



# Northumberland College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published March 2006	Provider reference 130773
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## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Northumberland College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Acting Principal:	Pauline Piddington
Address of college:	College Road, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 9RG
Telephone number:	01670 841 200
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Chair of governors:	Peter Elliott OBE
Unique reference number:	130773
Name of lead inspector:	Simon Cutting, ALI
Dates of inspection:	16-20 January 2006

## Background of the organisation

1. Northumberland College is the only general further education (FE) college in Northumberland. It has a main site at Ashington and additional sites at Kirkley Hall, Alnwick, Amble, Blyth and Berwick-upon-Tweed. The college has a Centre of Vocational Excellence status (CoVE) for construction and tourism. Its mission is 'to provide education, training, and services that are of high quality to meet the needs of the people and industry in Northumberland and beyond'.
2. Northumberland is a sparsely populated county of approximately 300,000 with both an ageing population and falling numbers of young people. 46% of the population live in 2.7% of the land area in the South East of the county, an area of relatively high social deprivation. The transport infrastructure is poor. Employees in the county have lower levels of qualifications than the national average.
3. Achievement at 16 is just above the national average with 56% gaining 5 GCSE's at A\*-C. 79% of young people continue in learning after Year 11 but significant numbers do not continue after the age of 17. Most 16 to 18 year olds are learning at high schools (54%) with 28% in further education (FE) and 18% in work-based learning (WBL).
4. The total number of learners on the roll in 2004/05 was 12,996, of which 2,172 were aged 16-18; about one half studied full-time. There were 10,824 adult students; most studied part-time. Approximately 47% of learners were female. Less than 1% of the college learners were from minority ethnic backgrounds.
5. In 2004/05, the college offered provision in 14 of the QCA sector/subject areas. An approximately equal number of full-time equivalent learners aged 16 to 18 studied at levels 1, 2 and 3. A high proportion of young people follow vocational courses. Some 69% of adult enrolments are at levels 1 and 2. Each year, the college enrolls approximately 300 young people on apprenticeship courses and 200 enrolments on Jobcentre Plus programme courses. The college holds four franchise contracts.

## Scope of the inspection

6. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visit; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
- achievements and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: health; social care & child care; agriculture; horticulture and animal care; construction; hairdressing and beauty therapy; tourism and preparation for life and work.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: grade 3
Achievements and standards	Satisfactory : grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: grade 3

*Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.*

## Curriculum areas

Health, Public Services and Care	Good: grade 2
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Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Construction	Good: grade 2
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Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Tourism	Good: grade 2
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Preparation for Life and Work	Satisfactory: grade 3
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## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

7. This is a satisfactory college. Success rates have significantly improved during the period 2004 to 2005, and are at or above the national average at levels 1 and 2 but are below national averages at level 3 for 16 to 18 year olds. Success rates on longer short courses have improved and are significantly above national averages. Retention rates for 16 to 18 year olds remain below the national average but are above the national average for adult learners. Pass rates remain poor at level 3. Learner attendance is good at around 84%. The standard of learner work on many courses is good.
8. Achievement of apprenticeship frameworks is poor. Achievements of learners on Employer Training Programmes (ETPs) are very good. Progression rates for learners on Entry to Employment programmes (E2E) and clients aged 25 and over on Jobcentre Plus programmes are low.
9. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make effective use of resources to support learning. Initial assessment of learners' needs is inconsistent. Individual learning plans are used well to promote learning but are insufficiently used to plan additional support. Support for students' learning in lessons is good.
10. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. The range of provision is good. The college has formed strong and effective external links. Full-time students have access to a good range of enrichment activities. Many full- and part-time students benefit from a good range of relevant additional qualifications.
11. Most students receive satisfactory guidance and support. The college's tutorial system for full-time learners is well planned and effective but is unsatisfactory for part-time learners. The college responds very quickly and effectively to meet identified student needs.
12. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership at curriculum level is effective. Strategic planning is insufficiently coherent. The quality improvement framework is well established, although unevenly applied. Self-assessment is largely accurate. There is a strong ethos of widening participation. Governors provide the appropriate challenge to the college.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: grade 3

13. Since the last inspection the college has demonstrated that its capacity to improve is satisfactory. The self-assessment report is largely accurate and the college knows what it needs to do to bring about further improvements. The



results of the teaching observation programme matched the findings of the inspectors. Quality improvements arrangements are well established and are mainly effective. Work practice between faculties varies and good practice is insufficiently shared. Although targets for retention and achievement are used effectively by curriculum teams, data is insufficiently used to support quality improvements. Managers and governors have a clear vision for the future and the support and commitment of staff to improve the college.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

