



Department
for Education

Effective curriculum practice at below Level 2 for 16/17 year olds

Annex: Good practice case studies

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Institute for Employment Studies



Social Science in Government

Contents

A	Fareham College: Careers and Personal Development	5
A.1	Background to the institution	6
A.2	Background to the offer at below Level 2	6
A.3	Careers and Personal Development	7
A.3.1	Personalisation	8
A.3.2	Progression rates	9
A.4	Lessons for delivery	9
B	Furness College: Craft Engineering	11
B.1	Background to the institution	11
B.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	12
B.3	Craft Engineering	12
B.4	Lessons for delivery	13
C	Halesowen College: Vocational Studies	15
C.1	Background to the institution	15
C.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	15
C.3	Vocational Studies Level 1 diploma	16
C.3.1	Personalisation	16
C.3.2	Engaging students	17
C.3.3	Progression	17
C.4	Lessons for delivery	18
D	Halesowen College: Business, Retail and IT	19
D.1	Background to the institution	19
D.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	19
D.3	Business, Retail and IT Users Level 1 Certificate	20
D.3.1	Engaging students	21
D.3.2	Progression rates	21
D.4	Lessons for delivery	21
E	Hugh Baird College: Foundation Learning Department	23
E.1	Background to the institution	23

E.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	23
E.3	Foundation Learning Department	24
E.3.1	Personalisation	25
E.3.2	Progression	26
E.4	Lessons for delivery	27
F	Longley Park Sixth Form College: Information Technology	29
F.1	Background to the institution	29
F.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	29
F.3	Level 1 Information Technology	30
F.4	Lessons for delivery	32
G	Nelson and Colne College: Foundation to progression	33
G.1	Background to the institution	33
G.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	33
G.3	Tailoring the final term to support progression	34
G.3.1	Progression rates	35
G.4	Lessons for delivery	36
H	Newcastle College: Learning for Life/Supported Internships	37
H.1	Background to the institution	37
H.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	37
H.3	Learning for Life/Supported Internships	38
H.3.1	Personalisation	39
H.3.2	Engaging students	39
H.3.3	Progression rates	40
H.4	Lessons for delivery	40
I	Skills for Growth: Traineeships	42
I.1	Background to the institution	42
I.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	42
I.3	Hairdressing traineeship	43
I.4	Lessons for delivery	45
J	South Tyneside College: Hair and Beauty	47
J.1	Background to the institution	47

J.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	47
J.2.1	Trialling different approaches	48
J.3	Hair and Beauty	49
J.4	Lessons for delivery	50
K	Stockton Riverside College: Multi-skilled Construction	51
K.1	Background to the institution	51
K.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	51
K.3	Level 1 Diploma in Construction (Multi-skills)	53
K.4	Lessons for delivery	54
L	Wilberforce Sixth Form College: Vocational study programme	55
L.1	Background to the institution	55
1.2	Background to the below Level 2 offer	55
L.3	Level 1 vocational study programme	56
L.4	Lessons for delivery	58

Introduction

The following 12 good practice case studies were produced by the Institute for Employment Studies in collaboration with each of the named providers on the basis of research conducted to understand effective curriculum practice in teaching 16/17 year olds working at Level 1 and below. A full research report is available alongside this set of good practice case studies.

A Fareham College: Careers and Personal Development

- The Careers and Personal Development (C&PD) course is a personalised programme of study that builds on learners' earlier learning and is aimed at helping learners to understand themselves, their strengths, weaknesses and particular interests. The programme aims to prepare them for progression to further learning and a preferred career path.
- The C&PD course successfully (re)engages students who might otherwise leave a formal learning environment due to uncertainty about the direction of their career path or for other reasons.
- The programme gives learners the flexibility to explore career and course options within the college and build the English and maths skills required to succeed on other programmes. This is highly valued by students.
- Learners are able to start the course throughout the year, supported by a flexible qualification structure.
- There is a high rate of progression to other courses within the college and students are able to progress onto other courses when they are ready.

A.1 Background to the institution

Fareham College is a further education college in the south east of England offering a wide range of provision at different qualification levels, including in the areas of construction, early years, health and social care and hospitality and catering. The college launched the Centre for Excellence in Engineering, Manufacturing and Advanced Skills Training in 2014 which offers state of the art facilities in these areas. The main campus was redeveloped in 2015 and offers learners the opportunity to gain practical vocational experience as it has several businesses, including a silver service restaurant, hair and beauty salon, gym, travel agents, nursery and theatre. There are currently over 3,500 students enrolled at the college.

A.2 Background to the offer at below Level 2

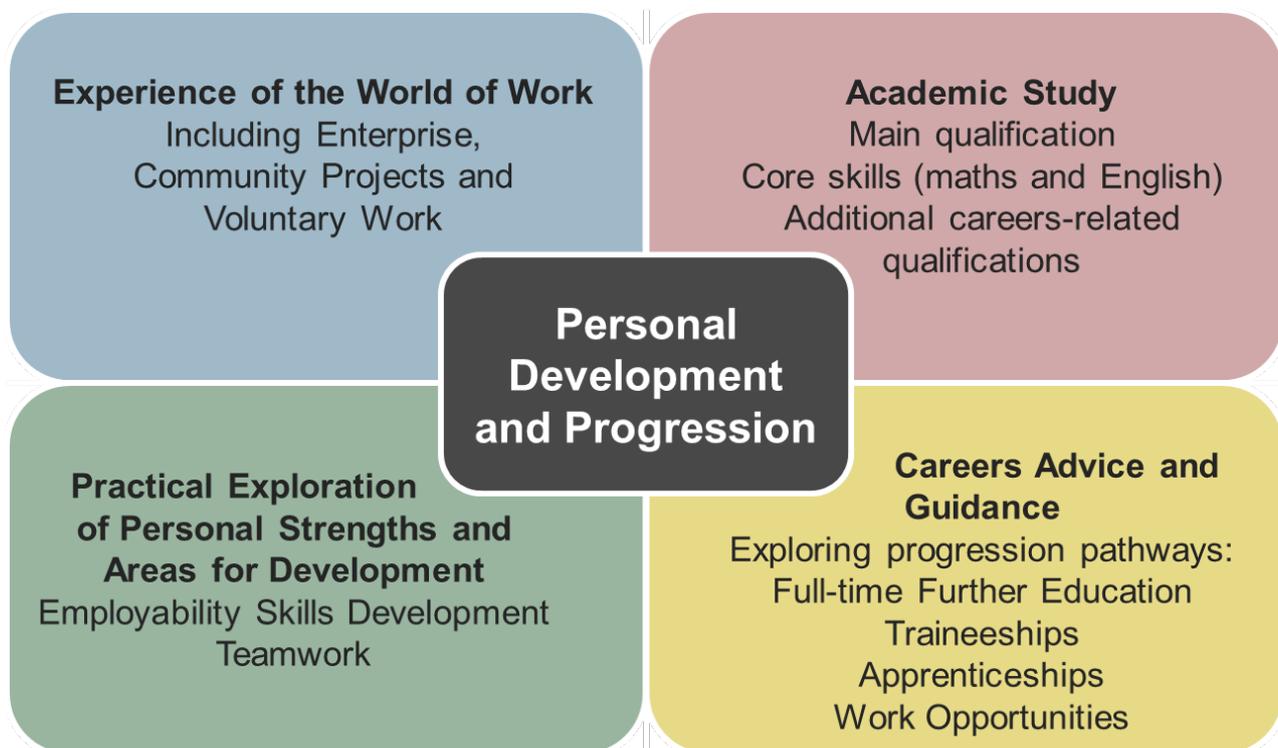
The college offers a number of foundation courses that do not have any formal entry requirements at Level 1 or below. These combine technical and professional learning with functional skills, and personal and social development, and aim to give learners the opportunity to progress to Level 2 and beyond. There are currently 124 learners enrolled on courses below Level 2 at the college. They include childcare, health and social care, bricklaying and traineeships as well the careers and personal development course.

A.3 Careers and Personal Development

The college designed the C&PD course around 3 years ago with multiple aims: to provide a safety net for students at risk of leaving during the academic year, to offer a platform to experience different programmes for those unsure of their learning and career goals and, as appropriate, support students to gain confidence studying in a college environment. The programme is highly tailored to individual students, but focuses on behaviour, attitude and attendance, and giving students vocational learning experiences. Young people enrol on the course after contacting or visiting the college and discussing options with staff, or when they wish to leave other provision within the college.

The curriculum is structured around 4 components and integrates English and maths, with career exploration, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Overview of the C&PD course curriculum



Source: Fareham College (2016), Careers & Personal Development Strategy 2016-2017

The C&PD course ranges from 8 weeks in duration to a full academic year and follows standard college term times. It consists of 612 planned learning hours for students completing the full academic year.

The college currently has 4 C&PD groups and works with around 80 learners throughout the year. Of the current cohort, around a quarter have Special Educational Needs although most of these do not have an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan and close to half did not achieve GCSEs at grades A*-C.

Each group comprises no more than 10 students. Students have a full day of teaching in C&PD, undertake courses with English and maths elements at an appropriate level reflecting their prior qualifications and assessment results, and attend a department day spent in another area of the college. Currently the English and maths team are separate to the C&PD department, but in future they hope that the tutors will come to teach the students in the C&PD classroom. In addition, English and maths are interwoven into every C&PD session.

The course programme is flexible, and staff tailor the course content to the interests and needs of students. For example, with an earlier cohort, to build on students' interest in sport, staff included a Sport qualification rather than the Personal and Social Development qualification. Other examples of tailoring include creatively sourcing work experience placements, such as from a department in the college, and a guest session from a member of staff on employability and how to set up a business. This year tutors are working with a voluntary organisation to expand student opportunities and the variety of the course. The partners will run shared sessions with the students focusing on trust building.

Students can choose which vocational area to engage with in regular 'department days' where they work alongside existing students in these subjects. As such, C&PD students can be involved in activities including bricklaying, hairdressing, beauty, catering, fashion, art, media, sport and dance.

A.3.1 Personalisation

Students work towards a flexible, Personal and Social Development qualification, which can be delivered at Entry level up to Level 2. It consists of units so that students can achieve an Award, Certificate, or Diploma. Each class consists of a mixed ability group of students with e.g. those taking Entry Level 1 working alongside those taking Entry Level 3.

Each student is interviewed when they apply to C&PD and asked about their interests. Programmes are then personalised based on career interests, levels of English and maths and taking account of any existing work experience or placements. For example, students joining a C&PD course after starting a different course can continue with work experience placements from the earlier course if suitable. Further personalisation is provided through the 'department day' activities where students choose which department to join and can change department depending on their interests. Typically C&PD students integrate into the regular, practical sessions of the departments.

A.3.2 Progression rates

The 2015/16 cohort consisted of 81 students (35 students stayed for the full academic year). Their destinations are outlined below.

Table 1: Destinations of the 2015/16 Cohort

2015/15 C&PD Careers and Personal Development course starters destinations	Number of C&PD Careers and Personal Development students	% of cohort
Apprenticeship	5	6.1
Traineeship	14	17.2
Other courses within the college	23	28.3
Other education	7	8.6
Employment	25	30.8
Moved out of area	4	4.9
Unknown	3	3.7
Total	81	

Source: Fareham College

Learners are able to progress during the academic year, if appropriate, and tutors ensure that learners have an identified progression route before they leave the C&PD course.

Students valued the opportunity the course presented to try different options and to find their preferred career path. In the view of students, the course succeeded in its aims to keep them engaged in learning and to help them to become clearer on their preferred career path. For example, a student on the course had needed to reduce her college hours due to a health condition and wanted to focus on gaining maths and English skills before progressing in her chosen vocational area in the following September. Another student used the course to manage the transition to the large college environment. He said:

'Being able to do C&PD has given me the opportunity to take a step back and to think about what I really want to do... having the time to think about what I want to do rather than having to jump into it has been good.'

