



South Trafford College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published March 2006	Provider reference 130519
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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	South Trafford College
Type of college:	General FE
Principal:	Mr William Moorcroft
Address of college:	Manchester Road West Timperley Altrincham Cheshire WA14 5PQ
Telephone number:	0161 952 4600
Fax number:	0161 952 4612
Chair of governors:	Mr Graham Luccock
Unique reference number:	130519
Name of lead inspector:	Glad Capewell, HMI
Dates of inspection:	30 January to 3 February 2006

Background of the organisation

1. South Trafford College is a medium-sized general further education college in the borough of Trafford in Greater Manchester. Its main site is in Altrincham. The college provides courses for the community at the Learning Gateway based at Broadoak School in Partington, and in a number of outreach centres. It has Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in hospitality, sport and recreation and in health care.
2. Although there are some areas in Trafford with high levels of deprivation, for example in Partington, the south of the borough is more affluent. The unemployment rate is 2.3%. Minority ethnic groups make up 6% of the population. The proportion of learners enrolled in college in 2003-04 from minority ethnic groups was 12%. Trafford has a selective school system from the age of 11. Eight schools, seven of which are grammar, have sixth forms which offer mainly GCE AS and A-level courses.
3. In 2003-04 the college enrolled 9,652 learners of whom 7,067 were part-time and 2,339 were aged 16 to 18 years. There was a gender balance amongst learners aged 16 to 18 but amongst those aged 19 or over the proportion of females was 69%. Most learners study on vocational programmes from entry level to level 3. The college also offers an academic programme, a small work-based programme and is taking part in the employer training pilots (ETPs). Learners aged 14 to 16 from ten local schools study on a wide variety of courses through the increased flexibility programme (IFP) and the growing programme of customised vocational courses.
4. The college was last inspected in 2001. At that inspection, the provision was judged to be good in seven curriculum areas, satisfactory in five and unsatisfactory in one; science and mathematics. This area was re-inspected and found to be satisfactory. Leadership and management, support for students and the college's approach to inclusion were all judged to be good.
5. The college mission statement is 'to provide individuals with the opportunity to achieve in a supportive and inspirational environment'.

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); 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

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding : grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding : grade 1
Achievements and standards	Outstanding : grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding : grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding : grade 1

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.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

7. Achievements and standards have improved significantly since the last inspection and are outstanding. Success rates on most courses are significantly higher than the national averages and many place the college in the top 10% of colleges nationally. Development of learners' work-place skills is excellent. Learners attend well and enjoy their studies. Their progression to further education, employment and higher education is very good. Appropriate action has been taken to improve the success rates on the minority of GCE and work-based courses where they were low.
8. Teaching and learning are outstanding. The highly effective lesson observation system has supported well the development of teaching methods. Assessment and monitoring procedures are excellent. Learning resources are outstanding in many vocational areas. Additional learning support and key skills development are very effective. The use of ILT is underdeveloped in some areas.
9. There is an outstanding range of programmes promoting learners' progression and social inclusion. The adult and community learning programme is diverse and of high quality. Provision for learners aged 14 to 16 is very good. There is excellent activity to support workforce development. Enrichment opportunities are satisfactory but some learners do not receive sufficient information about them.
10. Learners receive outstanding guidance and support. Advice and guidance to learners are excellent. They receive outstanding personal, vocational and academic support. The help provided to those with additional needs enables them to make very good progress.
11. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal provides inspirational leadership and is ably supported by the senior team. Curriculum managers share good practice and use management information effectively to support rigorous self assessment and their drive for improvement. Good progress has been made in promoting equality and diversity policies. Governance is excellent. Links with external agencies are strong and beneficial to learners.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

12. The college has applied its self assessment and quality assurance processes with rigour to bring about improvements. Development plans reflect well the college's analysis of need and areas for improvement, as well as local and

national priorities. A clear vision has been developed to provide a constant focus on improving outcomes. In areas where it has been identified that improvements are needed then strong and effective action has been taken. Staff are committed to achieving the college's objectives and are provided with good resources to help them succeed.

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

13. The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement is outstanding. The judgements on leadership and management, social inclusion and support for learners have all improved to be outstanding. There are now significantly fewer major weaknesses for the college to address. The college worked vigorously to address the weaknesses identified in the last inspection: its focus on teaching has secured clear improvements in the quality of learning; the provision for learners aged 16 to 18 at level 2 is now outstanding; learners' key skills are developed well; appropriate action plans have been put in place to improve the promotion of equal opportunities; staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process; and significant improvements have been made to the college's accommodation with further new build planned. The college has been particularly responsive to the needs of the wider community that it serves and to local and national initiatives.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- outstanding achievements
- excellent development of work-place skills
- high quality teaching and learning
- excellent assessment and monitoring of learners' progress
- wide range of programmes promoting progression and social inclusion
- outstanding activity to support workforce development
- excellent guidance and support
- very effective additional learning support
- outstanding leadership and management
- rigorous self-assessment
- excellent governance

