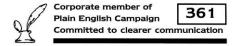# Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on 'outcomes for learners' in further education and skills inspections

April 2014

# Contents

# Introduction

1. This guidance provides information on key 'outcomes for learners' data, relevant to all inspections taking place from September 2012. It takes no formal account of the other aspects of the inspection process – 'teaching, learning and assessment' and 'leadership and management'. However, observations of teaching, learning and assessment; standards of learners' work; learners' preparedness for the workplace and learners' and employers' views would be used as supportive evidence. The guidance does not attempt to replicate that set out in *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2012.*[1]

2. This guidance covers:

   ■ principles of 'outcomes for learners'

   ■ data and information inspectors use

   ■ providers' own analysis of performance information

   ■ the use of national rates when measuring performance

   ■ the progress learners make compared to their starting points

   ■ other types of provision in further education and skills

   ■ summary of how providers and inspectors use common data sets

   ■ case study scenarios

   ■ QSRs and provider group national rates

## Principles of 'outcomes for learners'

### The big picture – outcomes are about more than success rates

3. Providers should enable learners to achieve their potential by supporting them to meet challenging targets set as part of their learning programmes. These targets should take into consideration learners' starting points. Success rates have a place in judging performance. However, they are only one measure as they indicate how many learners have reached a minimum standard, that is, how many remained on their courses and passed.

4. In order to judge the quality of learners' outcomes inspectors need to know how well they have achieved, the progress they make, how well their personal, social and employability skills have been developed (including English and mathematics) and whether their courses enable them to progress into higher-level qualifications or into jobs that meet local and national needs. Inspectors

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[1] *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2012* (120061), Ofsted, 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120061

also need to judge how well specific groups of learners achieve, to ensure that one group of learners is not performing any less well than another.

## A provider's context

5. As a starting point for judging learners' outcomes, inspectors will use the appropriate 'all' national success rate. However, to arrive at a final judgement they must take into account a range of other factors. These include: socio-economic factors, prior attainment, high grades (where appropriate), size and volume of provision, local factors such as employment rates and success rates achieved by similar groups of learners (for example, by comparable provision type, age and by level of course) and trend data over time. Inspectors will also take into account provider-specific risk factors with provision such as that for young learners who have recently not been in education and training (NEET) or long-term unemployed adults. Where appropriate (see Appendix B) both provider group success rates and overall national success may be taken into account but the expectation is that providers will always aim for the higher of these two rates.

   **Note:** 'all' national rates are calculated on the totality of provision offered in England (excluding the vast majority of schools), for example 'all' AS-level courses. They do not take account of provider type or any other contextual factors. The national success rate tables contain a small number of outcomes from schools, where they deliver further education qualifications and return an individual learner record ILR (around 2,000 learners on long courses in 2012). These are included in the national rates calculation.

6. **16–18 provision**: Ofsted remains committed to achieving the Government's ambition of 'levelling the playing field' for 16–18 provision. The Department for Education has publicly stated its commitment to publish comparable data for all 16–18 provision. In 2013, performance tables changed and qualification success rates were formally introduced for schools. Ofsted has published guidance to harmonise the approaches to inspecting 16–18 provision and inspectors have received training.[2]

## Formative outcomes for learners are developed in a range of settings, not just in the classroom, workshop or workplace

7. Inspectors take into account outcomes that are accredited through qualifications and other learning aims appropriate to the development of skills and independence for learners, such as those for learners with learning difficulties/disabilities. Inspectors will need evidence of what learners' programmes comprise; how they provide support to develop English, mathematics and employability skills; how well they meet learners' needs; how the needs of employers and national skills needs are taken into account and

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[2] *Subsidiary guidance supporting the inspection of maintained schools and academies* (110166), Ofsted; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110166

Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on
'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections
April 2014; No. 120254

5

collectively how all of these undertakings enable learners to progress. Inspectors will look carefully at the skills and knowledge being developed and how each provider adds value to a learner's programme, such as enabling learners to follow additional units of study, take additional qualifications or make use of other opportunities to better prepare them for progression to higher-level study, apprenticeships or for employment. In community learning, wider benefits could include the development of learners' self-confidence, community engagement and volunteering.