C&PD student

A.4 Lessons for delivery

The C&PD course tends to engage with learners who are at risk of leaving another programme within the college. Communication between departments and monitoring systems are therefore crucial alongside the curriculum. There is also a need to engage

staff across the college in order to raise awareness and to demonstrate its value - which the team do by celebrating the success of their students when they progress.

The flexibility of the curriculum, and relevance to developing and exploring learners' career interests, enabling them to trial career and course ideas, to join throughout the year, and to work at the most suitable level, is vital to secure effective engagement, retention and progression. Staff effectively build on students' interests, including current affairs, and have adapted the programme of activities over time to provide a high degree of personalisation.

The course also builds the English and maths skills necessary for progression to other qualifications and students gain confidence in their ability to learn, scaffolded by effective pastoral support.

B Furness College: Craft Engineering

- Furness College works on the principle that students will have different needs and some students will take longer to enter the workplace than others. As such, after initial assessment it sets students a series of tailored and achievable milestones on their route through course levels and into work.
- Maths, English and employability are embedded throughout the curriculum as well as delivered in specialist classes run by experienced maths and English tutors.
- The college is mindful that maths and English classes may have been difficult experiences at school for students so wherever possible they do not use the terms maths and English, even in the 'maths' and 'English' classes.

B.1 Background to the institution

Furness College is a General Further Education College on the south west peninsula of Cumbria. Its catchment area comprises medium-sized towns and rural communities, many of which are in the 20% most economically deprived wards in the UK. The surrounding area has a strong engineering heritage which remains today, with a large local company providing an important source of employment, an Apprenticeship scheme for which there is strong competition for vacancies, and a local supply chain which provides many additional employment opportunities. Due to the local economy, college staff said that people believe that there is parity of esteem between academic and vocational routes.

The college has over 2,000 students, around 1,500 being 16-18 year olds, and provides courses across the post-16 spectrum, from preparation for life and work, to higher-level Apprenticeships. As well as specialising in engineering, working closely with local employers, the college specialises in supporting students with negative experiences of the school system and has a strong track record in helping these students to re-engage with learning and subsequently find employment.

The college has an extensive outreach programme and regularly visits local primary and secondary schools to promote the numerous alternatives to the academic route. It also engages with many local employers who provide work experience placements and ultimately a source of full-time employment for students. In addition, employers advise on up-to-date working practices and how to create a realistic, simulated working environment within the college. The college also works with local business experts, such as the Local Enterprise Partnership and Chamber of Commerce, to identify areas of growth, including new plants planned in the area, and to adapt provision to local employment needs.

B.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

Throughout the college, and particularly with below Level 2 courses, the ethos of the college focusses on inspiration, nurturing and employment.

There are around 200 students studying programmes below Level 2 either part-time or full-time. It is believed that enforcing full-time attendance is not the best way to re-engage young people so tutors are sensitive to students' needs. Students can move between full and part-time courses depending on their experience and interests. For example, some students who have just started re-engaging with education start on part-time provision until they find a course that inspires them and may spend part of their week doing other things such as voluntary work or sports. This flexibility provides an important bridge between students' first experiences in the workplace because they can split their week between working and improving their work readiness at college. For such students, the college and employer work closely together to ensure the student is at work or college on the allotted days.

When a student joins the college, the first step is to identify a vocational area in which they have an interest. Where young people are unsure of the kind of work they would like to pursue in a vocational area, they can rotate between a series of short courses, sampling different skills. The second stage of the induction is to assess their numeracy and literacy skills using computer-aided testing. Their current level in each is then used to assign them to basic skills classes at the appropriate level and is shared with their vocational tutor who has responsibility for embedding numeracy and literacy in vocational classes.

Once on their course, if a student requires additional support for behavioural issues, the college can refer them to a partner organisation. The specialist provider assembles teams of young people for short work experience placements in Europe with costs covered, once young people prove their ability to respect other members of the team. As such, the placement, which involves living and working abroad, is a goal that is found to be an effective aspiration for team working and reliability skills. Often, group leaders themselves have experienced disengagement from education and work for a period and bring empathy and understanding on this basis. Students who are referred to the provider re-join the college when they are ready, most commonly after 1 to 6 months, and subsequently have similar progression rates to other students in this cohort.

B.3 Craft Engineering

Depending on the initial assessment, students start on 'Craft Engineering: Skills for work and life', typically at Entry Level 1 or 2, or Level 1 Craft Engineering. The Entry Level programmes typically include a rotation between short courses in various aspects of craft

engineering - carpentry, metalworking, and painting and decorating, each with a different tutor - until students find a subject or tutor that inspires them. Students who start at this level often progress far beyond it within the college, sometimes to the higher Apprenticeship level. Of the 200 students who start in the below Level 2 provision, 96% go onto study a different courses in the college or enter the workforce with or without continued training.

'Craft Engineering: Skills for work and life' typically has small class sizes of between 6 and 10 young people. This is due to bespoke curriculum design (such as the rotations), individualised coaching in maths and English, and because many participants have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Level 1 Craft and Engineering courses have larger class sizes, of between 15 and 20 students and, as students have chosen an area of interest, do not offer the bite size rotation.

B.4 Lessons for delivery

The approach taken by Furness College is to provide an even mix of formal vocational qualifications, maths and English (embedded or bespoke classes) and other enrichment activities, such as skills for employment courses tailored to the subject area (often around legal compliance). Around 50% of time is dedicated to the vocational aim with 25% allocated to each of the other activities. However, as mentioned, all content is embedded across the curriculum so the amount of a time a student spends on each aspect is tailored to their needs by tutors who identify those areas which each student need most help with. Care is taken to ensure that content – especially in maths and English – is not only integrated but engaging. For example, the register for employability classes is taken using a simple maths quiz that students enjoy. There was good anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of this approach.

With backgrounds working in their vocational area, staff not only know the subject well but they can also build a rapport with the students which leads to mutual respect. As well as being nurturing, they instil their work ethic in students, reinforcing belief that with the appropriate application and effort, there is a strong chance they will find work.

The ethos of the college focuses on inspiration, nurturing and employment. Throughout the college, achievement is stressed - from displays highlighting the journeys into employment of former students to the continued engagement of former students in the current curriculum. Apprentices study on the same campus as the Entry Level students and act as further inspiration. In addition, former apprentices who now have their own business continue to take new apprentices from the college intake.

Staff are sensitive to negative experiences they know that many students will have had at school, and therefore work to ensure that there are clear distinctions between this and

the college environment, even down to using different terminology: they do not refer to 'maths' and 'English' and instead of 'homework', they set milestones that can be finished in class time or another time. To avoid further negative experiences, provision is tailored to students' needs: whether a student works part-time for 5 days or full-time for fewer days is determined through a conversation with a tutor they trust. Similarly, the decision of when it is appropriate to recommend the student to a local employer is taken between the student and the staff they trust - a return to the workplace too soon could give the student another bad experience and keep them from the labour market even longer.

C Halesowen College: Vocational Studies

- The Halesowen College Vocational Studies course was designed to offer students an opportunity to experience a variety of arts-based subjects.
- As such, Vocational Studies acts as a route back into education for some students, as it gives them the opportunity to ‘sample’ subjects before specialising.
- The students’ progress is assessed at half term and they are carefully monitored so that any necessary adjustments can be made.
- Vocational Level 1 students felt that they were treated with respect at the college, which they appreciated as some felt that this had not been the case at school.

C.1 Background to the institution

Halesowen College is a large Further Education college, which is situated in the town of Halesowen outside of the city of Birmingham in the West Midlands. The college has approximately 4,000 students, most of whom are aged 16 to 18. The college consists of 4 faculties: A level; Creative Arts; Health and Science; and Business and Professional Services. It offers a diverse range of programmes from Entry Level and Level 1 to Level 4 and above.

Halesowen is not a deprived area, although the college has a wide catchment which incorporates areas of significant deprivation. Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) statistics suggest that the wider area is second only to the north east in terms of poor labour market conditions: there is high unemployment, skills shortages, and a lack of individuals with higher qualifications. This is reflected in the college’s student demographics, as approximately 42% of students come from homes where household income is less than £16,000. The college runs a free bus service for students and, given the socioeconomic status of a large proportion of their students, the college believes this is key to students accessing their provision. The number of students with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans has increased from 22 to 65 in the last year, and the college predicts this will further increase.

C.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

Halesowen College has a relatively diverse range of provision for their below Level 2 students, with courses offered from each of the 3 vocational faculties. This is despite the cohort being relatively small – there are 182 studying towards below Level 2 courses. Classes for these students tend to be slightly smaller compared to Level 2+ courses, as these students often need more intense support than others.

Although timetabling varies to some extent across Level 1 courses, most courses are timetabled such that students do not have free periods. For example, the Sport and Leisure Department found that starting the day at 9am worked well as students were used to getting up at this time for school. Speaking with staff, although timetabling varied slightly across courses, all teaching staff felt that their approach to timetabling worked well, and attendance was best with the current approach.

Typically, as part of below Level 2 courses, students spend around 17 hours a week at college with 4 hours a week dedicated to Functional Skills – 2 hours each for English and maths.

C.3 Vocational Studies Level 1 diploma

The Vocational Studies Level 1 course has been running for 4 years and combines arts-based subjects including art and design, graphics, media, music, performing arts, and travel and tourism. Staff report that this works well, as it allows students to sample a variety of creative subjects ahead of specialisation. Because of the broad subject base, staff said that this course also provides an effective route back into education for students who were disengaged in school. Assessment is based on coursework, which is marked on a pass/fail basis, and practical assessments, although students undertake written tests for Functional Skills.

There are usually around 15 students on the Vocational Studies course, although the current cohort consists of 11 students. Timetabling can often be complex and is dependent on the availability space/classrooms, and teaching staff. Students take all of their classes as a group and commented that they enjoy this, as it allows for a close bond to be formed.

C.3.1 Personalisation

Staff tailor the programme to the needs of students as much as possible. All students are interviewed before joining the course. This allows staff to pick up on support needs in advance (e.g. whether they have an EHC plan) so that they can cater to the students' needs and timetable accordingly. Tutors commented that forward planning was a central part of their approach and this was particularly important for Level 1 students as it allows them to minimise change/disruption, which can be difficult for some students.

Staff monitor students closely to make sure that all of their needs are being met. The beginning of the year is a particularly important time and students are formally assessed around the half-term point to ensure that they are coping and that the course is appropriate. In total, there are 4 review points throughout the year at which all students continue to be monitored.

An important part of the course is the 2-week work experience component that all students complete. For Level 1 students, organising this is a collaborative process with the college and students receive as much support as necessary in securing a suitable placement. The focus for Level 1 students is on allowing exposure to employers and the workplace more broadly, rather than on acquiring specific skills. As a result there is quite a bit of variety in terms of the types of work students undertake. For example, a student gained work experience with a local magazine, as they were interested in journalism and photography; another had a placement with Jobcentre Plus and was subsequently offered an Apprenticeship.

For some students, however, work can be a daunting and new experience. Where this is the case, staff offer intense support and where students are not ready for a 'real world' work placement, they are offered one within the college, which provides a friendly and known/safe environment. This can include experience of working in the college's library for example. In one instance, a student who expressed an interest in progressing to Level 2 Art secured work experience, with the help of tutors, alongside the college's art technicians. Staff believed that this approach allowed them to prepare students for the work experience element of Level 2 courses.