14. The college has made satisfactory efforts to improve. Most weaknesses identified in the 2002 inspection have been adequately addressed. However, progress to address weaknesses associated with unreliable retention and achievement data is slow. The achievements of 16 to 18 learners have improved. The college has an appropriate staff training programme to support teaching and learning. It has responded well to widening participation initiatives and external links are good. There has been an insufficiently timely response to the consistent application of quality improvement and implementation of policies for Skills for Life. Weakness relating to tutorial arrangements and literacy and numeracy learning support for part-time students remain.

Key strengths of the college

*Strengths*

- standards of learner work and skills for employment on many courses
- good teaching and learning in many curriculum areas
- very good links with schools, employers and other agencies
- strong widening participation ethos
- very good response to meeting local and national initiatives
- good provision in health, public services and care, construction and tourism

Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- low success rates at level 3 for 16 to 18 year olds
- recruitment and retention of students aged 16 to 18
- initial assessment for part-time students
- small class size
- incoherent strategic leadership and direction
- the use of data to support management decision making
- inconsistency in application of quality improvement mechanisms across faculties
- inconsistent sharing and using of good practice across the college

## Main findings

### Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

15. Success rates for learners following long courses significantly improved during the period 2004 to 2005. 16 to 18 year old success rates at level 1 were 10 percentage points above the 2004 national average and at level 2 were at the national average. Adult success rates at level 1 and level 2 were 11 and 5 percentage points above the 2004 national average respectively. Although improving, success rates for 16 to 18 year old learners at level 3 were 13 percentage points below the national average and adult learners were 2 percentage points below the national average. Success rates on short courses of less than four weeks remain below national averages but success rates on longer short courses have improved and are significantly above national averages.
16. In 2005, retention rates for 16 to 18 year olds had declined to below the national average at levels 1 and 2 and remained below the national average at level 3. This has not been effectively identified in the self-assessment report. Retention rates have improved for adults to above the national average at all levels. Pass rates for all learners on long level 1 courses and for 16 to 18 year olds on long level 2 courses are good, but pass rates remain poor at level 3. Pass rates are high on tourism, most health, public services and care programmes and accredited courses for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Student success rates in achieving additional qualifications in health, public services and care and agriculture, horticulture and animal care are good and have improved in key skills. The 2005 data used by inspectors was provided by the college and is not validated by the LSC.
17. Achievement of apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeship frameworks are poor. Retention and achievement of learners on Employer Training Programmes (ETPs) are high. Progression rates for learners on Entry to Employment programmes (E2E) are low, but improving. Achievements of qualifications for clients on Jobcentre Plus programmes are good. Many of these clients continue with their learning on completion of their programme. The proportion of clients aged 25 and over on Jobcentre Plus programmes who gain employment is below contractual requirements.
18. Generally progression to higher level courses is satisfactory. Learner attendance is good at around 84%. The standards of learner work are good in construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy, health, public services and care and on employer training programmes. Most learners enjoy their lessons and their behaviour is good. They comply with the health and safety regulations. The college plans to introduce a value added system. There has been limited progress in introducing the recognising and recording of progression and achievement (RARPA) for non-accredited learning.

## Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

19. Teaching and learning are good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Much good teaching was observed in tourism, construction, land based subjects, health and care and Jobcentre Plus provision. In the better lessons, well planned and challenging activities maintain the interest and motivation of learners. Teachers make effective use of resources to promote learning. Good examples were seen in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and health and care. Students benefit from the very good resources available through the CoVEs in construction and tourism. In hair and beauty therapy good use is made of IT to support students' learning.
20. In the weaker lessons, teachers fail to provide for the different needs and learning styles of students. In hair and beauty therapy insufficient clients are available to enable students to develop their skills in a realistic working environment. Resources are poor for motor vehicle studies in work-based learning. Students have insufficient access to computers to develop their professional expertise in health and care courses. In land based industries students have limited access to computers outside the classroom.
21. Support for learners in lessons is good. Essential skills staff help learners to improve their literacy and numeracy and develop their key skills; learning support assistants help those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; teachers are flexible in their response to students' needs for assistance with their individual programmes. Students value highly the support they receive.
22. The college has thorough systems and procedures for assessment and verification. Assessment practice is mostly satisfactory or better. Most full-time students' needs for support in literacy and numeracy are assessed and diagnosed at the beginning of their course. However, the implementation of the college's essential skills policy is inconsistent. For example, there has been a delay in carrying out initial assessment in tourism. Part-time students can seek support or their teachers may identify their needs but there is no systematic initial assessment in place. This was a weakness at the last inspection which is still to be addressed. Procedures for the development and assessment of students' key skills have improved in the past year but practice is inconsistent across the college. In tourism the integration of key skills within vocational studies is poor.
23. Individual learning plans in most areas contain clear targets that are regularly reviewed with learners. On work-based learning courses there are regular and effective reviews of learners' progress. However, ETP learners do not have formal reviews of progress. The use of target setting with individual students is underdeveloped in preparation for life and work, work-based learning and Jobcentre Plus provision. Individual learning plans are not always used sufficiently to plan and deliver learning support for individual students.