8.  **The future of performance measures.** Success rates remain an important measure of performance. They measure the proportion of learners that complete a qualification successfully in relation to the number that start the programme. This approach will continue to be applied to most qualifications; however, the concept of what constitutes 'success' will in future be considered more widely. For example, Ofsted will consider the range of data available through reformed Key Stage 5 performance tables. New performance measures being produced by DfE and BIS will also be considered. These will include data on progression and destinations. On some programmes success can be measured through effective use of recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) to measure progress against agreed targets or by successful entry to employment or an apprenticeship.

9.  **Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)**: changes from 2013/14 include:

    ■  adult learners – the Skills Funding Agency is considering an approach to calculating success rates based on qualification size as defined by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, including at unit level rather than on length.

    ■  employability programmes – these will require a success measure for those learners attaining positive job outcomes.

10. **Department for Education (DfE)**: From September 2013, for learners aged 16–18, including those in school sixth forms, provider funding moved to 'programme of study' funding rather than funding by qualification, where a programme is broadly defined as:

    ■  a level of study which is higher than learners' prior attainment, or which provides appropriate lateral progression for some students with learning difficulties or disabilities, where appropriate

    ■  qualification(s) which are stretching rather than easy to pass

    ■  qualification(s) that are judged to be of good/suitable size and level of rigour that will enable genuine progression to meaningful employment, training or higher levels of education

6

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on 'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections**
**April 2014, No. 120254**

- achievement of mathematics and English GCSE A\*–C or, where this has not already been achieved, English and mathematics provision that will lead to significant progress towards reaching this level

- participation in value-added non-qualification activity and work experience, wherever appropriate.

11. In addition, the DfE intends to measure 'success' at advanced level in terms of programme completion, the acquisition of high grades and the proportion of learners that progress to higher education and in particular Russell Group universities. From September 2013, provision for 'high cost' learners with learning difficulties or disabilities is commissioned and funded directly by local authorities, who agree intended outcomes with providers.

12. **Inspection and data changes**: Ofsted inspectors and providers need to stay abreast of any changes in the data sets and performance measures available at national level and consider these as and when they become available.

# Data and information inspectors use

13. Ofsted inspectors use data reports published on the Provider Gateway and any other verifiable data to support a fuller understanding of a provider's context and performance. All data are generated by the further education sector itself and shared with Ofsted and others through government agencies. A summary of the data inspectors use follows.

## Classroom-based learning (CBL) (formerly learner responsive)

14. **Data on prior attainment**: only for learners aged 16–18 following programmes at advanced level. Using information provided by the DfE, and taken from the level 3 Value Added table (formerly the Learner Achievement Tracker), the data can help inspectors judge performance in the context of learners' starting points. The average prior attainment is calculated on all GCSEs taken and includes fails.

15. Social and economic factors using outputs from the Index of Multiple Deprivation applied to individual learners' postcodes. The **Socio-economic Performance Indicator Table (SePI)** is designed to help providers and inspectors to better consider performance when the social and economic disadvantage profile of different learner cohorts are taken into consideration. The resulting analysis compares a provider's success rates, by age and level, with national averages referenced against statistical neighbours. The SePI report is available on the Provider Gateway. The SePI should not be used to justify poor performance from learners facing high levels of deprivation but should be used to substantiate a provider's judgements about the backgrounds and context of its learners.

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on
'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections
April 2014; No. 120254**

7

16. **Qualification success rate (QSR) reports** produced annually and available on the Provider Gateway as follows:

- **summaries** – containing substantive (long) success rates, success rates by level and by group, and functional skills

- **Sector Subject Area (SSA)** – containing data at subject area tier one, tier two and individual course levels

- **supplementary** – containing retention and achievement rates

- **subcontractors** – containing success rates by subcontractor and by age, including retention and achievement.

17. Inspectors must not ask providers to produce different aggregations of success rate data – the data are available at individual course level, tier two and tier one – inspectors **must not** ask providers to manipulate data in any other way and particularly **must not** ask for combinations of course level data.

18. **Interactive classroom-based performance report (iCPR)** produced by Ofsted and placed on the Provider Gateway, for every provider in receipt of funding, in the spring of each year. These reports have been ceased and the last available reports are for 2011/12. Inspectors can now obtain course level success rate data via the QSRs.

19. **National success rate tables (NSRT)** enable inspectors and providers to compare performance with other providers in terms of quartiles and top and bottom deciles.