C.3.2 Engaging students

Students were very positive about their experiences at college, as they felt that they were treated with respect by staff. They liked being on first-name terms with their tutors. Students felt that the Vocational Studies course suited them as it gave them the opportunity to study a range of subjects.

The college's expectations for students change as they progress through the year. While the initial stages of the course are designed to help students settle in and gain confidence in their own abilities, towards the end of Level 1, the tutors push students further in order to prepare them for progression to a Level 2 course. For example, for those students able to take them on, staff may set extensions to tasks that are slightly more demanding. A lot of focus is also placed on preparing them for their next step. Towards the end of the year students may also attend careers fairs and receive careers advice around jobs and Apprenticeships.

C.3.3 Progression

Halesowen College is confident that all students starting the Vocational Studies course will achieve a Level 1 qualification during their time with the college. As there are often small numbers of students who, for a variety of reasons, will not return to the college after the Christmas break, the Vocational Studies course is designed so that all core units are completed before the Christmas holidays. This allows students to achieve an Award

instead of the Diploma and ensures that all students to be able to take away at least some form of qualification on leaving the college.

Out of the 11 students currently enrolled on the Vocational Studies, around 7 or 8 are expected to progress to Level 2 qualifications such as art or photography at the college. In the case of students who choose to leave the college at the end of the academic year, they usually follow a number of destinations. For example, there are often a small number of students who leave the college in order to pursue traineeships or Apprenticeships with other providers; an option supported by Halesowen college. It provides the necessary advice and guidance needed to inform this decision and support the student's transition.

The college's students have a strong history of progression, and some of their previous Level 1 students have progressed to Level 3 qualifications at Halesowen College.

C.4 Lessons for delivery

Within courses that are below Level 2, staff felt that flexibility is key, as they must be able to adapt to the needs of the students. The college sees its assessment and review procedures as crucial to supporting students to make progress and succeed. These allow learning programmes to be tailored to ensure that individual students are stretched and encouraged to achieve at the highest level they are capable of. To do this, the college aims to build expectations incrementally across the course experience.

Tutors must be able to gauge students' engagement with lessons and adapt accordingly. Whilst time and effort goes into the planning of lessons for students across the college, additional care must be taken when planning the teaching for below Level 2 courses. Tutors explained that if they talk for too long a period, students start to disengage, so lessons are comprised of short chunks and involve lots of activities to maintain students' interest.

D Halesowen College: Business, Retail and IT

- The Business, Retail and IT Users Level 1 certificate was designed to give students greater choice, as it incorporates 2 separate courses: the Retail Knowledge Level 1 certificate and the IT Users Level 1 certificate.
- Functional skills are thoroughly embedded into the Business, Retail and IT classes alongside course content, as is the teaching of the British Values syllabus that covers democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs..
- The teaching style for this course is very dynamic and flexibility is important. Lessons are planned carefully so that each activity is short and the tutor is able to switch between tasks to keep the students engaged. Online quizzes are used as an effective means of maintaining students' interest.

D.1 Background to the institution

Halesowen College is a large Further Education college, which is situated in the town of Halesowen outside of the city of Birmingham in the West Midlands. The college has approximately 4,000 students, most of whom are aged 16 to 18. The college consists of 4 faculties: A level; Creative Arts; Health and Science; and Business and Professional Services. It offers a diverse range of programmes from Entry Level and Level 1 to Level 4 and above.

Halesowen is not a deprived area, although the college has a wide catchment which incorporates areas of significant deprivation. Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) statistics suggest that the wider area is second only to the north east in terms of poor labour market conditions: there is high unemployment, skills shortages, and a lack of individuals with higher qualifications. This is reflected in the college's student demographics, as approximately 42% of students come from homes where household income is less than £16,000. The college runs a free bus service for students and, given the socioeconomic status of a large proportion of their students, the college believes this is key to students accessing their provision. The number of students with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans has increased from 22 to 65 in the last year, and the college predicts this will further increase.

D.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

Halesowen College has a relatively diverse range of provision for their below Level 2 students, with courses offered from each of the 3 vocational faculties. This is despite the cohort being relatively small – there are 182 studying towards below Level 2 courses.

Classes for these students tend to be slightly smaller compared to Level 2+ courses, as these students often need more intense support than others.

Although timetabling varies to some extent across Level 1 courses, most courses are timetabled such that students do not have free periods. For example, the Sport and Leisure Department found that starting the day at 9am worked well as students were used to getting up at this time for school. Speaking with staff, although timetabling varied slightly across courses, all teaching staff felt that their approach to timetabling worked well, and attendance was best with the current approach.

Typically, as part of below Level 2 courses, students spend around 17 hours a week at college with 4 hours a week dedicated to Functional Skills – 2 hours each for English and maths.

D.3 Business, Retail and IT Users Level 1 Certificate

The Business, Retail and IT Users Level 1 Certificate qualification has been offered by Halesowen College for the last 4 years. It is slightly different from other Level 1 courses, as it is a joint qualification. Rather than achieve a Level 1 Diploma qualification at the end of the academic year, students will receive 2 Certificates: the Level 1 Certificate in Retail Knowledge and the Level 1 Certificate in IT Users. This is designed to offer students greater choice for their next steps, and is particularly popular for students who are unsure of their career and course preferences.

The Business, Retail and IT Users Level 1 is one of the most popular below Level 2 courses available at the college. The cohort is relatively large in comparison to other classes, with 34 students enrolled currently. At the start of the current academic year 2 tutor groups were formed for the course. However, in October 2016, the decision was reached to take some students from each to create a third tutor group as the groups were proving too large to teach effectively and the student experience was suffering. Due to issues with space, the third tutor group are taught on a different campus. Initially students with poor attendance prior to the split continued to attend badly, and other students were unhappy about being split from their friends and had an attendance 'wobble'. Nonetheless, the groups have since gelled well and attendance and achievement have improved considerably.

Functional Skills, Equality and Diversity, and British Values were thoroughly embedded into the IT lesson observed, which was said to be common practice by tutors. Embedding Functional Skills is viewed as particularly important, as students have a wide range of abilities and it allows students to develop their English and maths in a context which does not have negative associations for them. For example, students had created their own websites about British seaside towns, using simple site-building software. They created a

timed script for their introductory video. Functional Skills were embedded in this, since students had to calculate the length of their script in words and time needed to speak those words to fit a video lasting 90 seconds. They did this by timing themselves reading a piece of text for 10 seconds and using the number of words during this 10 seconds to estimate script length. The script itself was also a chance for students to build upon their English skills, including grammar, spelling and the use of descriptive and persuasive language. To embed British Values and Equality and Diversity, a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT)-friendly city was chosen to promote mutual respect and tolerance and challenge stereotypes.

An important part of the course is the 2-week work experience component that all students complete. For Level 1 students, organising this is a collaborative process with the college and students receive as much support as necessary in securing a suitable placement. The focus for Level 1 students is on allowing exposure to employers and the workplace more broadly, rather than on acquiring specific skills.

D.3.1 Engaging students

To maintain interest and engagement, lessons are designed with regular breaks in addition to the usual mid-morning/afternoon and lunch breaks. The Course Leader incorporates regular interactive online quizzes and games into the lesson. These are said to be extremely effective in re-capturing the students' attention when they begin to disengage. More generally, all aspects of the lesson were divided into manageable chunks for the students, so the Course Leader was never talking for too long at any given time, and students were required to complete a variety of activities. Technology, such as video capture and editing, was a key tool in maintaining engagement.

D.3.2 Progression rates

There are 34 students in total across the 3 tutor groups on the Business, Retail and IT Users Level 1 course. The college predicts that a large majority of these will achieve the Level 1 qualification and a significant number are likely to stay on at the college and progress to a Level 2 qualification.

D.4 Lessons for delivery

Within the below Level 2 provision, strong emphasis was placed on providing flexibility; tutors adapt to the needs of the students who often struggle to engage with passive and theoretical material. The requirement for a dynamic classroom environment with a highly flexible teaching style, also meant a need to ensure lessons were carefully planned and included a range of activities, such as interactive quizzes and games, with frequent changes and breaks to maintain students' concentration. Combined with this, was a

holistic approach with each aspect of the curriculum carefully embedded into the lesson. Thus students were building and developing their Functional Skills and learning about British Values at the same time as developing skills and knowledge in their core curriculum subjects.

E Hugh Baird College: Foundation Learning Department

- At Hugh Baird College, 3 programmes work in conjunction to prevent students entering the not in education, employment or training (NEET) status at any point in the year.
- It stresses the importance of tutors sharing resources to be able to change lesson content to suit students (often at short notice).
- Level 1 is not viewed as an adjunct to Level 2; it is an offer in its own right. A dedicated Foundation Learning department, comprising staff recruited specifically, provides a strong network of support for students with a range of needs.
- Students will progress at different speeds; it is important to have different starting points through the year for progression to Level 2.

E.1 Background to the institution

Hugh Baird College is one of the largest providers of education and training in Merseyside, delivering over 300 courses to more than 5,000 students. Courses range from Entry Level to Level 3, across the full post-16 further education curriculum offer. In addition, the college , a comprehensive Apprenticeship offer.

The college is situated in an area of high deprivation and local schools are not high performing; 71% of the college's latest intake entered their course without a grade C or higher GCSE in maths and English. It is the role of the college to motivate young people and support them to make informed choices about the options they will pursue.

Locally, some private training providers who would have catered for foundation-level students have closed and there has been a rise in the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The college recognises that a clear and coherent Foundation Learning offer is essential in order to fulfil its mission.

E.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

Provision below Level 2 was brought together into a single Foundation Learning department 2 years ago and staff were specifically recruited to deliver these courses. This represented a significant investment which is now proving successful with above national average retention and achievement rates on the 3 main programmes being seen. Most recently, maths and English teaching for Foundation Learning students were also integrated into the department. A dedicated team has provided a strong network to support the diverse range of students in a comprehensive manner.

The college staff describe the drivers to their Foundation Learning courses as:

1. To prevent young people from becoming NEET. They do this by providing suitable programmes that can be started at any time of the year.
2. Avoid duplication with local schools. The college found that while they were at school some students had already taken the same/similar courses as the college were offering. Therefore they often had high drop-out rates due to boredom.
3. Achieve something quite quickly and signpost clear progression routes. In order to engage young people, help them progress towards employment and keep them motivated, the college planned programmes to ensure that learning goals were achievable within a term.

Each vocational programme across the college was reviewed to evaluate whether it had a need for a Level 1 programme within the specialised department rather than as part of the Foundation Learning department. In some instances, such as electrical installation and carpentry, a need was established for this because the Level 1 provides an important base in terms of skills development for Level 2. Therefore the college has kept some Level 1 provision outside of the Foundation Learning department. Level 1 provision can now be taken over 1 year or as part of a fast-track which enables students to progress to Level 2 in January. Level 1 programmes in the Foundation Learning department are a discrete offer and not an adjunct to Level 2 and Level 3 courses.

In deciding on the programmes offered, the college links to the Liverpool City Region Skills Strategy, while the Foundation Learning department also considers the college's business plan.

E.3 Foundation Learning Department

There are 3 courses on offer in the Foundation Learning department. Each can link to the other, as flexibility is crucial to their success. All are classed as part-time as they are less than 540 hours per year. Students could participate in all 3 over the course of 1 academic year. These courses are considered to be one of the 'unique selling points' of the college offer.