24. The college provides a good range of provision for the learners it recruits. This is identified as a strength in the college self-assessment report. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. The college has a strong commitment to widening participation. Many courses are arranged flexibly to attract adult students and suit their domestic and work circumstances, for example, courses for students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD) and those offering information technology (IT) courses in venues in the local community. Many students succeed in a range of additional qualifications that improve their employability and skill levels. There are good progression routes from level 1 to level 4. The college works closely with employers, schools, other training providers and other agencies to help meet the strategic needs of the region. Many curriculum areas have suitable vocational training programmes for learners aged 14 to 16. A large number of pupils on these programmes progress onto college courses when they leave school. The range of enrichment activities for most full-time learners is good. Learners have good opportunities to make a positive contribution in the local community. However, there is insufficient staff and governor training in child protection matters.
25. The college's provision for the advice, guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. Potential learners receive detailed information and entry requirements about available courses from an attractive prospectus. Good links with local schools are productively used to ensure a smooth transition to college. A good range of services, including counselling and careers information is available as part of learning services and those who use these services are well supported. The well-planned careers education and guidance programme enables learners to have good access to Connexions advisers. Full-time students effectively explore a range of appropriate employment and further and higher education opportunities through the tutorial programme.
26. Individual tutorials are valued by learners and group tutorials benefit from a series of themed topics. Students receive good personal support from their tutors. When additional learning support is provided, it is effective. Key student information and data on punctuality, attendance, course transfer, progression and achievement are insufficiently used by student support services to provide prompt support or to gauge their effectiveness. Connexions advisers and the college counsellor are pro-active in providing advice on a range of personal issues including health education. There is effective additional learning support for learners with sensory impairments and dyslexia.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

27. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting principal and governors provide a clear vision but strategic planning and direction are insufficiently coherent. The annual operating plan does not sufficiently prioritise key issues for the college. A recent re-organisation has resulted in clearly defined accountabilities which are well understood by staff. Communications

across the college are good. A significant number of policies, posted on the college intranet, are outdated and they do not clearly identify review dates.

28. Quality improvement arrangements are well established and mainly effective although they are not evenly applied. Work practices between faculties vary and best practice is insufficiently shared. The quality improvement arrangements for sub-contracted provision are insufficiently rigorous. The outcome of lesson observations adequately informs staff appraisals but the frequency of these key processes is insufficient. A robust self-assessment process is in place and is supported by all staff. Target setting lacks rigour. The use of timely and accurate data on which to base judgements was inadequate but has now improved. This is a weakness identified in the college's self-assessment report. Achievements have improved since the last inspection. Operational management of the curriculum is effective. There has been a slow response in some areas to address weaknesses identified at last inspection. The staff are adequately qualified and bring good vocational experience. Staff development has been successful in raising the standards of teaching and learning but there is insufficient focus on essential training for staff and governors.
29. The college actively promotes interagency collaboration and there is a well established ethos for widening participation. Links with schools and employers are very good. Equality of opportunity and diversity are satisfactorily pursued through a range of strategies. The college has a good record on tackling discriminatory practices and courses are accessible to a wide range of learners; policies are in place but require revision to fully comply with most recent equalities legislation. The college meets its statutory duties with regard to Race Relations Act 2000 and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act. Bullying and harassment policies are applied effectively although the new policy is not dated nor is a review date identified.
30. Safe and appropriate recruitment procedures are in place and all new staff are subject to enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks. The college makes effective use of a wide range of specialist resources. Accommodation across the sites is adequate and plans have been developed to relocate the college within two years.
31. Governors provide an appropriate level of challenge to college managers but have been slow to address the issues of inaccurate data. Attendance at governors meetings is now much improved at 82%. Class sizes are small, averaging 8.1. The college provides satisfactory value for money. The college has failed to meet its funding targets over the last three years and is projecting a significant operating loss for the financial year 2005/06. Many financial documents are insufficiently thorough and their consideration by governors is insufficiently timely.