20. **Level 3 Value Added table (L3VA)** (formerly the Learner Achievement Tracker) produced by the DfE. It measures progress by comparing a learner's points score in the advanced-level subject or qualification they enter, against the average points score attained by all students nationally who, for that subject, had the same prior attainment. It will provide a measure of actual progress as well as expected progress.

21. **Providers' own data**: Ofsted recognises that providers will have their own systems for recording, monitoring and evaluating both in-year and whole year performance such as:

- attendance

- retention

- value added, including as demonstrated through RARPA evaluation where appropriate

- progression from one level of course to the next within the provider

- progression from the provider to destinations such as employment, further learning or training and higher education.

Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on
'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections
April 2014, No. 120254

**Note:** Inspectors will take account of any 'in-year' data or any other data collected and analysed by the provider. However, they will be used as supportive rather than primary source data. **Provider progression/destination data must be actual rather than predicted.**

## Workplace learning (WPL) (formerly employer responsive)

22. **Qualification success rate (QSR) reports**, available on the Provider Gateway for apprenticeships, including by subject area and apprenticeship framework.

23. **National success rate tables (NSRT):** refer to paragraph 19. **Providers' own data**: refer to paragraph 21.

# Providers' own analysis of performance information

24. It is very important that providers understand their own data. Inspectors will expect providers to be fully conversant with the strengths and weaknesses of their data in terms of quality, integrity and performance. If queries regarding the accuracy of published data are raised by the provider at inspection this raises concerns with regards to the leadership and management of performance at the provider as it is the provider's responsibility to check data as soon as it is published.

25. Some of the critical aspects that providers need to have a detailed understanding of include:

   ■ their provision, and how well it prepares different groups of learners for moving to a higher-level course, higher education or employment

   ■ retention, achievement (including high grades) and qualification success rate data for substantive courses, by level, by age, by subject area and for different groups of learners

   ■ trends in performance across previous years

   ■ how learners progress relative to their starting points

   ■ learners' destinations when they complete a course or agreed learning aim

   ■ how their analysis of critical data informs the self-assessment process and improvement action plans

   ■ how they will be able to respond to detailed questioning on any of the above.

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on 'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections April 2014; No. 120254**

9

# The use of national rates when measuring performance

## National rates

26. National rates are important as they enable every provider to compare their performance (in terms of retention and achievement) against the national context. Ofsted understands that some national rates are high and others low. To avoid any confusion, as Ofsted does not use or apply threshold values, for the purpose of inspection there are no benchmarks. For any substantive (long course) provision, a reasonable assumption for good attainment is that:

    ■ success rates of the large majority of groups of learners are likely to be in line with or above similar groups of learners nationally, with the majority above

    ■ where success rates of any group of learners are below those of all learners nationally, the gap is closing

    ■ in exceptional circumstances, where the performance of groups of learners is low overall, it is improving at a faster rate than nationally.

27. As a starting point for considering learner attainment, Ofsted inspectors will start by considering the 'all' national rate. This approach, standard for apprenticeship provision over many years, will be extended to all provision types. Following this initial analysis, inspectors will consider other contextual factors to ensure that attainment outcomes are compared with those of similar providers and learner groups.

## Contextual factors

28. Contextual factors are not an excuse for low attainment or poor progress. Learners should be guided onto, taught and supported on their chosen programme so that they have every likelihood of success. However, as the 'all' national rates represent only the norm, certain learners have significant advantages or disadvantages over others. For example, some sixth form colleges require prospective learners, as an entry requirement, to have achieved very high GCSE scores. Under such circumstances, it is reasonable to expect the provider's performance to be at the upper end of the attainment spectrum. In this instance, the sixth form college national rate (the provider group rate) provides a more useful comparator. However, another provider offering similar provision may recruit mostly from high-ranking social and economic deprivation areas. This might indicate, taking national data for similar groups into consideration, that inspectors would need to adjust their expectations. It is essential to judge success rates in the context of value added and prior attainment. Value added data allow inspectors to judge whether programmes provide stretch and challenge to learners – or whether learners with high prior attainment are coasting and achieving only average results. Similarly high grade achievement data published in school context tables should also be judged alongside prior attainment and value added.