- The first of these programmes is delivered at either Entry Level 3 or Level 1. It is aimed at students who are vocationally focussed but have shown no commitment to a particular route. The programme offers an Occupational Studies award, along with a functional skills qualification. The Occupational Studies award has over 70 units at both Entry Level 3 and Level 1 from which the course manager can select to suit the students. There are 2 starting points each year and students who start on Entry Level 3 in September can progress to Level 1 in January. The

development of core employability skills is embedded throughout delivery. The cohort of 40 attends 3 days per week with an additional full or half day of enrichment activities. The enrichment activities can include first aid courses, charity work, watching and creating documentaries; decided and organised by the students. In addition to 1.5 hours of maths and 1.5 hours of English Functional Skills teaching each week, students undertake vocational tasters and work experience, the latter as part of group activities, such as helping at a food bank or community garden.

- The second programme is aimed at students who have started a course and dropped out or have decided to go to college later in the year. The programme starts with an initial 8 week taster, then students choose their pathway which may include an accredited award or certificate, progression to further study or entering employment. 'Tier 1' is focussed on behaviour and punctuality and works to engage students at the college. Tiers 2 and 3 focus on progression. The current cohort size is 30. Most students come from within the college, although increasing numbers are referred from external agencies. Students are with the programme for 2 days a week over an 8-week period. After this they can move up to the next tier or into another course (such as the one above). Tier 1 has no qualification attached, Tier 2 works towards an Entry Level 3 Occupational Studies and Tier 3 a Level 1 qualification. In addition, there are group projects with employers such as community gardening for Tier 1 students and moving towards individual placements for Tier 3 students.
- The final part of the offer for Foundation Learning students is a 12-week package offered 3 times a year, involving 5 days attendance each week. There are 12-14 students in each cohort. The course aims to build confidence and develop life and employment skills. On completion, there is a graduation ceremony at which each student delivers a speech. Students achieve a Certificate in Employment, Teamwork and Community Skills. Typically, they then progress either within the college or to employment. There is no requirement to undertake separate maths and English provision as these subjects are embedded.

E.3.1 Personalisation

The 12-week package follows a standard structure working towards building team-working and self-development. Although the theme each week is decided centrally for the programme, session delivery is determined by the tutors. They take into account learning preferences and differing abilities; they often pair people of differing abilities. This is valuable, as one student may be stronger in one area and weaker in another compared to their peer, such as being confident in public speaking, but less physically able.

In the other two programmes flexibility is crucial. Tutors can adapt class sessions according to what is going on in the news or incidents that have happened in previous classes. If tutors see a need for something they can dig into their own 'bag of tricks', request support and ideas from other Foundation Learning colleagues or seek advice from other areas of the college, such as asking the sports department to deliver a session of team games for an hour a week to build up team-working skills.

Tutors are also responsible for pastoral care and Foundation Learning maths and English teaching. Having a tutor who is also responsible for pastoral care means they have the opportunity to get to know the student fully and understand factors that might impact on their learning. The college also provides a 'base classroom' where all of their lessons take place that Foundation Learning students can make their own.

E.3.2 Progression

At induction, staff talk about progression with the students and start to plan how they can progress at the college after their Foundation Learning programmes. Staff also discuss expectations for attendance and punctuality. Many Level 2 courses would not accept students' behaviour as displayed at the beginning of the Foundation Learning programme. By the end, most students' attendance and punctuality improves to the point that they are able to get a reference from their tutor for their next course application. They are encouraged to apply for Level 2 through the same system as any other student. The expectation is that by the end of the Foundation Learning programme, the student should progress to Level 2, start an Apprenticeship or have gained employment.

At the time of the case study visit, 90% of students were making arrangements for their progression. For example, some had plans to embark on a painting and decorating course on the basis that they had enjoyed the vocational taster in this subject they had received as part of their programme.

The college uses management information systems to track progress and collects information about employability attributes such as attitude to learning, behaviour, attendance and punctuality, as well as progress on any qualification a student is studying. Each student's intended destination is set at week 1. A contracted company carries out a follow-up to track destinations due to the large volume of students.

Staff feel that progression can be sideways (for example between the 3 Foundation Learning programmes), but ideally upwards. Foundation Learning department managers have worked with other areas of the college to ensure there are Level 2 starts available in January to enable progression when Level 1 students are ready. Progression can be to another course in the college or to another provider, traineeship or Apprenticeship. Traineeships are viewed as more practical and offered in electrical, motor vehicle and

health and social care. Progression can also include volunteering, employability courses, or anything else that prevents students from entering the NEET status.

The staff have good relationships with local providers such as those who offer additional employability skills courses although subsequent to the closure of much local provision it has become more difficult to source external progression routes.

Some students move into employment. This may be in the form of a part-time job with opportunities to increase hours to become full-time, it could be starting training with an employer such as a supermarket, or Apprenticeships. The opportunity to earn and learn is often appreciated by this student group.

E.4 Lessons for delivery

It is important to allow students to progress over different time periods; students will take shorter or longer periods to progress, developing different skills and attributes. It is also important to ensure that there are progression routes available at the different points in the year to match to when students are ready to progress.

A significant factor in Hugh Baird college's success is the flexibility granted to tutors to adapt to the needs of the group and change delivery accordingly. Staff plan ahead and always know what they are doing next week, but are also able to change in response to student need. Staff have a bank of resources built up over time to draw on.

Some Level 1 courses need to last a full academic year – such as Level 1 carpentry – due to the extent of skills and knowledge that need to be developed. Many others do not need to be this long but each should be individually reviewed to ensure optimum duration.

When considering the whole package provided for students, staff feel that pastoral support is more important than the curriculum or qualification. However the college views the offer as a package containing a formal qualification (if relevant) and experiences that enhance life skills and employability, resulting in progression opportunities that move each student closer to the world of work or higher levels of education.

A transition 'year' needs to be flexible: not all students will require the full year but some might. Students need to be able to join a foundation offer at any point in the year, even returning to such provision after having left earlier in the year.

F Longley Park Sixth Form College: Information Technology

- Longley Park's programmes have vocational packaging but are wide-ranging and have a clear emphasis on personal and social development and transferable skills.
- Employability development is structured through work-related learning in 'safer' environments to support students to gradually become work-ready in a more sustainable way.
- Programmes are designed to link into the qualifications framework and provide a clear pathway to higher level learning.
- Tutorials provide crucial wraparound support for students who often have many barriers to learning.

F.1 Background to the institution

Historically there had been low progression to post-16 Further Education (FE) amongst young people across local wards, and very low progression to Higher Education (HE). In response to the economic challenges in the area, Longley Park Sixth Form College was set up as a widening participation institution 12 years ago. The college is linked to 7 feeder schools. Whilst it is a sixth form college (SFC), it has more Level 2, vocational and blended programmes of study than most SFCs, to meet the needs of local students.

F.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

In the past the college has run generic Level 1 study programmes to give students who are not yet ready for Level 2 a flavour of different subjects and pathways. This is because these students often lack clearly-formed career ambitions. However, this broad-reaching offer proved less effective because students were not part of a specific subject and did not feel integrated within the college. To overcome this, senior managers and Heads of Department instead introduced a number of discipline-specific pathways which brought together student preferences and intelligence on local labour market needs within flexible, broad programmes with an emphasis on wider personal and social development. This enabled students to feel more integrated within a subject area while also allowing them to develop insights into potential careers before making firm choices.

'At Level 1, although there's a vocational flavour, we are not training people to work in those areas, we're trying to give them transferable skills.'

Senior Manager

Class sizes are between 10 and 14 students per group, with 14 being a maximum after which classes become too large for effective learning. The below Level 2 pathways are:

- Level 1 Information technology
- Level 1 Health and childcare
- Level 1 Sports and personal development
- Entry Level to Level 1 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) study programme with maths and information technology (IT) functional skills.

Each of the Level 1 programmes follows a similar structure of a vocational element, maths, English, tutorials and work-related learning. As ESOL has English as a core part of the programme, ESOL students also undertake IT Functional Skills as well as maths. Students who achieved a D in English or maths must re-take GCSEs, those who achieved an E (in maths) have traditionally done a 2-year 'Use of Maths' Level 2 programme while those who achieved an F or below undertake Functional Skills.

Below Level 2 courses are marketed to students and parents/carers as a preparation year where students develop their skills and reach the best possible position to move onto a Level 2 course. Staff also emphasise that college will be different to school. Students on Level 1 programmes face many different barriers to learning: social and/or economic, family circumstances, gaps in learning, learning support needs and ESOL needs. Providing personal and holistic support is crucial.

F.3 Level 1 Information Technology

The first step in the student lifecycle is where every applicant is invited into the college for a general presentation about college life and an individual meeting with a college manager in a relevant discipline. This is not selective. The conversation is about whether the course is right for the student, their interests and career aims. At enrolment, students have skills assessments so they can be allocated to classes of the right level and to give teaching staff a realistic idea of potential progression.

The IT course is full-time and structured around the academic year. Students follow a fixed set of around 15 units each year, although Heads of Department amend the programme annually depending on the knowledge and skills each cohort needs to help them progress to higher-level learning the following year. Heads of Department also strive to make sure the programme is blended, offering a range of modules covering administration, business and management, IT and security, audio production and graphics. The aim is to have courses which are flexible and developmental. If cohort size allows, there are multiple streams following different modules according to interests.

Employability development takes place through work-related learning (e.g. workplace scenarios acted out in the classroom), workplace visits and employer talks at the college.

Staff explained that for this cohort, exposure to employment must be structured appropriately and delivered in a safe environment. Many students are not workplace ready at Level 1. Activities have included employers talking about what it is like to be in a work environment, behavioural expectations and mock interviews. Taking a gradual approach helps students to build up confidence and employability skills. Staff feel this prepares their young people better for progression.

Students also have regular tutorials delivered by their vocational leads. This means tutors know how students are faring, understand safeguarding needs and can be a friendly, trustworthy support. Students are positive about the relationship and safe space.

Because of the diverse additional needs and barriers to learning, tutors and teaching staff must differentiate much more than is necessary for Level 2+ students and use multiple classroom behavioural management styles. Differentiation may often be practical: using pictures as well as text in hand-outs, reading out instructions as well as having them written down or offering extended work for students who are further ahead. A particularly effective approach for some learners has been arranging different activity stations around a classroom; this gets students trying lots of different things and moving around. Students may also have very different learning preferences – some like sustained textbook learning whilst others prefer broken up lessons, pair work or group work, or need more engaged, one-to-one support.

'If you've had bad experiences or you've struggled with [English or maths] in school, to carry on with it in college is difficult... we've got a couple of learners who are struggling with English so we're looking to accommodate them because by making them do it is making them not turn up. Instead we're looking at 1-2-1 classes in a different setting.'

Head of Department

Maths and English are partially contextualised alongside vocational qualifications. However, staff emphasised they make sure this is not the only way that numeracy and literacy are taught. Students need numeracy/literacy exposure in all sorts of contexts, both to pass the qualification and also for future learning, training or employment.

Most commonly, students' progress to a Level 2 programme within the college, but others move to a general FE provider that can offer a more vocational, hands-on experience in a particular subject. Level 2 provision may not necessarily be in the same subject area as the Level 1 course, which is the reason for the skills-focused development emphasis in the earlier courses. Students do not often move straight to traineeships or Apprenticeships as there are very few opportunities for this cohort. Staff noted that a number of students move through the qualifications framework and sometimes on to HE.

'It's not untypical for students to come in at Level 1, go to Level 2, 3 and on to university.'

'Soft' outcomes were also evident. Students develop personal, social and employability skills over the course of the programme as well as vocational expertise.

'They're coming in from school... and when they start, they get that bit of independence and they build on that across the course – after Christmas you see them being much more independent and taking ownership of their learning.'

Head of Department

F.4 Lessons for delivery

Vocational approaches are most effective for these students because these offer real world, practical learning with contextualised assignments. Staff feel that key to success is integrating knowledge-based learning as a way to develop transferable and employability skills. Students feel they develop technical skills but also study skills such as completing work on time, meeting deadlines, building up literacy and numeracy.

