support staff have a strong focus on the continuous improvement of their service and have identified the need to extend their support for curriculum staff in whole-class approaches as well as providing good support for individual learners.

7.6 The learners' responses to the ETI's pastoral care questionnaires and the feedback from the learner focus group meetings held during the inspection were very positive regarding their experiences in the College. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the South West College has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding.

7.7 The quality of the careers, education, information, advice and guidance is outstanding. The senior management team has a clearly defined strategic vision for careers, which includes a code of ethical principles, and provides excellent career learning opportunities which meet well the needs of learners. The careers and employability staff provide a very effective careers programme, which is an integral part of curriculum delivery and meets well the needs of learners. The provision is well-integrated into the learner pathway, addressing effectively potential barriers to learning, from admissions and pre-entry advice through to progression planning. The progression pathways are clearly articulated and learners are well-informed about their career options.

7.8 There are effective arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of the careers provision. Across the College, learners have access to an extensive range of high quality and up-to-date resources, including online information sources that are relevant to the employment prospects within each professional and technical area. The learners also have very good opportunities to access an impressive range of employment fairs, careers conventions and industry speakers to further inform their career planning. The quality of the provision for careers within all of the professional and technical areas inspected is strong.

7.9 Across the provision, learners are provided with good opportunities to enhance their main learning programmes with additional qualifications to develop further their employability skills, including relevant vendor qualifications. They also have excellent opportunities to participate and succeed in skills competitions locally, nationally and internationally.

7.10 Overall, the quality of teaching, training and learning is very good. Across the provision, 90% of the sessions observed were good or better, and nearly one-half of them were very good or better. The exceptional high quality of teaching and learning is a feature of the provision in art, design and creative media, beauty therapy, engineering, discrete SLDD and sport studies. The main features of the very good and outstanding lessons include well-planned activities where learners could lead and assess their own work, effective questioning to develop thinking skills, creative use of interactive learning tasks that motivated and engaged learners in complex technical activities, and skilful use of investigation activities to consolidate and apply prior learning experiences. There is a need to improve the quality of teaching, training and learning in a minority of lessons, particularly in the essential skills and in hospitality and catering and travel and tourism.

7.11 Across the provision, the quality of assessment is at least good and in the best practice there is very effective use of assessment for learning to inform planning. Learners are encouraged to achieve higher grades and outcomes in their work and internal verification arrangements are applied systematically. Most learners receive regular and prompt feedback to improve their learning.

7.12 In work-based learning, the quality of the personal training planning process is good overall. The plans record effectively the results of initial assessment and capture well the learners' prior levels of educational attainment and development goals. Progress reviews and assessments in the workplace are applied systematically by staff in the College. The training support officers and the learning support mentors provide effective support for the learners, particularly in securing appropriate work placements, and in overcoming any individual barriers to learning and success. In addition, those trainees on the Skills for Your Life and Skills for Work strands of Training for Success receive very strong support from a dedicated team of personal development mentors to prepare them for the world of work.

7.13 A high proportion (81%) of the learners on the Training for Success programme are in work placements, and the minority of those not currently placed undertake relevant and challenging project work, a varied programme of personal development and blended learning activities. Across the work-based learning provision, the quality of work-based learning is of a very high standard and provides the learners with excellent opportunities to develop their occupational skills to industry standards.

7.14 The College has made outstanding progress with its sector-leading Virtualisation initiative, which is a central component of the College Development Plan and its longer-term vision for flexible and adaptive learning. This has been underpinned by a significant and ongoing investment in the systematic development of staff technical skills and their e-pedagogy. In addition, a reliable and fit-for-purpose technical infrastructure including a contemporary and extensively used virtual learning environment has been established.

Several innovative examples of the effective delivery of blended learning programmes were observed during the inspection, including the fully online, excellent level 3 Information Technology programme delivered to a group of learners in Zambia. As a result, the College is well-placed to provide programmes of study with a significant blended learning component.

7.15 The leadership of the Virtualisation initiative is dynamic, innovative and highly effective. While the pace of development is both ambitious and challenging, the virtual services manager is supported to good effect by the senior managers across the College. All initiatives are carefully planned and extensively piloted, monitored and evaluated before implementation. Through the College's virtual learning pilots, for example, where the majority of staff and students work remotely online over a period of time, the technical infrastructure is stress-tested to ensure it has the capacity to support the vision for much enhanced e-learning, within the College's catchment area but also on a wider scale, including internationally.