## The progress learners make compared to their starting points

29. Historically from September 2009, Ofsted used the Learner Achievement Tracker as the main value added and progress measure for advanced-level learners aged 16–18 in schools and colleges. For GCE examinations from 2012 onwards, Ofsted is now using the level 3 Value Added table, produced by the DfE and using the same methodology – that is, a correlation between GCSE grades achieved on entry and expected advanced-level achievement for graded qualifications. Fails are included in the data so that this more closely parallels value added measures produced by commercial systems such as ALPS and ALIS. The level 3 Value Added (L3VA) table will show both predicted and actual progress, based on learners' prior attainment. It is to be expected that there will be correlation between these different systems of measuring VA.

30. Ofsted recognises that while there is a close relationship between the GCSEs achieved and attainment at advanced level, this is more complex at foundation and intermediate level. Inspectors will therefore be looking for evidence from providers that captures learners' prior attainment, how this is used to set target expectations at these levels and how well learners make progress against agreed targets.

31. For adults, who may not have attended school for many years, past qualifications are not necessarily a good predictor of success. In such instances it is the responsibility of the provider to ascertain, through initial assessment, their base line starting point for any chosen programme of study. Using this unique analysis of a learner's skills, experience and aptitude they will have been set challenging goals and targets. From this starting point, inspectors will ascertain: the rate of learning and acquisition of skills; the extent to which challenging targets are met; progress made during learning activities from learners' work and over time; and, more generally, the broader skill set acquired.

## Other types of provision in further education and skills

**Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.** Where providers are in receipt of funding to provide adjustments for disabilities or to support learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in other ways, they should be able to demonstrate the progress made across all aspects of the programme. Success in passing qualifications is only one aspect of the programme.

32. For those on mainstream programmes a provider should, in addition to success rates, also be able to provide information from learning support plans about success in terms of one or more of the following:

  ■ a progressive reduction in support provided in learning situations

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on
'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections
April 2014; No. 120254**

11

- the use of technology to overcome barriers to learning

- the successful management of everyday living skills, including social interactions.

33. Generally, the more complex or profound the learning need, the less significant the qualification success rate when making a judgement about outcomes. It is expected that, at pre-entry level and much of foundation level, learners will achieve their units. Providers should be able to show progress made against starting points in all aspects of a programme. Some providers produce visual diagrams such as spidergrams to show progress from the starting point in a number of areas. Such evidence of progress must be supported by rigorous moderation.

34. Providers must be able to provide full information about the starting point for an individual learner across all aspects of their programme. They may, for example, receive funding for speech and language therapy as well as for independent living skills and preparation for employment. All areas should be broken down into much smaller units to match individual attainment/capability. Clear and challenging targets must be set, and evidence should show the progress made towards their achievement. Again, rigorous moderation of target setting and progress is crucial. The provider should also be able to demonstrate progress towards a long-term goal, which may be transition to a supported living situation and engagement in the community. The provider should have information about leavers, showing the extent to which they have achieved their long-term goals.

## Judicial services

35. Outcomes for learners are measured across the duration of the learner's stay in custody, including transition arrangements and plans for employment and/or training on release. Data are analysed from the learning and skills contracted provision as above, together with other contract-related information and prison service data. This is measured across three strands of:

- employability

- literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

- personal development and social integration.

## Community learning and skills (CLS) providers

36. How data are used in community learning and skills providers will depend on the provision that is offered. For example, a provider could offer apprenticeships, learning for qualifications such as A levels and BTECs, and learning where the main aim is not a qualification. Where the learning aim does not lead to a qualification, the principles of RARPA will be applied. Non-accredited provision could include activities for specific groups of learners, for example a cultural awareness group meeting for four weeks, for two hours per

week, to plan a festival. For these learners, there may be group rather than individual aims. Retention is a key measure in non-accredited learning, and attendance and punctuality data are also good indicators. In some cases, where data are available, learner outcomes may be measured by progression to employment, further education or training.

## Skills conditionality – courses for job seekers

37. Performance is measured primarily by outcomes into employment and secondly by achievement of qualifications and learning aims to improve employability, as defined by Skills Funding Agency.

# Summary of how providers and inspectors use common data sets

38. **Note**: some of the below will not apply to all providers and/or provision.

- Start by considering long success rates (including retention and achievement) and substantive courses, where these form the large majority of provision.

- Take into account the prior attainment of learners at advanced level and their socio-economic background.