As the study programmes are assessed by modules, learning is delivered in a drip-feed and students can build their skills over time. Staff find that students '*suddenly blossom*' through learning in this way; also, that more 'academic' vocational education was inappropriate and could make post-16 study less accessible for the cohort, ultimately impacting on progression.

Teamwork and peer support is valuable to delivery, as it helps students learn independently and engage with the material.

Routine is also critical as a lack of consistency can be stressful and cause students to disengage. Staff have found it useful to have a regular plenary at the beginning of the day in same format, plus very organised work folders.

G Nelson and Colne College: Foundation to progression

- Across all Entry and Level 1 programmes, teaching staff aim to complete the core qualification requirements by the Easter break, so that the final term can be individually tailored in ways that support each student's progression pathway.
- For students intending to progress to higher level vocational study, the final term involves 'tasters' of classes at the next level, advanced study skills and additional placements as relevant.
- For students looking towards employment, traineeship or Apprenticeship as their next step, the final term will focus on further work experience.
- Tailoring the final term supports progression by smoothing transition to the next stage. Students are motivated by gaining experience of their next level, and gain confidence in their ability to succeed at this level. It also offers an opportunity for students to confirm their choice, and to change to their plans if needed.
- All students continue to study maths and English throughout the final term.
- Fully individualising timetables is a significant managerial undertaking, requiring leadership and planning throughout the year. However, the benefits are reflected in the college's progression success rates of over 90% across the Entry/Level 1 cohort.

G.1 Background to the institution

Nelson and Colne College is a further education and sixth form college in Lancashire, with around 1,800 students in total. The college serves an area of high, economic deprivation. The proportion of school leavers attaining five A*-C grades at GCSE, including maths and English, is below 45% and levels of literacy are low in the general population, in addition to there being a high concentration of speakers of English as an additional language (EAL). Yet the college is top in the local area for 'value added' on both academic and vocational pathways, and is top in the country for 16-18 Apprenticeship success.

G.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

Below Level 2 courses are delivered by the college's Foundation division and include Level 1 and Entry level 3 courses in:

- ICT and Business
- Health and Social Care, and Childcare

- Uniformed Public Services and Sports Development
- Engineering
- Hair and Beauty.

There are also Entry Pathway courses at Pre-Entry through Entry level 3, which are targeted at learners with low levels of literacy and numeracy, many of whom also have ESOL needs. These programmes have a strong focus on language and communication. Additionally, the college offers a programme at Entry level 2 and 3, designed for students with mild to moderate learning difficulties and/or challenging behaviour. This programme prepares learners for employment or further learning through a very practical approach, including college-based enterprise and community-based group work experience.

Maths and English are given high priority across all Foundation programmes. Each subject is timetabled for 3 hours per week (in 2 x 90-minute blocks) for every student, at the appropriate level. Additional support is available through weekly 'workshops'. Students who are very capable in maths but whose levels of English mean they are studying vocational courses below Level 2 are able to pursue higher level maths qualifications as part of their study programme (for example, a current student is enrolled on Level 1 Engineering alongside AS level maths, having achieved A* in maths GCSE last year).

Alongside around 7 hours per week of vocational classes, students have a weekly group tutorial, regular individual meetings with a personal tutor, a weekly e-learning session, weekly skills sessions, plus enrichment sessions delivered by a sports engagement educator. External work experience is an integral part of every course and there are opportunities for students to engage in voluntary and charitable activities.

There are currently (2016/17) around 250 learners on programmes in the Foundation division. Due to the needs of this cohort of learners, class sizes on Foundation programmes never exceed 15 students; the more popular courses will be divided into groups to ensure small class sizes are maintained.

G.3 Tailoring the final term to support progression

Across all Foundation programmes, teaching staff aim to complete the core vocational qualification requirements by Easter, so that the final term can be tailored for each student to optimally prepare them for transition to the next stage. Students continue to study maths and English for 6 hours per week throughout the final term, but beyond this will have an individualised timetable built around activities that will support successful progression to the next destination.

For students aiming to progress to higher level vocational study, their final term will involve some 'taster' sessions of classes on their Level 2 or Level 3 courses, where they will be encouraged to take an active part in the lessons and complete the same work as the other students in the group. This helps both to increase motivation, through demonstrating what they will be learning in the following year, and to dispel anxieties about being able to cope with the next stage of study. Other sessions are used to build up study skills for the next level or to undertake additional work experience placements; the latter being particularly important to those wishing to progress into a traineeship, Apprenticeship or employment as it enables them to become work-ready.

A Sports Development vocational tutor described how some students take part in additional sessions with the college's Sports Engagement coach during the final term, to give them experience of a wider variety of sports such as archery, fencing, boxing and climbing. The vocational tutor noted that this was an effective way of maintaining student engagement during the summer term, when there can be a risk of attendance declining.

As well as preparing students for their next step, experiences during this term can be equally useful in supporting learners to recognise if the pathway they have selected is right for them. For example, some may discover, through taster lessons, that full-time vocational study at Level 2 would suit them less well than a traineeship or Apprenticeship.

This individual tailoring of learner timetables is labour-intensive for the Head of Division, requiring much direction and leadership throughout the year. However, the benefits are clear in the college's progression success rates.

As well as tailoring the third term, progression to Level 2 study is supported by introducing elements of the Level 2 curriculum to learners *within* their Level 1 lessons. Tutors find that students are excited and motivated by being introduced to skills and topics that feature in higher level courses (e.g. programming languages for ICT students), and experiencing familiar topics when they start to study at the next level serves to boost confidence. This integration of additional material requires effective liaison with staff delivering courses at Level 2 and above.

Tutors also differentiate learning within classes to ensure that higher ability learners do not 'switch off'. To maintain engagement, students who are progressing more rapidly are stretched through being set more challenging tasks or higher-level targets.

G.3.1 Progression rates

Of 217 learners who completed programmes at Entry and Level 1 in the 2015/16 academic year, 191 (88%) progressed to positive destinations including:

- Full-time further education (79%)
- Employment of over 16 hours per week (5%)
- Apprenticeship or traineeship (2.5%)
- NEET programme (1.5%).

Other destinations included part-time study, part-time employment or voluntary work.

Of those students who continued in full-time education, 92% progressed to the next level, with just 8% taking another course at the same level. Over 90% of learners continuing in full-time education were retained at the college.

G.4 Lessons for delivery

Individualised tailoring of the timetable in the final term of the academic year can help to bridge the transition to the next level of learning, through preparing students for what is to come, exciting them about higher level content and allaying concerns about capability. It can help learners to clarify and confirm their choices. However, the amount of planning, leadership and management necessary to implement this should not be underestimated.

It is important that learners see the relevance of what is taught to maintain their interest and engagement; vocational classes throughout the year must be practically-based with good resources, and delivered in bite-sized segments. Encouraging learners into work environments as often as possible, and bringing in visitors and guest speakers from industry, are key to bringing the vocational learning to life.

Managerial and teaching staff at the college were keen to emphasise that, for this learner group, a holistic approach is essential. Underpinning their ability to succeed in their vocational course, young people studying below Level 2 require as much, if not more, support for their personal and social development, their broad interpersonal, study and employability skills, and any pastoral or safeguarding needs they may have.

H Newcastle College: Learning for Life/Supported Internships

- Newcastle College has designed the Learning for Life programme for young people living with disability and/or learning difficulty. It includes a vocational pathway and a pathway focused on preparation for independent living.
- The vocational pathway typically lasts for 3 years. Students in the 1st year explore a range of vocational options, before selecting from retail, hospitality or horticulture, which they pursue into their 2nd year, leading to a Level 1 qualification. The goal is to undertake a Supported Internship in the 3rd year, from which the aim is to progress into employment.
- Students in all years study maths and English and have a weekly tutorial covering personal and social development and work-related skills. Each has a personal tutor, and those with additional needs are also supported by learning mentors.
- Key to engagement and progression are: creative and practically-based approaches to curriculum delivery; weighting the learning experience towards the vocational content; and embedding literacy and numeracy in relevant and contextualised ways. A holistic approach to young people's learning and broader personal development is also required.

H.1 Background to the institution

Newcastle College is a large further and higher education college with approximately 4,500 full-time further education (FE) students and around 10,500 students in total. The college has a main campus in the city centre plus a number of satellite sites across the wider city area. It is organised into 5 'schools': Creative and Digital Technologies; Construction, Leisure and Sport; Engineering; Health, Childcare, Business and Science; and School of Education. In the majority of vocational areas, courses are offered from Level 1 through to Levels 6 or 7. Other than maths and English, the college does not offer GCSEs and does not deliver any A level courses. The college is very well equipped with high quality practical facilities, which are a particular draw for students, and has a number of 'real work environments' (including kitchens, restaurants, a hair salon, an on-site convenience store and a mobile fruit and veg shop) where students who are not yet ready for external work experience can gain real-world experience within the supported college environment.

H.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

The college offers a very broad range of vocational courses, most of which are available at Level 1. Courses offered at Entry Level include Childcare, ESOL, vehicle technology,

retail, horticulture and hospitality. In the most recent curriculum planning process, the college has sought to broaden its below Level 2 offer further, to ensure that - as far as possible - there are coherent progression pathways for all vocational areas, from Entry/Level 1 through to higher level studies.

There are currently 660 students enrolled on courses below Level 2. Virtually all Entry and Level 1 courses are full-time (35 weeks/540 hours), the exception being some ESOL provision. Contact hours are typically 16.5 hours per week.

The college has recently introduced the Progression Coach role assigned to each course that leads weekly tutorials covering personal and social development, study skills, employability, and who can provide additional support to vocational studies. Progression Coaches also deliver individualised tutorials for all students, seeing them in this format every few weeks. The sessions can also be used to address pastoral needs. Informal feedback shows that the Coaches are having a positive impact on students' confidence levels and are helping with attendance rates. The college also has a dedicated and specially trained staff team of Learning Mentors who are available to students requiring more intensive personal/social support.

H.3 Learning for Life/Supported Internships

The college offers a programme for young people living with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), entitled *Learning for Life*. There are 2 pathways within this, a vocational path which aims to prepare young people for employment and a path focused on preparation for independent living. Class sizes never exceed 12 students.

The vocational pathway typically lasts for 3 years. Students initially explore a range of vocational options to establish where their interests lie, and work towards an Entry 3 or Level 1 Award in retail, hospitality or horticulture by the end of the 1st year. During the 2nd year, students progress to a Level 1 Award or Certificate. In both years, there are opportunities to undertake work experience within the college. Students also continue to study maths and English as discrete classes which are integrated into their vocational studies. Focussing on developing 'softer skills', confidence and maturity is also an important element of the initial years. The goal for students' final year is a Supported Internship.

The Supported Internship involves a work placement outside of the college environment with ongoing input and support from college tutors. A Work Placement Officer identifies and matches students to appropriate work placements. Some students identify their own work placement or source additional work experience opportunities alongside their main Internship. Students are in their placement 2 days per week (days vary for each student), and attend college alongside this. Their classes are integrated with students on

Supported Internships when both groups are in college. The college-based elements involve maths and English, 'soft skills' and any necessary work-related skills identified by the tutor in consultation with the employers.

The initial years of the Learning for Life pathway build the skills that will be required to succeed in the Supported Internship. Whilst retail, hospitality and horticulture are offered, the college has placed a relatively large focus on retail, as this curriculum gives students a useful range of transferrable skills (e.g. customer service, communication).