7.16 There are many instances of best practice, including: the establishment of creative, distinct, welcoming Virtual Centres in each campus; the investment in three full-time e-learning technologists to support and develop staff; the significant investment in high-calibre under-graduate and post-graduate interns to take forward specific projects, including the design of bespoke software applications and work to develop a Virtual College presence; the strong strategic coherence across curriculum planning, virtual services development, management information systems, marketing, staff up-skilling and the whole-College teaching and learning strategy; and the roll-out of virtual hubs to facilitate connectivity for learners using their own mobile devices. Staff have easy access to the full range of virtual and other services, for example, up-to-date benchmarking and other data, through the College's bespoke and award-winning Gateway portal. A similar Pathway portal for learners is under development.

7.17 The use of ILT to enhance the quality of teaching and learning is very well used in most of the professional and technical areas inspected, particularly in art, design and media, beauty therapy, construction, electrotechnical services, engineering, discrete SLDD, sports studies, and transportation operations and maintenance.

7.18 The effective use of technology adds much to the efficient running and management of the College, while at the same time considerably extending its presence and reach. Senior managers and staff minimise meeting and travel time through an extensive use of videoconferencing. As a result, staff report mostly very good levels of access to, and communication with, senior managers. This use of technology contributes to the extensive range of productive collaborative links with other Colleges, employers and agencies locally, nationally and internationally.

7.19 In the essential skills, the quality of teaching and learning was good or better in a majority (71%) of the sessions observed, with around one-fifth being very good. The teaching and learning profile was better in the further education and the adult and community provision than it was in work-based learning. In the better sessions, the lecturers planned effectively to meet the needs of all learners, with effective use of ILT and assessment for learning strategies to motivate them. In a minority (29%) of the sessions, however, the planning did not meet well enough the needs of all the learners and there was limited use of ILT to support and enhance the teaching and learning.

7.20 The quality of the observed lessons in the community education provision was very good or better. The tutors consistently encourage learners to progress to the next level of their learning. Alongside these community education courses, the College has developed bespoke programmes, which are targeted appropriately at learners who have disengaged, or those who require mentoring support. The learners value the mentoring and additional support, which is offered by the staff involved in the SUSE, Connections, Going Places and Prince's Trust programmes. The lecturers and staff are dedicated and highly motivated in their work, and have a well-embedded focus on promoting social inclusion.

7.21 In the community education provision, learners with additional support needs enjoy a range of high quality learning experiences, which have a positive impact on their mental health and well-being. These well-motivated learners produce high standards of work and benefit from the excellent opportunities to showcase this work and their talents.

7.22 In the schools partnership programme, the quality of the provision for learning is very good. The pupils have access to a wide range of industry standard, cutting edge, equipment and computer hardware and software systems. The quality of the accommodation for the delivery of the programmes is very good and, at times, outstanding, for example the use of the College's Image Centre for creative technologies for the provision of moving image arts or computer games development. In the lessons observed, the quality of the teaching and learning was mainly good. These lessons were well-planned with evidence of independent learning by the pupils who are well-supported by the lecturers. The pupils demonstrate good or better standards of practical and project work. The school principals and staff report that the outcomes achieved by the pupils compare well to their achievements in mainstream provision; they also acknowledge the development of the pupils' wider skills, including teamwork, problem solving and overall employability skills. Average outcomes on these programmes are very good and have improved consistently over the past three years. Progression rates to full-time programmes in the College are high, with around 40% of the last cohort progressing to further programmes in the College.

8. Achievements and standards

8.1 Overall, achievements and standards are very good in further education and in work based learning.

8.2 It is noteworthy that in all of the professional and technical areas inspected the learners achieve at least very good standards of work; the standards achieved by learners in beauty therapy and transportation operations and maintenance are outstanding. Across the provision, the learners typically achieve well beyond their prior levels of attainment, and are encouraged to target outcomes beyond the minimum standards; the levels of value added attained by the learners are significant. They develop very good specialist skills which they can apply effectively to solve complex technical problems. Through the many and varied opportunities available to them, the learners develop a wide range of additional skills that are valued by industry, including team-working, problem-solving and good communication skills. They are confident in their work and articulate and mature in their oral responses. The learners are highly motivated with a positive disposition to learning; their critical thinking, research skills and ability to synthesize information from a wide range of sources are well-developed. They develop very well their interpersonal skills and their relationships with other learners and staff are exemplary.