- Consider the impact of success rates (including retention and achievement and high grades) by proportion at learner level to consider if performance varies.

- Review subject area success rates (including retention and achievement and high grades) for substantive courses.

- Make judgements about progress and attainment in AS-level subjects, taking into account which subjects learners intend to continue into a full A level.

- Consider the progress that advanced level 16–18 learners make given their starting points using the DfE's 'Level 3 Value Added' measure, as well as taking into account (where appropriate) other methods of calculating value added, such as ALPS and ALIS.

- Measure achievement of English and mathematics in GCSEs, functional skills and other appropriate literacy and numeracy qualifications, using grades A* to C for GCSE achievement.

- Consider how well learners are achieving high grades compared with their starting points (grades A* to B for A levels, grades A* to C for GCSE and those qualifications which include a 'distinction' grade, such as for Edexcel).

- Measure the impact of shorter qualifications and learning aims on developing learners' personal goals and employability skills.

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on 'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections April 2014; No. 120254**

13

- For workplace learning, the starting point will be overall success rate (as the main measure of apprenticeship achievement), taking into account timely success as a key indicator of achievement against planned length of programme.

- Generally, where performance for any type of provision has been below similar groups of learners nationally, consider how rapidly gaps are closing.

- Review the performance of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

- Compare the performance of different groups of learners, for example male/female, disability, minority ethnic with the provider average for substantial courses as well as for similar groups.

- Use the latest published data (where available) and data available for previous years, and take into account the provider's own in-year data, for example on attendance and retention.

- Use the available national data on learners' destinations; otherwise default to the provider's own data where this is sufficiently robust.

- Consider how successful provision is which does not have a specific qualification aim (such as for learners previously NEET or the unemployed) in supporting learners to progress to education or employment.

## Conclusion

'Outcomes for learners' is a rounded judgement, based on an extensive range of evidence. National rates applied to qualification success rates will continue to play an important role, but only as a component of the learning outcomes judgement. High qualification success rates do not always mean that teaching and learning are good, learners make good progress relative to their potential or that learners develop the skills they need. Case study 'scenarios' for each of the illustrative grade characteristics for 'outcomes for learners' are included as a guide and are provided as an appendix to this guidance.

14

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on 'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections**
**April 2014, No. 120254**

## Appendix A: case study scenarios

**Note:** the following case studies are for illustrative purposes only, and are not based on any actual providers. All grades provided are for the 'outcomes for learners' aspect.

### General further education college: grade – outstanding

- A medium-sized further education college offering a wide curriculum. Most substantive courses were for 16–18 year olds, but there was a good range of vocational courses for adult part-time learners. The college did not offer A-level provision.

- GCSE prior attainment locally was below the national rate, with most 16–18 year-old students following advanced-level courses attaining an average C/D grade.

- Inspectors started by looking at 'all' national rates, but to compare with similar learners nationally, inspectors used the general further education provider group national averages.

- For learners on substantive courses, accounting for just over half of the college's provision, success rates had improved steadily over the past three years and were significantly above the national rate for similar providers in the previous year. The picture was similar for almost all groups and subject areas, particularly for those with substantial numbers.

- For the small proportion of adults on substantive foundation-level courses, success rates were just below the national rate but, due to the college's actions, were improving rapidly. The standard of these learners' work observed during the inspection was good. Success on short course provision was high.

- Level 3 Value Added data indicated that most learners made the progress expected of them or slightly better. For other courses, the college had developed their own effective method for measuring progress, and could demonstrate that most learners made better than expected progress, considering their starting points. Attendance at lessons was high.

- For a significant proportion of apprentices, success rates were well above the national rate in the previous year, with significant improvement on the previous year. Most learners achieved by their planned end date and their standard of work was generally very good with some outstanding.

- Learners developed high levels of practical skills and knowledge. They improved their English, mathematics, functional skills and subject vocabulary very effectively in lessons and through targeted support.

- A large majority of vocational programmes were routinely successful in local and national competitions.

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on 'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections April 2014; No. 120254**

15

- Work placements were highly effective in developing learners' employability skills.

- High numbers of learners progress to employment or further study, including higher education.

## Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities: grade – outstanding

- Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, and a small number with complex learning difficulties. Programmes offer communication, literacy and numeracy development, independent living skills, employability and work experience. There is also specialist support for learners with visual impairments on a range of mainstream vocational courses.