The staff delivering Learning for Life make use of technology to enhance the learning experiences and engagement of the students. Examples include creating virtual reality work environments using 360° photo technology readily available in smartphones, using video calls to communicate with students in their Supported Internship placements, and encouraging students to take photos of familiar landmarks on their routes to work, to support their confidence when travelling alone.

Learning for Life students are able to engage in the college-wide programme of enrichment activities that run on a Friday and include sport, drama and media.

H.3.1 Personalisation

Whilst students initially follow a fixed timetable, there is flexibility in the pace/timing allowing individuals to achieve the various required competencies at different times in the year. Students on the same vocational course may attend different classes for maths and English, depending on their level of study. A specialist unit delivers literacy and numeracy for students with hearing impairments.

Tutorial sessions are used flexibly, for example students experiencing personal issues may have an individualised meeting with a Learning Mentor. All personal tutors meet on a monthly basis to discuss and plan for any students who are at risk or experiencing issues that require support. Some students on Supported Internships may need support to become independent travellers. The role of the tutor may include a stepped process of going with the student on 'dry run' journeys to the workplace, shadowing them on the route, then meeting them at the destination, to the point where the student is able to make the journey on their own.

H.3.2 Engaging students

The college prospectus devotes equal space to the Learning for Life offer as other vocational pathways. There is also a separate, larger print prospectus for the Learning for Life programme, featuring case studies and colour photos of current and past students engaging in activities. The college is keen to promote the message that young people will not be dismissed just because they do not have the qualifications to begin Level 2 or 3

studies. The college runs monthly Information, Advice and Guidance evenings and many schools bring students in for taster visits and tours of the college. There is a long lead-in time for prospective students, with visiting opportunities beginning in January for the following September. The college also runs summer schools, which include an introduction to the retail pathway.

H.3.3 Progression rates

Over 90% of 2nd year students complete a Level 1 qualification and progress to a Supported Internship. For some, moving to Level 2 study is a possibility. However, for many students on this programme, the appropriate progression will be to complete all 3 years including a Supported Internship and then make the transition into employment. Progression is monitored by the Progression Coaches and Personal Tutors, who have individual meetings with students and staff meetings to discuss appropriate support.

Students appeared to share the perception of the programme as a 3-year pathway, leading to the end goal of a Supported Internship from which they enter into paid employment if possible. A 2nd year hospitality student spoke enthusiastically about his current work placement in the college, and was aware that he would be undertaking a Supported Internship the following year. A Supported Internship student had already been offered a paid position with his employer, who in turn was liaising with the college to gain information on how she could support him to gain further qualifications on the job.

H.4 Lessons for delivery

Staff recognise that creative and practical approaches are necessary to maintain the interest and engagement of this student group, and that the vocational area must dominate the experience:

'It's really, really important that we ensure that they have a large amount of time doing the practical elements of the course... and as much as possible, embed their underpinning knowledge, that they need to know, during those practical activities.'

Senior manager

It is also important that English and maths are embedded in the vocational curriculum in ways that appear relevant to the students, with exercises grounded in aspects of the work roles they will be performing. Guest speakers and off-site visits help to enliven the students' experiences.

It is essential to focus on the student holistically, considering their vocational skills development, as well as aspects such as capability and confidence for independent

travel, and communication skills. Developing a good relationship with parents/carers is also important.

I Skills for Growth: Traineeships

- Skills for Growth recently refocused its below Level 2 provision on traineeships (from study programmes), as traineeships are considered to be more flexible and allow for better tailoring towards individual needs and abilities.
- It has introduced awards to recognise achievement/progress for those who are unable to pass Functional Skills tests.
- It offers highly tailored experience for trainees, which include small group working, a mix of activities and individual support from a coach, all set within a business-like context.
- Provision is constantly evolving from a strategic level through to course delivery models. The organisation evaluates the provision at the end of each academic year, draws lessons from its Ofsted report, gathers feedback from staff and also captures student feedback.

I.1 Background to the institution

Skills for Growth is a vocational training provider with a long track record in delivering learning and training. It was established as a charity in 1984 (originally as Bexley Youth Training Group) in order to respond to the growing number of young people leaving school without the necessary skills to enter the world of work. It has a strong employment focus and aims to deepen young people's understanding of the skills required and the behaviours expected by employers. It has 3 sites – Woolwich, Bexleyheath and Stratford. The key offers to young people aged 16 to 24 are traineeships and Apprenticeships, with Apprenticeships offered in hairdressing, childcare and development, business administration, ICT, and customer services. Previously, Skills for Growth offered study programmes (with approximately 70 students per year) but from September 2016 it has refocused its activities to solely concentrate on traineeships and Apprenticeships. This shift was prompted partly by a recent Ofsted report which found that achievement of qualifications in study programmes was lower than anticipated, and partly by Skills for Growth wanting to capitalise on one of its key strengths: an employment focus. It found that study programmes focused heavily on classroom-based learning and qualifications and were less well aligned with the organisation's core strengths around developing employability skills.

I.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

Following the refocus, the key below Level 2 offer are traineeships, which Skills for Growth believes deliver greater freedom and flexibility in respect of content. It offers a full-time traineeship which runs for 22 weeks with 551 planned hours, and a part-time

traineeship for 14 weeks with 386 planned hours. Most young people on traineeships follow the full-time route, but part-time is available for more able individuals.

There are 4 intakes per year: September, October, January, and March. Skills for Growth is currently supporting 144 trainees. The vast majority of young people on traineeships (93 %) have no GCSEs at grades A*-C but very few have additional needs (either an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan or a statement of Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)).

At present Skills for Growth offers sector-focused traineeships in hairdressing and childcare, although most individuals follow a general programme. There are plans to develop more vocational input in relation to business administration, customer service and information and communication technology (ICT), as these are popular areas, and to draw on their vocational teams who deliver Apprenticeships in these areas.

1.3 Hairdressing traineeship

The hairdressing traineeship involves half a day per week with a specific vocational focus, with workshop style sessions designed around the units covered in the full Apprenticeship in order to give a 'taster' of the job and what it involves. These taster sessions often involve trainees working alongside/in the same environment as the hairdressing apprentices (the training site at Bexleyheath has two fully equipped salons with access to a range of models) and this can help with aspiration raising. A mandatory element of the traineeship is to undertake a work placement (see below).

Typically (when not on placement) young people on the full-time programme will be on site for 3.5 days with:

- Two days focused activities/input around maths and English with specialist tutors, with 1.5 hours on **maths**, and 1.5 hours on **English** in the morning each day. The maths provision covers: working with numbers, percentages and fractions, measurements, and statistics. These units can be taken in any order (thus are non-hierarchical) and each leads to a module award. The English provision covers: speaking and listening, reading, spelling, punctuation and grammar, and writing. Each of these modules has a corresponding module on a nationally regulated qualification. Alongside subject content, the scheme of work also outlines other aspects to be built into the modules such as student resilience, safeguarding and PREVENT¹, and equality and diversity. Each student has their own plan setting out

¹ The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 contains a duty on specified authorities (including FECs) to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This is also known as the Prevent duty.

the modules and levels they are working towards and the aims for the wider content (e.g. resilience etc.).

- Three hours on **employability** projects delivered by tutors in the afternoon (these embed development of maths and English skills).² Skills for Growth have developed a range of employability projects to develop work attributes and skills but also practical life skills. Various skills are developed including the types of skills outlined in nationally regulated qualifications covering workplace skills. An example of a project is planning a group outing. This would involve: researching potential places to visit, working together as a group to decide where to visit, devising a travel plan, undertaking a risk assessment, purchasing the tickets and then actually making the journey. This helps individuals work together as a team, gets them used to travelling which will help when they need to commute to work, and helps with confidence and independence. Individuals are assigned roles to meet their individual needs.
- A day focused on **work preparation** activities including interview skills, CVs, job search, job applications, dealing with conflict at work, improving confidence in the workplace, how to speak to employers, and employment rights. Skills for Growth try to build in employer involvement/visits into these activities, so that young people hear directly from employers about what they look for in and expect from employees.
- Half a day spent in the training salon at the Bexleyheath site. This replaces the workshop-based enrichment activities³ undertaken by those on broad traineeships, but for those on the hairdressing traineeship there is an **enrichment** week (once during the traineeship programme) providing activities including first aid training, a football tournament, cookery workshops and a fashion workshop.

As noted, a mandatory aspect of the traineeship is to undertake a work placement. Each young person is therefore assigned a **work placement** with an employer (within 4 weeks of enrolment) and the aim is to achieve at least 100 hours in a workplace during the traineeship (to achieve a certificate), and if possible to build up to working full-time or to move into an Apprenticeship. Placements are brokered by the internal Employer Engagement team's work experience coordinators who work closely with a range of employers. Skills for Growth through Apprenticeships has links with salons across London and the South East. Placements are matched to students, with the support of

² Initially English and maths were delivered in larger blocks over a day, followed by another whole day of project work. However, Skills for Growth found that students were more engaged with smaller blocks of delivery and a mix of topics and activities.

³ Focusing on topics such as safeguarding, PREVENT, equality and diversity, personal hygiene, sexual health, personal image, building confidence, dealing with bullying, internet security and financial management.

their coach, based on where the individual lives and their interests.⁴ At the start of the placement, work objectives and expectations are set through the young person and the employer working together, and an exit interview at the end of the placement provides feedback which students can then work on with their coach. Work experience is considered a critical part of the course and allows young people to try out different types of work and to get acclimatised to the work environment. Individuals can be on placement for 1 and 4 days a week (with at least a day a week on site off-the-job to focus on developing their maths and English skills), or they can take their placements in blocks.

The programme is tailored to the individual. During the recruitment and induction process, students undergo a diagnostic assessment to understand their individual maths and English needs and any additional coaching needs. Each young person is assigned a coach, and coaches look after a cohort of between 15 and 20 young people. Individuals work with their coach to choose their aims which can involve a combination of Functional Skills and/or regulated awards to work towards in English and maths. Each of these can be at Entry Level 2 (very few students are at this level), Entry Level 3, Level 1 or Level 2. Coaches lead the work preparation and enrichment activities, and these activities tend to be taken in the same peer group. Coaches also provide individualised, additional support depending on the needs of the young person. Coaches monitor student attendance and progression and can deal with any behavioural issues. Student progress is also tracked using an e-portfolio which includes a log of their own thoughts and reflections on their learning.

Just over half of the current September starts are still on programme; of those who have completed, 61% progressed to an Apprenticeship and 21% to employment, but very few moved onto other education. Most of the October starts are still on the programme, but a small group has progressed moved into Apprenticeships.

I.4 Lessons for delivery

Skills for Growth constantly evolves its provision in terms of curriculum content, delivery and support; captures feedback from staff and students (through student voice meetings several times a year) and engages in networking opportunities with other providers to help it to innovate. It believes it has a student-led approach to delivery and focuses on facilitating learning within meaningful contexts rather than instructing.

Skills for Growth recently decided to offer other nationally regulated awards in maths and English alongside Functional Skills awards. It felt that the 22 weeks of a traineeship was

⁴ Those on the wider traineeship programme may tend not to have a clear idea of exactly what they want to do so placements give them an insight into different work areas.

not long enough for some students to achieve Functional Skills qualifications (and pass the relevant exams) and so wanted to offer them additional 'stepping stone' achievements based on gathering a portfolio of material. This also reflected feedback from Skills for Growth's Ofsted report that achievement of qualifications was lower than hoped for. They were familiar with the approach of the selected awarding body and felt reassured about the product. It has devised a 'scheme of work' where Functional Skills modules and the units of this award are closely aligned and can be covered in the same sessions (with the criteria and evidence required for each type of learning matching up).