## Curriculum area inspections

Health, Public Services and Care

Good: grade 2

### Context

32. There are 169 full-time students, most aged 16 to 18, on programmes in care and early years from entry level to level 3. There are 30 apprentices in early years and 173 learners on national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in early years at levels 2 and 3 and in care at levels 2 to 4. Some 109 learners attend classroom and teaching assistants' courses. Twenty eight students are on counselling courses at levels 1 to 4 and 263 on short courses including play work and first-aid.

### *STRENGTHS*

- high success rates on many courses
- good student success in achieving additional qualifications
- high standard of student work
- good teaching and learning
- good support for full-time students and apprentices

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- low retention rates on AVCE in Health and Social Care and Certificate in Child Care and Education
- inadequate arrangements for initial assessment of part-time students
- inadequate access to information learning technology (ILT)

### Achievements and standards

33. Success rates are high in most courses and are above national averages on part-time level 2 courses in counselling and play work, NVQs in early years at levels 2 and 3, and the diploma in child care. Full-time students successfully gain relevant additional qualifications. Key skills achievements are improving and are satisfactory for most students. Retention in AVCE in health and social care, certificate in childcare and education and the diploma in pre-school practice are low.
34. High standards in students' written, practical and display work reflect good practical applications and skills development. The quality of child observations carried out by students in early years courses is excellent. Students develop good independent research and analytical skills effectively linking theory to practice.

## Quality of provision

35. Teaching and learning are good. Well planned lessons include effective, challenging activities that engage learners and check their learning. Teachers create a purposeful environment, emphasising professional ethics. Students work productively. Initial assessment of full-time students and apprentices is satisfactory and forms part of their individual learning plan. Initial assessment for part-time students is inadequate. Where it has occurred, feeding back of the results to students is slow. Assessments are satisfactory and grading is accurate. Students receive clear feedback supporting their development and progress. Frequent assessments support workplace skills development.
36. Resources are suitable. Students have inadequate access to ILT in many classrooms. Students are given satisfactory advice on internal progression opportunities, careers and UCAS applications. The range of provision is satisfactory.
37. Academic and pastoral support for full-time students and apprentices is good. Staff provide additional coaching, study skills and 'catch up' sessions. Students are set realistic targets in tutorials. Apprentices receive the same level of support, reinforced by six-weekly reviews involving employers. Support arrangements for part-time students vary and were an issue at the last inspection.

## Leadership and management

38. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new management team has demonstrated the capacity to improve since the last inspection. Self-assessment is broadly accurate. Progress against development plans is regularly monitored and effective actions agreed. Recent improvements in data collection enable managers to set and monitor targets for students' retention and achievement. Communications are good. Teachers work well with specialist staff to support learners' additional learning needs. Internal verification and moderation is satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is adequate, although some opportunities to effectively challenge learners stereotyping were missed. Positive action has been taken to increase the recruitment of males onto child care courses.

## Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care

Satisfactory: grade 3

### Context

39. There are 264 learners on land based courses. Some 40% are over 19 years old and 50% are female. Courses include agriculture, horticulture, arboriculture, countryside management, equine and animal care. Thirty nine learners are on apprenticeship programmes. Courses range from level 1 to level 3 with progression to higher education available in the college.

### *STRENGTHS*

- high success rates in equine and animal care in 2005
- good achievement of additional qualifications
- good teaching and learning
- good initial guidance and tutorials
- good links with industry and employers

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- low success rates on diploma in countryside management
- low apprenticeship framework completion and key skill pass rates
- slow progress following previous inspection in improvements to the accommodation for animal care courses
- insufficient computer access for individual learner work

### Achievement and standards

40. In 2005, success rates in equine and animal care were above national averages. Retention and pass rates were variable with low retention rates in animal care. The retention rate of learners for the current year has improved. Learners achieve a wide range of additional relevant qualifications. Many have been identified through the land based industries liaison committee.
41. Success rates on the national diploma in countryside management have been below national averages for the last three years. Completion of apprenticeship frameworks is low. Only three full framework achievements have been recorded to date. This was identified in the self-assessment report. A work-based learning assessor has recently been appointed to co-ordinate framework completions. In 2005, level 1 key skills achievement in information communication technology (ICT) and communications was low.