- Comprehensive baseline assessments ensure that the college has a clear view of the learners' starting point and set challenging targets in the context of each learner's aspirations.

- A robust, rigorously moderated RARPA process is in place which results in effective and frequent monitoring of learners' progress; learners at risk of underperforming are identified and clear actions to promote improvement are put in place. This quality assurance is very effective at identifying any weaknesses in provision and these are addressed rapidly and effectively.

- Learners make outstanding progress during their time at college. The provider makes very good use of visual diagrams to demonstrate learners' starting points and the significant progress is achieved over their programme. Learners are involved in evaluating their own progress and produce high quality interactive records of achievement.

- Assistive technology is used well to support the development of good communication skills. Speech and language therapy interventions are meticulously recorded and progress is evaluated against agreed targets for learners' development. Evaluation demonstrates a very positive contribution to learners' progress.

- Records of learner reviews, attended by parents, local authority commissioners and other agencies, indicate high levels of satisfaction with the progress made by learners.

- Well-qualified learning support staff work closely with teaching staff to provide support that is tailored to learners' needs and promotes autonomy. Support is unobtrusive but effective, and good recording and regular review ensure that it continues to be at the correct level for each learner and contributes well to the progress they make. College evidence shows the reduction in support as learners become more independent, where appropriate.

- The collation and analysis of data indicate no significant differences in the achievements of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds, or of different

types of disabilities or gender. The provider makes outstanding use of its links with similar providers to benchmark its performance and moderate the quality of its provision.

- The college is highly responsive to the needs of employers and uses destination data to inform curriculum development to enhance long-term work opportunities for learners.

- Learners are well prepared to meet their long-term goals. A rigorous analysis of data clearly demonstrates that learners make excellent progress in achieving their agreed outcomes. A number of learners progress into sheltered employment and robust follow-up destination data demonstrate that these placements are sustained over time.

- The provider is particularly successful in achieving successful and sustained employment destinations for visually impaired learners who traditionally have poor employment expectations.

## Independent learning provider: grade – good

- A small independent learning provider offering mostly vocationally relevant qualifications (VRQs) and apprenticeships, with some advanced apprenticeships in engineering and construction. All apprentices were employed. There was no subcontracted provision, but a local college provided off the job training.

- Apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship overall success rates are in line with national rates, however a high proportion complete within agreed timeframes.

- The success rates for apprentices over 25 years of age are below similar learners nationally, but the trend is of continuous improvement.

- Historic 'Train to Gain' success rates were in line with the high overall national rates with the proportion of learners achieving by their expected completion date improving to good. This was mostly due to management actions to improve the support for key skills achievement.

- The first year's data on workplace learning, as the provider moved to delivering VRQs, show that success rates were satisfactory. However, due to clear management actions, the achievement of English and mathematics functional skills was high.

- There was good evidence of learners progressing from intermediate-level VRQs to apprenticeships and choosing to stay with the provider.

- Learners' portfolios and the skills they could demonstrate indicated that almost all learners were making the progress expected of them.

- Inspectors agreed with employers that the standard of most learners' work in the workplace was good and that the qualifications achieved benefited their companies.

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on
'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections
April 2014; No. 120254**

17

- Learners had a good understanding of progression opportunities and what they needed to achieve to be successful.

- Comprehensive records indicate that most learners progress successfully to higher levels of study, employment or gain promotion as a result of their studies.

## Sixth form college: grade – good

- A rural medium sized sixth form college offering mostly A-level subjects to 16–18 year olds.

- Learners' prior attainment at GCSE was relatively high; a grade B GCSE or higher was the minimum requirement to study most subjects.

- After initially considering 'all national rates', to compare with similar learners nationally, inspectors used the sixth form college national rates.

- Apart from in a few subjects, success rates were at least in line with high national rates and were comparable with similar colleges nationally.

- The proportion of high grades was good, but outstanding in only a few subjects.

- Almost all learners made the progress expected of them, with some making better than expected progress in lessons.

- The college's own in-year attendance rates were good and comparable with previous years.

- A high proportion of learners on the GCSE resit programme achieved a grade C or better, particularly in English and mathematics, enabling most to progress to the A-level programme.