Skills for Growth adopt a critical skills approach to effective teaching, and staff have been trained in this methodology. With this approach each session is based around a key challenge or problem, and the tutors/coaches will work to engage students with the problem. Each session should start with a recap of what has been covered to date, state the aims and objectives for the session (and an individual's own targets if appropriate) and check what students already know. At the end of the session students discuss a scenario that will draw from the content of the session – these may be examples of Functional Skills exam questions, – and will finish with students reflecting on what they have learned and how this could be used in a work situation. These aspects have been introduced to help individuals prepare for exams and also to enable young people to 'see the point' of the learning they have undertaken. Skills for Growth tries to ensure everything students do is 'linked back to the work environment'. This approach is being rolled out across all provision regardless of learning activity/topic to help manage students' expectations.

Learning and training takes place in small groups to make the experience different from school. An online resource is used to support maths and English provision, mainly for Functional Skills. This allows individuals to log in from home should they wish, and it assesses their progress and provides feedback to show where strengths have been gained and where they need further work. Skills for Growth has recently introduced tablet computers to support content delivery as they feel technology is a good way to engage students.

Young people are required to dress in business attire and to attend punctually (attending from 9.15 am to 4.15 pm) to help them transition from the school environment to the work environment. Students spoke of being sent home if they were dressed inappropriately (e.g. in jeans) or having to wait outside until a convenient point to enter, or for a session to finish if they arrived late.

J South Tyneside College: Hair and Beauty

- Raising aspirations is the ethos of the college and permeates through all curriculum areas, exemplified by masterclasses and enrichment activities in which students can participate.
- South Tyneside College provides a strong vocational element with different commercial ventures for students to gain experience in retail; hair and beauty; catering. It also has strong external employer links.
- A seamless curriculum is being trialled for students, meaning maths and English lessons are delivered by same tutors/lecturers who provide teaching in students' vocational subjects.

J.1 Background to the institution

South Tyneside College is a large Further Education College (FEC), in the north east of England supporting 8,500 students. The college comprises: a vocational college and a specialised marine college. The courses at the marine college are mainly commercial, whereas the vocational college mainly offers nationally funded provision. The vocational college offers courses from Entry Level 1 and Level 1 through to degree programmes.

The vocational course offer is determined by: demand from students; from school preferences; and, related to the priorities of the Local Enterprise Partnerships. The reach of the college into the community is nationally recognised and the college won the Times Education Supplement (TES) FE College of the year award and Overall FE provider of the Year in 2017. It has been recognised for its work with employers using industry to further enhance vocational education in hair and beauty and engineering. In addition, South Tyneside College holds a variety of masterclasses with industry experts that have included a renowned hairdresser and a Michelin star chef. The college has numerous commercial ventures to further enhance the student experience with students being involved in craft fayres and enterprise opportunities.

Students are interviewed by members of the Information, Advice and Guidance staff team to ensure their course selection is appropriate. During the first 4 weeks of a course Personal Learning Coaches, in conjunction with academic staff, meet frequently with students to ensure they have made the right decision, having been given opportunities to attend informal taster sessions.

J.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

Level 1 courses are available across almost the whole curriculum and are seen as an entry route into higher level vocational courses. The Level 1 offer gives the opportunity to

re-engage young people with learning and includes: automotive, engineering, construction, hair and beauty, hospitality and catering, health and social care, and music. The college offers a Level 1 certificate aimed at developing employability skills, including some training within vocational areas to ensure students are ready for employment. In addition there are 2 areas of the college for students with disabilities. Interface, an outstanding college provision with dedicated facilities, provides entry level qualifications especially for autistic students and students with Asperger syndrome, to support their transition from entry level to mainstream; and a Learners with Learning Disabilities and Difficulties (LLDD) department, offers similar provision, although students' main need is that they are disengaged and unsure of their pathway. The college also offers Supported Internships for students who have an Educational Health and Care (EHC) Plan, most of who come from Interface. This provides students with coping skills to be utilised within their work placement and beyond.

The aim for all students studying on below Level 2 courses is to build confidence in education, after most have felt that school was not for them. Staff focus on developing social and emotional skills, and work readiness and soft skills.

J.2.1 Trialling different approaches

Foundation Learning to Level 1 has been developed across the college over the past 3 years; each vocational area offering this has been developed in turn. Progression has been reviewed from Entry level 3 to Level 1 and from Level 1 to Level 2, to ensure that students have the skills needed for the next step. For example, after making changes to Health and Social Care progression reached 100%.

The college previously offered students not yet ready for Level 2 a personal and social development qualification that included vocational tasters, such as art and design, cookery and music. Students rotated around these tasters. However, following student feedback the offer has changed with students now choosing 2 vocational areas that they are most interested in 'tasting'. When students have successfully completed the tasters, they achieve a unit credit. Tutors reported that student feedback is positive and they welcome the opportunity to achieve an accreditation that is relevant to their next steps.

The college has also changed the pastoral support this academic year to make study sessions and tutorials project-based, reflecting the main vocational area students are undertaking. For example, students may work on a project as a team and this would cover vocational skills linked to the main course, English and maths, other skills such as communication, teamwork, planning and presentation skills.

In addition, the college is trialling different models for delivering maths and English. LLDD/Foundation students have the same tutor for maths and English as the rest of their curriculum, they build a strong relationship with this tutor and become confident in asking

questions when they do not understand. To achieve this, 6 staff undertook training to deliver maths and English to ensure a seamless curriculum. Lesson timings have also been adjusted: the GCSE class for the Level 1 motor vehicle group has been shortened to 1 hour sessions rather than the normal 1.5 hours to improve concentration . A Breakfast Club has also been successfully introduced and has helped to improve students' behaviour and ensure they remain engaged throughout the day. The college reported that attendance and retention improved as a result of this.

J.3 Hair and Beauty

The aim of the Level 1 hair and beauty course is to provide an introduction to the vocational area as well as build confidence and life skills. It is delivered in a realistic work environment. This programme has high internal progression rates (90% of completers). Students can progress to Level 2 and eventually to Level 5 within the college. Curriculum planning has focussed on units in the Level 1 qualification that will help students progress to Level 2, so that they are prepared for and capable of progression. The programme offers an industry standard qualification to support progression into work.

Staff reported that students joining the college, were often disengaged from education and felt misunderstood. As students had not achieved at school, staff thought it was important that they experienced a different style of delivery to re-engage them. The programme was described as an opportunity for students to reinvent themselves and flourish.

Hair and beauty is a full-time course that runs from September to June. It comprises theory, study skills/tutorial, and maths and English Functional skills (if required). The remainder of the time is spent in practical sessions in the college salon. The salon delivers 'hands-on' and communication skills. Many students do not have strong social skills and teaching staff become role models to allow them to develop such skills, also acting as their managers at the salon. In addition to Functional Skills for maths and English, tutors embed maths and English content in the practicals, for example, covering angles for cutting hair, schedules, ordering stock, and budgeting. Teaching staff are also professional hairdressers, so use examples from their own work, such as understanding business rates, VAT and renting chairs.

The curriculum, staff and pastoral areas work together. The pastoral support complements classroom activities; tutorials and study skills sessions take a holistic approach. The study skills sessions help students with completing an extended activity or to finish an assignment. The Personal Learning Coach (PLC) supporting students has a background in hair and beauty so brings this understanding to tutorials. The PLC also completes individual learning plans with students, leads assessments and supports students to carry out self-assessments; in combination, these actions can identify

improvements and/or new targets. The staff and PLC meet together to review performance and attendance, and talk about any safeguarding issues. This ensures that issues are acted on quickly.

Level 1 students lead elements of work in the salon that support the Level 2 and Apprenticeship students: washing hair, blow-drying, and sweeping up – as juniors would do. This helps Level 1 students to visualise career progression.

In line with the ethos of the college there are enrichment activities for students at all levels. Links have been established with a national hairdressing academy, which now regularly visits the college leading masterclasses', delivering training and has also been part of the college's inspirational leaders programme. Hair and beauty students annually enter a national competition for all levels of students (3 from the college have reached the finals, including a Level 1 student) with 1 student achieving 3rd place this year. A local dementia unit provides a real working environment enabling the hair and beauty students to offer treatments to patients. Other enrichment activities include visits to a professional technical studio in London and to local laboratories to look at hair and skin under microscopes.

J.4 Lessons for delivery

According to staff at South Tyneside College, the 2 key success factors in preparing students for work and adulthood, and getting them onto the right pathway are firstly, regular progression meetings for all students to track progress monthly, particularly ensuring that Entry Level 3 and Level 1 students are engaged in their studies and building aspirations for progression. Second, adaptable systems which can respond to students' needs and interests are crucial. The college has an innovative, flexible and dynamic curriculum that combines industry with vocational education. Delivery should not be restricted by traditional and existing practices and systems; there should be flexibility to change certain factors, for example, changing the duration of classes.

Staff would like the opportunity to work with potential students before they leave school to better prepare them for vocational studies and ensure they are aware of the full range of options available to them so the college is trialling a 'Crack Squad' of professional experts with a re-modelled Schools Liaison Programme offering interactive activities to interested young people, working with them and introducing them to vocational education and the specific curriculum areas within it.

K Stockton Riverside College: Multi-skilled Construction

- Stockton Riverside College engages young people on the basis that they will be with the College for 3 years, with Level 1 providing a foundation for progression.
- A range of Level 1 and below courses are offered, including construction specialisms, alongside a multi-skilled trades option, motor vehicle, hospitality and catering, creative arts, as well as roll-on roll-off programmes.
- There is a strong ethos of: providing aspiration and stretch for all students; inclusion; and the provision of a calm environment across the college.
- Staff emphasise the positive aspects of English and maths, focussing on the improvements that students will achieve as part of their Level 1 and how these will feed through into employability.
- All students engage in work experience which takes different forms depending on their level of study and course.
- All students take part in employability development and enterprise activities, as well as personal and social development, and enrichment, some of which students instigate.

K.1 Background to the institution

Stockton Riverside College is a medium sized further education college in the north east of England. It offers a wide spread of provision across 3 campuses including: A levels, higher education studies, and vocational studies from Entry Level to Level 3. Its Skills Academy, developed in partnership with the Local Authority and Egglecliffe School, houses students who are studying vocational qualifications at Entry and Foundation level. Stockton Riverside College accommodates Level 1 studies. The college has 6,500 students including 16-18 year olds, adults and apprentices and draws from a range of local schools. The rate of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C at some of these schools is less than 50%. As such, Level 1 provision is viewed as fundamental to the college's offer. The college has strong achievement and progression rates generally, and places emphasis on supporting and developing aspiration amongst young people, as well as stretching them in respect of their learning and development.

K.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

In most vocational areas, Level 1 provision is available. In addition, the College offers 2 re-engagement programmes which are roll-on/roll-off throughout the year one lasting 12 weeks, the other 6 weeks. Both programmes focus on personal and employability development and support entry to vocational provision, Apprenticeships and employment.

Level 1 courses are typically full-time although there is flexibility in timetabling to accommodate the needs of students. Courses are based on study programme funding guidelines (minimum 540 hours) and comprise vocational studies, English and maths, enrichment, employability support, enterprise activities and work experience. Students with additional needs study with other students and receive support from ALS (Additional Learning Support Assistants) who engage and support at the level best suited to the student (e.g. taking an active role and working closely with students during classes or acting as a support to the whole group and the student as needed). English and maths are embedded within vocational subject areas as well as taught as separate subjects. Staff set a positive note for these subjects in their discussions with students:

'Instead of saying "by the way, you also have to study English and maths" we say, "you will also get the chance to improve your English and maths skills".'

Head of Department

English and maths champions in vocational subjects encourage staff to discuss the functional application of English and maths. In hospitality and catering the focus may be on measuring ingredients, whereas in joinery it would be the application of maths in measurements and planning jobs. In addition, visual displays highlight the importance of these subjects.