### Quality of provision

42. Teaching and learning are good. Well planned lessons set challenging targets for learners. Teaching materials are professionally produced and are



appropriate. Teachers make good use of naturally occurring learning aids to support learning. Learners are attentive, well motivated and work diligently during lessons. Assessment is satisfactory. Feedback from tutors gives learners good advice on how to improve their performance. The range of provision is satisfactory.

43. Initial guidance and tutorials are good. Learners are effectively guided to the most appropriate courses. Parental involvement is good. A specific land based initial assessment of additional learning needs is used for all learners. Strong additional support is put in place. Classroom assistants ensure that all learners benefit from each lesson. Regular tutorials support learners well with sound, confidential advice on academic and personal matters. Group tutorials are used well to develop learners' wider social skills.

#### Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Team meetings are regular with satisfactory recording of actions which are followed up. Industrial liaison groups are very active, giving good advice to ensure that course content meets industry needs. Local employers actively support the college by providing work experience and practical experience for groups of learners and loan of up-to-date equipment.
45. The last inspection identified that the animal care unit was unsuitable. Although new accommodation is being prepared it is not yet operational. There are insufficient computers for learners to undertake independent study. Computers in the dedicated computer rooms are not available and computers in the learning resource centre are regularly booked for teaching purposes. Residential students have no access to computers after 8.30 pm.
46. The self-assessment report for the area was accurate and correctly identified the majority of the strengths and areas for improvement identified at inspection.

Construction

Good: grade 2

Context

47. Some 1,870 students attend courses in a wide range of craft, building services and construction courses from entry level to level 4. Thirty five per cent of students are aged 16 to 18. Learners attend full- or part-time, evening or block release courses. Programmes are available for work-based learners and at all levels. Distance learning is available for some part of the provision. The college is a CoVE for construction crafts. Approximately 200 pupils attend school link courses in construction. Courses are available at Ashington, Berwick, Prudhoe and Amble.

### *STRENGTHS*

- high success rates on NVQ level 2 in plastering and trowel occupations and NVQ level 3 in wood constructions
- good development of learners' practical skills
- good teaching and learning
- outstanding external links
- particularly broad range of provision
- effective strategies to improve achievements

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- low retention rates on the intermediate award in construction
- inconsistent support and tutorial arrangements for part-time learners
- insufficient opportunities for enrichment activities for full-time learners

Achievements and standards

48. Success rates on NVQ level 2 in plastering and trowel occupations and NVQ level 3 in wood occupations are high. Success rates on ETP provision are very good but success rates on the advanced construction award are low. Retention rates on the intermediate award in construction are low. The development of learners' professional and practical skills is good. Learners are effectively encouraged to work independently and productively, and to organise and complete practical tasks to a good standard in lessons or in the workplace. Attendance management is good, and was 85% during the inspection.

Quality of provision

49. Most of the teaching and learning is good. Teaching challenges learners and uses a variety of strategies to promote learning. Lessons are well planned and are structured to stimulate productive learning. Learners are set challenging tasks with regular assessment of progress.

50. Standards of accommodation and equipment are good. Classrooms are well equipped with learning resources including ILT equipment which are used effectively by teachers. Workshops are well equipped, and provide a safe and effective working environment. The construction facility at Berwick-upon-Tweed, although well equipped, is cramped. Opportunities for larger projects and further development are restricted.
51. The range of provision is good. The college offers a wide range of traditional and specialist construction crafts, and technical courses. The college is responsive to the needs of learners and employers. For example, 400 experienced, employed construction workers are working towards NVQ level 2 as part of the college's employer training programme. Provision is flexible including weekend attendance. There is a wide range of bespoke programmes that meet employers' skill needs.
52. The diagnosis of support and tutorial arrangements for part-time learners is unsatisfactory. The arrangements for the initial assessment of part-time students' additional needs are inadequate. Part-time learners do not have any structured tutorial support at group or individual level. Full-time construction learners have insufficient opportunities to benefit from enrichment activities.

#### Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management are good. Staff work together well as a team and effectively share best practice. Internal verification is comprehensive and robust. Strategies to improve achievements are effective. Success rates have improved significantly in the last year. Staff work effectively to manage student attendance. Recently appointed apprenticeship framework co-ordinators provide effective support for work-based learners.
54. External links are outstanding. Employers are actively and closely involved with the college, and effectively contribute to the design of the curriculum. Good communications with employers ensures there is co-ordination between the training in the college and in the workplace. Many employers offer work experience for the college's full-time learners. Significant sponsorship and donation of resources benefits learners. Guest speakers are well used to support learning.

## Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

Satisfactory: grade 3

### Context

55. Full-time and part-time courses are available at levels 1 - 3 in hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic therapies. Some 50 learners are on apprenticeship programme and there are 180 full-time and 273 part-time learners. 59% of the full-time learners are aged 16 to 18. Approximately 82% of the part-time learners are aged 19+. Some 5% of the learners are male. 200 pupils from local schools, aged 14 to 16, attend courses in both beauty therapy and hairdressing.

### *STRENGTHS*

- high success rates on NVQ levels 2 and 3 hairdressing
- high standard of learners' practical skills
- good integration of ILT into lessons to support learning
- good range of enrichment opportunities to enhance learning

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- unsatisfactory retention rates on NVQ level 1 hairdressing, NVQ levels 2 and 3 beauty therapy programmes
- slow progress in the achievement of apprenticeship frameworks
- some theory lessons which do not satisfy individual learning needs
- insufficient clients to meet learner needs

### Achievements and standards

56. The success rates on NVQ levels 2 and 3 in hairdressing are good and are improving on NVQ level 2 beauty therapy. Retention rates on NVQ level 1 in hairdressing and NVQ 2 and 3 in beauty therapy are unsatisfactory. Progress towards achievement of apprenticeship frameworks is slow. The achievements of young people aged 14 to 16 are good and many progress to college full-time programmes of learning. Learners develop a high level of practical and professional skills. Attendance is satisfactory.

### Quality of provision

57. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Integration of ILT is good and in the better lessons both teachers and learners make excellent use of ILT to support learning. Some theory lessons are uninspiring and teaching methods do not effectively match learners' individual learning styles and abilities.
58. Assessment and verification arrangements are satisfactory. There are too few clients to allow sufficient opportunities for learners to effectively develop their

skills to commercial standards. Initial assessment is insufficiently used to inform the development of individual learning plans.

59. There is a wide range of full-time and part-time courses from levels 1 to 3. A good range of enrichment opportunities enhance learning. Activities include success in local, regional and national competitions and professional workshops. Learners gain relevant additional qualifications and skills.
60. Learners receive satisfactory support. Tutorials are used to develop effective learner action plans and targets for the achievement of their vocational qualifications. The college report highlighted 103 learners in hairdressing as having additional support needs but only 3 learners were identified by the curriculum area as receiving support from specialist staff.

#### Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Quality improvement systems are now established and a number of new, well considered, curriculum initiatives have been introduced. Progress is monitored on the achievement of challenging targets at team meetings. Course reviews are detailed and focus upon improvements for the learners. Staff are well qualified and undertake regular development to update their skills. All part-time staff are working towards, or hold, a teaching qualification. Insufficient emphasis is placed on learner safety. The reception area to the hairdressing area is poorly lit and learners reported that they feel unsafe at times, particularly when working on their own.

Tourism

Good: grade 2

Context

62. The college offers a range of mostly full-time travel and tourism courses at levels 1 to 3. Courses include tour-guiding, customer service and overseas resort operations. Some 116 learners attend courses in travel and tourism. Most learners are aged 16 to 18. A small group of learners in a partner school are studying a first diploma in travel and tourism. The college is currently awaiting confirmation of full CoVE status in tourism in collaboration with two partners.

### *STRENGTHS*

- very high success rates on most courses
- good standards of students' work
- much good teaching and learning
- effective support to improve student performance
- good and productive links with employers

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- poor management of key skills
- late initial assessment of students

Achievement and standards

63. Success rates on most courses in travel and tourism are very high. They have improved considerably over the last three years. Achievement rates in 2005 are outstanding. Retention rates on a few courses are unsatisfactory. The standard of students' work is good. Learners demonstrate confident communication skills in preparation for employment. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of provision

64. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are managed effectively. Learners are enthusiastic, motivated and work hard developing their knowledge of the travel and tourism industry. Teachers make good use of ILT in most teaching and learning activities. A wide range of subject related activities are used to check learner understanding. Learning activities are insufficiently planned to meet individual learner's needs in some lessons. These strengths and weaknesses were accurately identified in the college's teaching and learning observation process. Learners' work is marked and returned promptly. Learners receive clear guidance on how to improve their work before a final submission. Teachers are well qualified and have very good subject knowledge.