- An expanding range of additional courses and opportunities enabled learners to broaden their skills and experiences, which prepared them well for higher education and employment.

- Most retained learners progressed to higher education, but few to highly competitive universities.

## Regional local authority led consortium – community learning and skills provider: grade – good

- A medium sized community learning and skills provider, which was the lead partner for a newly established consortium, providing adult education to learners in a large number of different venues across a wide geographical area.

- The consortium offered a wide range of mainly non-accredited courses within community learning. These included learning for work programmes, introduction to literacy, numeracy and language, family learning and personal and community development courses.

- The consortium was also the managing agent for a range of construction and engineering apprenticeships subcontracted to local colleges and specialist providers.

- Outcomes for learners on community learning programmes were good. Learners enjoyed their classes, were well motivated and most learners made good progress in acquiring basic skills. Achievement on non-accredited courses was good.

- Learners developed good social and personal skills, gained in confidence and self-esteem and many progressed to additional courses, voluntary work or paid employment. Learners who had had previous unsatisfactory educational experiences engaged well within the classes.

- Overall retention and attendance rates were satisfactory. Many learners had mental health issues and other barriers to learning. Achievement for those learners who remain in classes was good and in line with all other learners.

- Success rates for learners on the work-based learning apprenticeship programmes were outstanding. These were well above the national rates overall and significantly above for those learners who completed within their planned end date.

- Apprentices developed good professional skills to an acceptable industrial standard. They demonstrated correct and confident use of tools and equipment in the workplace and most learners made good progress towards their qualification.

- Most gain employment following completion of their apprenticeship including opportunities for further study to develop their skills further.

## Independent learning provider: grade – requires improvement

- Large provider in four towns, offering apprenticeships as well as VRQs to school pupils aged 14–16, delivered in branded 'academies'.

- While the success rates of advanced apprentices are high, for intermediate apprentices, who form the majority of the provision, they are below similar groups nationally. However, they improved in the last year, particularly timely achievement.

- The achievements of the minority group of male learners have remained below those of females, although not significantly so.

- Approximately a half of the school pupils following VRQs progressed onto apprenticeship programmes. The majority of learners made reasonable progress during their VRQ programmes, but the provider does not follow-up reasons why more do not progress.

- Most employers were satisfied with the skills apprentices develop, as they helped them to become more useful and employable. Most learners knew how to behave professionally at work and were attentive to customers' needs. The large majority of learners gain in confidence and self-esteem.

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on
'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections
April 2014; No. 120254**

19

- A high proportion of learners have additional learning needs and they make steady progress in achieving literacy and numeracy skills.

- Learners understand the main terms of their employment rights and responsibilities.

- Around a third of apprentices who completed their intermediate apprenticeship in the previous year progressed to an advanced apprenticeship.

## General further education college: grade – requires improvement

- Large college, offering a wide range of courses for 16–18 year olds, including a discrete 'sixth form' provision offering A-levels, vocational provision for adults and apprenticeships offered through two subcontractors.

- At entry, prior attainment for most 16–18 courses is around the norm for similar learners nationally, although the college required high prior attainment at GCSE, similar to a sixth form college, to study A-levels.

- After initially considering 'all national rates', inspectors used the general further education national rates for vocational courses and the overall national rate for the A-level provision.

- Value added progress data at level 3 showed that 16–18 learners generally made the progress expected of them. However, this varied considerably between courses and particularly within A-level subjects.

- The progress that adults made on both substantive and short QCF qualifications was as expected. However, only a minority of learners made adequate progress on literacy and numeracy programmes.

- The majority of apprentices demonstrated good skill development and preparation for further progression and promotion was good.

- At the time of the inspection, some consistently poor intermediate-level courses had been comprehensively reviewed, but it was too early to judge the impact on learner achievements.

- Learners' qualification success rates for different groups within the college groups were broadly in line with similar national groups, although in a few subjects they were below the college's average for all other learners.

- Apprentices' achievement had improved from a low base to around the average achieved by similar learners nationally. Inspectors reported that the majority of apprentices' work was of a good standard.

- The college's own in-year retention data indicated improvement compared with a similar time period for the previous year, although it was no more than the norm; attendance was still poor in a few subject areas but improving.

- While learners' functional skills and GCSE achievements, particularly in English and mathematics, were in line with national rates, some tutors missed opportunities within lessons to develop these skills further.