8.3 In both further education and work-based learning, the learners are well-informed about career pathways and of the required standards to successfully progress. Their learning programmes are very well-complemented with relevant planned activities including international exchanges, project-based learning activities, guest speakers, work experience placements and industrial visits. Excellent use is made of inter-College, regional, national

and international skills competitions to inspire and motivate further the learners. The success and achievements of learners in all these events are valued and celebrated by the College. Across the provision, the high quality engagement with industry along with the learners' access to top quality equipment and resources, all significantly add to their skills development.

8.4 In the essential skills, the learners achieve very good standards of work. In further education, the majority of them develop a good range of the essential skills, including peer and independent working skills which are reinforced well in their professional and technical work. Also, the development of their essential skills is well-linked to the improvement of their employability skills. In the work based learning provision, almost all of the learners communicate with clarity and confidence about their work and their interests. In further education and in work-based learning, the learners acquire and apply a broad range of ICT skills in their work, particularly in art design and creative media, engineering, sports studies and transportation operations and maintenance. Across the provision, most of the learners make very good progress in their work, often from a low baseline on entry, particularly so in work-based learning. It is significant that most of the learners are encouraged and supported to target a level 2 in each of their essential skills, where appropriate.

8.5 In further education, the learners attain very good outcomes. Over the last three years, according to the most recent data from the Department, the outcomes for level 1 courses⁹ have improved from 72% to 80%, and have been consistently above the average for the sector. The retention and achievement rates on level 1 courses in 2012/13 are outstanding at 93% and 86% respectively. There have been more modest gains in outcomes on level 2 courses, with overall outcomes improving from 75% to 76%. These outcomes have exceeded the sector average for two of the last three years. For 2012/13, the retention rate on level 2 courses is outstanding at 93% and the achievement rate is good at 82%. The overall outcomes on level 3 courses have been consistently above the average for the sector over the last three years. For 2012/13, the retention rate on level 3 courses is outstanding at 94% and the achievement rate good at 87%.

8.6 The outcomes on the Training for Success provision are also high. Over the last four years, the average retention and achievement rates on the Skills for Work strand of the Training for Success programme are very good at 74% and 82% respectively. Over the same period, the average retention and achievement rates on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand are good at 70% and 89% respectively, with evidence of sustained improvements during this period. The outcomes on this particular strand are well in excess of the other Colleges in NI. Average progression rates on the Training for Success programme are very high, with 87% of the learners who complete their programmes progressing to employment or further education and training programmes. This is a significant achievement.

8.7 Outcomes on the ApprenticeshipsNI provision are very good; they are particularly high on the level 2 strand. Over the last four years, outcomes on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme have improved, with significant improvements on the level 2 programme. Over this period, the average retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI level 2 programme is very good at 82% and the average achievement rate is outstanding at 96%. Similarly, progression rates are outstanding at 97%. On the ApprenticeshipsNI level 3 programme, the average retention rate is good at 77% and the achievement rate is outstanding at 96%.

⁹ Benchmarked data-see below

8.8 In further education, the average three year achievement rates for the full-time, part-time and community essential skills provision in literacy, numeracy and ICT are good at 86%, 88% and 81% respectively. In the work-based learning provision, the average achievement rates in the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are outstanding at 98%, 98%, and 93% respectively.

PART THREE: PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL AREA REPORTS

9. [Applied science](#)
Performance Level: Very good
10. [Art and design/creative media](#)
Performance Level: Very good
11. [Beauty therapy/complementary therapies](#)
Performance Level: Outstanding
12. [Childcare \(early years\)](#)
Performance Level: Very good
13. [Construction](#)
Performance Level: Very good
14. [Electrotechnical services](#)
Performance Level: Very good
15. [Engineering](#)
Performance Level: Outstanding
16. [Essential skills](#)
Performance Level: Good
17. [Hospitality and catering and travel and tourism](#)
Performance Level: Very good
18. [Information technology and media gaming](#)
Performance Level: Good
19. [Sports studies](#)
Performance Level: Very good
20. [Students with learning difficulties or disabilities \(SLDD\)](#)
Performance Level: Very good
21. [Transportation operations and maintenance](#)
Performance Level: Outstanding

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