65. The management of key skills is poor. Students are unclear how or where key skills are being developed or assessed either through their work or in lessons. There are inadequate tracking and monitoring of achievements in key skills. Initial assessment of students is too late, for example, initial assessments for learners enrolled in this academic year have not been undertaken.
66. There are good and productive links with employers and good work-placements for students. The development of the CoVE is further enhancing these links. The college is engaged with over 40 local tourism organisations to provide training. Employment opportunities are available through these organisations. A local airline directly recruits from college students. Progression from level 3 courses into employment is excellent. The range of provision is satisfactory.
67. Support effectively improves student performance. Both academic staff and personal tutors closely monitor their attendance, progress and achievement. Additional academic support is provided when a need is identified. Progress reports are sent to parents or carers each term; students appreciate these. When needed, tutors refer students for anger management sessions, counselling or liaising with social services regarding welfare issues.

#### Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are good. Improvements in the curriculum area have been effectively implemented. Communications are good and the self-assessment process involves all staff. They are aware of their weaknesses and are working well as a team to address and improve them. The findings of inspectors matched many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. There is a culture of continual improvement. It is as yet too early to judge if the strategies to improve initial assessment and the implementation of key skills will be effective.

## Preparation for Work and Life

Satisfactory: grade 3

### Context

69. There are approximately 2,550 enrolments on Skills for Life programmes, including additional learning support. Some 67% are aged 16-18. Learners can attend discrete programmes and programmes within vocational areas including work-based, community settings and in the workplace. Progression is available full- and part-time from pre-entry to level 2. 816 learners attend courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), 80 % are adults. Around half of the LDD provision is delivered through two partner organisations.

### *STRENGTHS*

- high success rates on 16 to 18 full-time LDD programmes and discrete workplace and community literacy and numeracy programmes
- effective use of resources to support learning
- good range of provision
- good response to national and local initiatives

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- underdeveloped use of target-setting for students
- inadequate planning and coordination of individual LDD students' programmes
- unsatisfactory quality assurance arrangements for Skills for Life

### Achievements and standards

70. Success rates on 16 to full-time LDD provision are high at 92% in 2005. Some 87% of Skills for Working Life learners successfully achieved their qualification. Achievement of short qualifications is also high at 82% for food hygiene and 66% for health and safety, preparing learners well for independent living and work. Many students receive a college certificate to recognise achievement on non-accredited courses.
71. Success rates are high on workplace and community literacy and numeracy courses; at 82% for numeracy and 72% in literacy in the workplace and 97% in community provision. Retention rates and achievement rates are satisfactory.

### Quality of provision

72. Resources are used effectively to support learning. Specialist resources include an adaptive kitchen and ILT resources to support the development of independent living skills for LDD students. Textbooks and games are used well to enhance learning.



73. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best lessons are well-planned, vocationally relevant and keep students interested and challenged. In some lessons, little learning took place and the activities were insufficiently challenging and as a result poor student behaviour adversely affected the learning taking place.
74. Initial assessment is insufficiently used to plan learning and monitor progress. Target-setting for students is underdeveloped. Learning plans lack challenge and there are no deadlines attached to targets. Reviews of progress are insufficiently developmental.
75. The range of provision is good. Skills for Life provision is available from pre-entry to level 2 with a good range of options including, advocacy, personal development and vocational courses for LDD and E2E students. Programmes are provided in a significant number of centres and workplaces.
76. Support for students is satisfactory. Additional teachers and support workers effectively help LDD students. Students' understanding of key induction topics including health and safety, complaints and course content are satisfactory.

#### Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Responses to local and national initiatives are good. For example, the LDD and Skills for Life team work well with partners to develop assessment tools to recognise learning needs and identify appropriate support. The co-ordination of individual LDD programmes is inadequate. Many students attend several programme options with separate action plans. Opportunities are not used effectively to plan learning and to measure the development of skills across learning options.
78. Quality assurance arrangements for Skills for Life are unsatisfactory. Monitoring of attendance is unsystematic. Results of audits and initial assessment are insufficiently monitored. The implementation of the Skills for Life policy has not been monitored. The strengths in the self-assessment report are inaccurate.

## Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	01/02	676	44	53	-9	1,181	52	50	2
	02/03	1,376	39	56	-17	1,441	53	55	-2
	03/04	1,424	36	60	-24	1,730	55	59	-4
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	181	16	54	-38	11	27	41	-14
	02/03	55	47	60	-12	3	100	47	
	03/04	44	80	65	14	4	100	52	
NVQs	01/02	99	10	52	-42	26	23	49	-26
	02/03	151	18	56	-38	35	26	57	-31
	03/04	209	26	61	-35	66	24	62	-38
Other	01/02	396	65	53	12	1,144	53	50	3
	02/03	1,170	42	56	-14	1,403	53	55	-2
	03/04	1,171	36	60	-24	1,660	56	59	-3

The 2003/04 data in this table understates success rates. The college individual learner record for 2003/04 was updated and resubmitted to the Learning and Skills Council in December 2005 with additional achievements. This update was not available at the time of inspection.

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream Level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	01/02	718	44	50	-6	1,775	53	48	4
	02/03	1,090	34	52	-18	1,811	50	49	1
	03/04	1,008	35	56	-22	1,998	42	53	-11
GCSEs	01/02	35	34	54	-20	119	44	53	-10
	02/03	73	40	57	-17	155	54	55	-2
	03/04	38	58	61	-3	81	49	59	-9
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	154	33	56	-23	16	31	50	-18
	02/03	83	41	59	-18	3	0	53	
	03/04	46	74	63	11	3	67	57	
NVQs	01/02	167	30	43	-13	205	35	45	-10
	02/03	160	33	42	-10	516	43	49	-6
	03/04	200	30	52	-22	776	29	53	-24
Other	01/02	362	57	49	8	1,435	56	48	8
	02/03	774	33	50	-17	1,137	53	48	4
	03/04	724	32	54	-22	1,138	50	52	-3

The 2003/04 data in this table understates success rates. The college individual learner record for 2003/04 was updated and resubmitted to the Learning and Skills Council in December 2005 with additional achievements. This update was not available at the time of inspection.

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	01/02	559	47	60	-13	1,277	52	50	2
	02/03	507	40	62	-22	1,214	52	51	0
	03/04	463	42	64	-22	1,098	45	53	-8
AIA2 levels	01/02	31	74	80	-6	46	54	57	-3
	02/03	27	56	82	-26	33	73	63	10
	03/04	12	83	84	0	13	77	66	11
AS levels	01/02	113	48	60	-12	88	40	47	-7
	02/03	87	36	61	-25	37	43	48	-5
	03/04	67	46	63	-17	36	36	50	-13
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	290	47	47	0	148	45	43	1
	02/03	258	33	50	-18	145	35	45	-10
	03/04	137	45	52	-8	62	48	43	5
NVQs	01/02	33	39	49	-9	119	36	41	-4
	02-03	8	38	51	-13	166	40	45	-4
	03/04	22	36	54	-17	242	29	47	-18
Other	01/02	92	40	54	-13	876	56	54	2
	02/03	127	54	55	-2	833	56	54	3
	03/04	225	38	56	-18	745	50	56	-5

The 2003/04 data in this table understates success rates. The college individual learner record for 2003/04 was updated and resubmitted to the Learning and Skills Council in December 2005 with additional achievements. This update was not available at the time of inspection.

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2003 to 2004

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVO rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	47	9	33	55	50
	Advanced	26	27	32	54	50

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

## b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVO rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	46	0	16	17	27
	Advanced	22	14	19	27	33

\* The number of learners who planned to complete their learning programme in the given year

\*\* College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

### 1. Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college 2003 to 2005

Year	Number of starts in year	Achieved Objectives *	Progression **	Still in learning
2003/04	170	n/a	19	0
2004/05	228	n/a	93	28

\* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

\*\* Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period

### Outcomes for Employer Training Pilots and National Employer Training Programmes managed by the college 2003 to 2005

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Still in learning
2002/03	349	266	16
2003/04	542	413	61
2004/05	459	275	162

\* These are key learning objectives identified for each learner following an ETP or NETP programme

### 2. Outcomes on Jobcentre Plus programmes managed by the college 2002 to 2005

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Gained employment	Still in learning
2002/03	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2003/04	172	100	55	0
2004/05	167	104	65	0

\* These are key objectives identified for each learner following a JC+ programme