- A good proportion of learners who followed substantive advanced-level courses at the college progressed to higher education or employment, but the college was not clear of the destinations of the majority of foundation and intermediate-level students (including adults).

## Sixth form college: grade – inadequate

- A small sixth form college in a small city location. Some adult provision offered at foundation and intermediate level, but the large majority of the course offer was A-levels for 16–18 year olds.

- GCSE prior attainment of learners following A-level courses was just below the national average.

- Inspectors used the 'all national rates', for success rates, other than for science A-levels. For this subject area alone, learners were required to have high prior attainment; so the sixth form college national rates were considered.

- Success rates for learners following AS-level subjects in particular, were below the national rates for similar learners nationally and declining across the majority of subjects.

- Although small in number, too many adult learners did not complete their foundation and intermediate-level courses. Retention was also low on a minority of A-level subjects and had not improved during the past two years.

- Attendance was poor in a small minority of AS-level subjects, although in-year college data indicated an improvement on previous years.

- While A-level success rates were high, progression from AS level to A level was low in many subjects; too many learners did not progress between the two years of an A-level programme.

- The standard of learners' observed work varied considerably although in some subjects it was good.

- Level 3 Value Added data indicated that, for those retained, progress was similar to other groups nationally, but low in a few subjects.

- Female learners – the majority – achieve better than males and the gap is widening. Some groups of minority ethnic learners underperform when compared to all college learners or similar groups nationally.

- There was insufficient focus on developing personal and social skills or preparation for destinations other than for higher education; adult learners were not catered for at all.

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on
'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections
April 2014; No. 120254**

21

- The majority of learners who completed their A-levels progress to higher education, but the college did not collect any other destinations information.

## Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities: grade – inadequate

- Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with severe learning difficulties, and some with physical disabilities on programmes covering independent living skills, employability and work experience. There is also specialist support for learners with hearing impairments on a range of mainstream vocational courses. There is inconsistent emphasis on improving communication, literacy and numeracy skills even though these are identified learner needs.

- Weaknesses in baseline assessment mean that target setting is imprecise and planned learning goals are not always sufficiently challenging. Assessment does not routinely inform planning. Assessment and target setting are not sufficiently monitored by managers.

- Teachers monitor learners' progress towards their goals and their analysis shows that they make good progress. However, weaknesses in target setting and in the narrowness of the curriculum make aspects of this data an incomplete picture of progress.

- Most analyses of data by managers is good, although in equalities monitoring it is less detailed and purposeful and does not enable them to track trends in performance and by different learner groups thoroughly.

- Therapeutic interventions are recorded but the information is not used in relation to learners' individual targets to ensure they are making progress.

- Learning support is generally effective but in some sessions learners were over-reliant on support staff to undertake tasks for them; this was detrimental to their increased independence.

- Staff supporting deaf learners are well qualified and provide good classroom support; however, there are too few staff to provide the level of support required when learners are on work experience.

- Many learners move into further education or training and a few into independent living. Relatively few learners achieve their employment goals and the provider is now in discussions with a local supported employment agency to address this.

## Appendix B - QSRs and provider group national rates (NR)

Qualification success rates for classroom-based learning show both an overall national rate and a provider group rate and it is important to be aware of which providers are grouped together if these provider group rates are to be used effectively. As a starting point inspectors will use the appropriate 'all' national success rate. However, inspectors take into account a range of other factors.

**The QSR uses the following groupings:**

| QSR group | Ofsted providers | Which NR will inspectors use? |
|---|---|---|
| General further education college | All GFE colleges | Provider group or overall – but providers should aim to meet or exceed the higher of these |
| Sixth form college | All sixth form colleges | Provider group or overall – but providers should aim to meet or exceed the higher of these |
| Specialist college | Includes land-based colleges, specialist art and design colleges and specialist designated institutions | Overall NR only |
| Private sector public funded | Includes all independent learning providers | Provider group or overall – but providers should aim to meet or exceed the higher of these |
| Other public funded | This group includes all the providers we would regard as community learning and skills providers but also NHS Trusts, HEIs and special colleges | Overall NR only |

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on 'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections April 2014; No. 120254**

23

**Guidance on the use of data to support judgements on
'outcomes for learners' in learning and skills inspections
April 2014, No. 120254**