There is an emphasis on providing careers and progression advice from the start, tailoring this to industry areas and linking course levels to career entry points and pay.

All students undertake work experience and, to prepare for this, are encouraged to use a work search tool which helps them to think about employability skills and attributes. The work placement will vary by the level of study and aims to be innovative. While Level 1 construction students may not be ready for a placement on a building site, they can benefit from placements in DIY stores, for example. To achieve this, the college has developed strong industry links through its Work Experience Coordinators. Employers regularly give talks and presentations as well as hosting work placements.

Enterprise activity gives an industry/business focus to Level 1 study and helps to develop confidence and soft skills. In the construction area, students prepare bird boxes from old pallets to sell at the local market over Christmas. In the hospitality and catering areas, they prepare baked goods to sell at parents' evening. This provides an opportunity for students to showcase their skills and also helps to develop a sense of pride in what they are doing. Monies raised from these activities are donated to a variety of local charities.

Within all Level 1 provision, there is a strong tutorial model, supported by the student managed learning environment. All relevant teaching staff and students can enter information on progress which tutors collate to provide students with a holistic view on

their progress. The tutorial model also addresses Fundamental British Values⁵ and the Prevent strategy⁶ and allows for the development of ‘soft skills’.

Enrichment activities include educational trips and in-house competitions on subjects relating to personal and social development - e.g. equality and diversity. These activities allow students to understand how to interact and co-operate with peers and others and develop a confident but respectful manner. The college also encourages the students to develop their own activities. Non-financial incentives are used to reward good behaviour and performance, such as access to a pool table in enrichment time. These also reinforce soft skills such as cooperation and communication with peers

Progression rates within Level 1 studies are strong. The college reports 90% progression to Level 2 studies amongst 16 year olds completing their course. The roll-on roll-off provision has a progression rate of 76% which is considered very strong given this attracts some of the most disaffected young people back into education.

‘Between the ages of 16 and 18 we have a huge impact on young people’s lives.’

Assistant Principal, Curriculum

K.3 Level 1 Diploma in Construction (Multi-skills)

The ethos of the curriculum design in respect to English and maths, work experience, enterprise, enrichment and personal and social development is similar to other Level 1 provision as described above. However, the curriculum for construction skills offers a broad experience and allows students to sample different trades – bricklaying, joinery, painting and decorating, along with tasters in plastering and tiling. Students rotate through these subjects throughout the Level 1 year.

This process allows students – many of whom may lack direction and/or have a sense of failure – to explore and understand hand-eye coordination, the skills required by different trades and where their talents lie in respect of the construction industry. The Level 1 Diploma in Construction thus allows them a period of experimentation with the vocational area while they gain the study, employability and soft skills, as well as behaviours, that will underpin their progression to Level 2. Some may decide to progress to different

⁵ Covering subjects including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

⁶ Focusing on topics such as safeguarding, PREVENT, equality and diversity, personal hygiene, sexual health, personal image, building confidence, dealing with bullying, internet security and financial management.

vocational areas outside construction, but take with them the study and soft skills that will enable this.

Around Easter time, students start to make choices for progression, including the construction (or other) specialism for their Level 2 studies. At this point, they join in classes with the Level 2 students in their subject choice which provides further insights to confirm their choice is right as well as the 'stretch' in learning and development to which the College aspires.

The Diploma in Construction course like the other Level 1 provision achieves high rates of progression. The pass rate for Level 1 Diploma in Construction in 2015/16 was 100% - up from 95% the previous year. The majority (93% in 2015/16) progress to Level 2 courses, with a small number accessing Apprenticeships.

K.4 Lessons for delivery

Staff within the college identified a number of success factors for their Level 1 provision. These include showing students they are on a career pathway from the very start and linking study level exit points to industry jobs and pay, which helps to raise aspirations to continue in education. Linked to this, staff highlighted the importance of offering a range of different enterprise activities, work experience and employer contacts to develop confidence and employability skills.

Undertaking thorough initial and diagnostic assessments at the outset of learning that also consider wider needs in respect of the barriers some students face and seeking to understand more about their ambition is seen as important. This helps staff to tailor provision, which in turn encourages students to stick with learning. Supporting this tailoring, there is also flexibility for Heads of Departments to create the courses that support achievement. This means additional certificate programmes can be added for some students if needed. Multiple achievement points help to build students' confidence and self-belief that they can achieve in education.

Staff encourage students to think positively about improving maths and English skills, the role of these skills in employment and embedding the use of these skills in vocational subjects. In addition, the inclusive ethos the college embeds encourages mixed level groups, including those with additional support needs, and encourages peer learning. These combine to also support the building of ambition and confidence.

L Wilberforce Sixth Form College: Vocational study programme

- Wilberforce Sixth Form College (SFC) offers a broad Level 1 vocational study programme which caters to the skills needs and career ambitions of a diverse cohort of students who struggled to engage and achieve at school.
- Lessons and discussions with students are always forward-focused, looking at how an activity will support progression to higher level learning or employment.
- Learning activities and enrichment are frequently hands-on and practical as this can often be a more effective approach with this group of students.
- Work experience is supported by tutors and conducted in groups, which is less intimidating for students who may lack the confidence to enter a workplace alone.

L.1 Background to the institution

Wilberforce is a Sixth Form College (SFC) in Kingston-Upon-Hull. In 2016, it had 246 students registered for academic qualifications, 284 on applied general courses and 194 on technical streams.⁷ As a SFC, the college exclusively focuses on students aged 16-19. It has high attainment (for example, a 99% pass rate of A level courses) and has a Good Ofsted rating. The college offers A levels, some GCSEs, regulated vocational qualifications and enrichment activities. Vocational qualifications are generally a mix of Level 2 and Level 3. Again, as a SFC, all learning is full-time and there is no flexible timetable delivery.

1.2 Background to the below Level 2 offer

In 2010, the college had a larger Level 1 offer, with provision across 8 curriculum areas. Following a restructuring of the curriculum, input from senior management and the Local Enterprise Partnership and analysis of student demand, the 2016-17 offer comprised:

- Level 1 Hair and Beauty (City and Guilds)
- Level 1 Public Service (BTEC)
- Level 1 vocational study programme.

⁷ Some students are included in more than one of these groups.

Alongside vocational qualifications, all Level 1 students undertake separate maths and English provision, supported work placements with local businesses, other work-related learning and enrichment activities.

Each of the courses had a different rationale. The Level 1 Hair and Beauty is a compulsory part of the wider Hair and Beauty programme which students have to pass as the first step in their learning programme. Level 1 Public Service was introduced for the first time in 2016-17 as a response to an over-subscribed vocational study programme and a high demand for Level 2 Public Service amongst students who did not have the necessary entry requirements.

Although there are some students with varied additional needs (for example, English as an additional language (EAL), physical impairments and special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)) the most common barriers are low confidence and low attainment. Students may be unwilling to engage in certain tasks and can struggle to be independent. Staff emphasised the need to build confidence in order to help students recognise and be proud of their skills and achievements:

'[Level 1s] are conscious of their spelling, they don't want to put down that they got the exam results that they did... it's quite difficult to get them to see the validity of doing a CV because they think an employer's going to see their exam results and not select them.'

Staff member

Level 1 provision is promoted at open days, enrolment and in the college prospectus, but students also find out about the course through word of mouth.

L.3 Level 1 vocational study programme

The study programme follows a bespoke design to provide a general grounding in the personal, social, vocational and work-related skills students need to progress, but it is not tied to a specific sector or occupation. As a result, students may come with a range of career ambitions or subject interests ranging through IT, Health and Social Care and Business. It consists of maths, English, enrichment (e.g. volunteering activity), work experience and 3 nationally regulated qualifications: a Level 1 Certificate in Sustainability Skills, a Level 1 Applied Science Award and a Level 2 Certificate in Personal and Social Development.

'The Level 1 course is not just about the curriculum, it's the holistic part of it, building their confidence, making them see there is value in education. A lot of our students come to us

and have not had great experience at school... it's also looking at their motivation, making sure we build their motivation and they trust us.'

Teaching staff

The course is 'sold' by highlighting opportunities for: developing personal skills and citizenship, improving maths and English, being in the college on a full-time course, improving CVs, progressing to Level 2 study and making a fresh start, regardless of GCSE results. The nature of the programme can mean it is a little hard for students to describe exactly what they do, although they recognise it as a bit more learning to get them to the right place to progress.

The core modules and curriculum (the 3 regulated qualifications; maths, English, and enrichment) are the same for all students and all have to meet the same criteria: courses are pass/fail, although students are given an indication internally of how strongly they performed in assessments. However, staff may be working with 'near misses' who were only a few marks off a C grade in their GCSEs, and others who have low or no qualifications at all, which can be quite a challenge. Tutors differentiate the level of challenge within the assessments and activities in class for each student.

'You tend to find [those with few or no GCSEs] will do a PowerPoint and [those who were near misses] will do an essay, and if [those capable of an essay] want to do a PowerPoint you say, "hang on a minute, I think you should be doing it in this format".'

Staff member

Lessons use many practical activities, such as drawing in pairs to learn communication skills. Lessons are also tailored to additional needs such as learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and most commonly low confidence from challenging prior educational experiences. Having flexibility in lessons is viewed as a necessity. For example, if a student disengages from a task, they may be designated a new role, e.g. as time keeper, which presents an opportunity to improve clock reading skills rather than missing out on any opportunity to learn.

Students are supported by teaching staff who have a strong pastoral role in addition to 2 support workers who help with English and maths needs, organisation and small group work. The support workers are prized by the students for their suggestions of new ways of working and understanding a particular topic.

Students are exposed to a range of working environments – through activities usually lasting a day or so – in local businesses in sectors including education, manufacturing, electronics and horticulture where the college has existing relationships. Work experience is supported: students go as a group and are accompanied by staff. This builds confidence as the experience is less intimidating than traditional solitary work

experience. Students are appreciative of being offered exposure to the world of work and felt the experience raised their aspirations and self-belief. They also have regular weekly enrichment activities such as support for refugees, litter picking, and/or volunteering on a local gardening project for elderly residents.

At the end of the year-long programme, staff stated that most students take up Level 2 courses, often at Wilberforce SFC. To a lesser degree, some enter employment, traineeships or Apprenticeships. Teaching staff look to find progression which works best for each student: something aspirational but realistic because goals set too high can damage confidence and outcomes in future. One of the clearest outcomes identified by staff and students is the growth in confidence and self-esteem that the course confers on students.

'It has [made a big difference] to some of us... some people at the beginning were real shy and putting their head down, now some people have picked themselves up and got to know everyone individually, speak to everyone.'

Student

Students also identify many other employability skills, such as communication, punctuality and critical thinking, as well as growth in maturity over the course of the programme.

L.4 Lessons for delivery

Staff and students identified the most important drivers of success as the contextual factors of how the programmes are delivered. These included small classes where students get to know each other better and can feel more confident in their learning environment, as well as the use of support workers in the classroom to provide additional help and alternative learning strategies to allow students to engage more with the material. Staff also noted that exposure to a range of working environments, both with employers and voluntary sector organisations, on a supported basis was key to success. From students' perspective the inclusive and encouraging approach of staff was seen as crucial to their engagement and progression.

The practical, vocational approach helps students who often learn best hands-on rather than theoretically. The multiple opportunities to understand more about the workplace through local business engagement helps students understand the world of work, gain confidence about being in a workplace and better understand the behaviours expected of them. Lastly, the broad focus of the study programme allows it to cater for a wide range of students who are not yet ready for Level 2 and prepare them for progression.



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