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates on a minority of GCE and work-based learning courses
- insufficient information about enrichment opportunities for some learners

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Outstanding: grade 1

14. The college has used its self assessment process effectively to support a sustained pattern of improvement in achievement and standards. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that achievement and standards are outstanding.
15. Overall success rates on long courses are very high for both age groups. In 2003-04, the college was in the top 10% of colleges nationally for its achievements on these courses. Overall success rates in 2004-05 on long courses were maintained at levels significantly above national averages. The success rates on all short courses for learners aged 16 to 18 and on short courses lasting less than 5 weeks for learners aged over 19 are excellent. Learners on vocational courses at level 3 achieve success rates well above national averages, although the success rates on a minority of GCE AS and A-level courses in 2004-05 were low. Most of these courses are no longer offered and the college has taken appropriate action to improve results on the remainder. Retention rates on these courses this year have risen significantly and are high.
16. Learners aged 16 to 18 on courses at levels 1 and 2 make very good progress and achieve outstanding results. On courses at level 3, they achieve the grades expected of them based on their GCSE grades. The college provides a high standard of vocational work environments and placements which enable learners to make excellent progress in their development of work-place skills. In 2004-05, the proportion of learners on ETP courses who achieved their learning objectives rose significantly. The overall success rates on the small work-based learning programme increased and exceeded targets, although there was too much variation between the achievements on different courses. There is very good learner progression to further education, employment and higher education.
17. The success rates of those who receive additional learning support are high, demonstrating the effectiveness of this support and the keen attention given to developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Learners aged 14 to 16 on increased flexibility programmes (IFP) achieve well, and pass rates on these programmes rose to 96% in 2004-05. Success rates for most minority ethnic groups have improved significantly and match those for other groups, reflecting more systematic guidance, welfare and support structures across the college. Most key skills success rates are well above national averages.
18. Learners enjoy their studies and their attendance rates are above the average for similar colleges. Many learners make a positive contribution to the

community through work in charity events, and in local schools and hospitals. Learners work with due regard to health and safety and build effectively their understanding of the health issues facing young people through the well-designed tutorial programme.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

19. The quality of provision is outstanding. Lessons are very well planned with clearly stated objectives that are effectively shared with learners. Learners are enthusiastic about their courses, enjoy their lessons and make very good progress in developing their knowledge and skills. The excellent resources in many vocational areas, such as hair and beauty, hospitality and catering and creative arts, support high levels of practical skill development. Teachers use a wide variety of methods to meet the different needs of learners successfully. Teachers use praise and encouragement well, while providing appropriate challenge. Learners respond well and produce work of a high standard. Teachers display good levels of knowledge, give clear explanations and use questioning very effectively to check learners' understanding and extend their knowledge. The teaching of key skills is firmly integrated within vocational areas. There is good use of ILT in some areas, but the college has identified that in others it is underdeveloped. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are outstanding.
20. A thorough system of lesson observations is in place which has provided an accurate evaluation of teaching and learning for the self-assessment report. Advanced practitioners work well with staff to help them improve less effective practice that is identified. The observations this year show a significant reduction in unsatisfactory sessions and this was confirmed by inspection observations. Joint observations carried out by inspectors and members of the college's internal observation team showed close agreement on judgements. The outcomes from lesson observations are integrated effectively into the quality assurance system.
21. Assessment is very well planned and there are comprehensive and effective quality assurance procedures in place. Teachers mark learners' work promptly and provide helpful comments. Learners know how well they are doing, what their targets are and receive clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. There are very good links between subject and pastoral tutors, so that tutors and learners have a complete picture of the progress of individuals. Parents of younger learners receive reports on their progress and are invited to regular parents' events.
22. Initial assessment of learners' additional learning needs is carried out promptly, and by a variety of appropriate methods, to ensure accurate identification of need. Once identified, learners receive support quickly and their progress is monitored effectively to ensure that the support continues to meet their needs. The impact on learners' outcomes of additional learning

support is thoroughly monitored and used for future planning. Learners receiving additional support have high success rates.

23. The college provides an outstanding range of courses at all levels which promote progression and social inclusion. Since the previous inspection, some 83 new courses have been added. Learners come from a wide geographical area and represent a range of ethnicities. Learning in the community for adults is well organised and diverse. The college plays a major strategic role in developing this provision. It offers adults in the community imaginative tasters and many accredited learning opportunities. Provision for the 80 learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well structured and effective.
24. Provision for 14 to 16 year-olds is very good. The college works effectively with ten partner schools to provide a wide choice of vocational courses with qualifications at entry level and levels 1 and 2. Participation rates have increased substantially and there has been a marked improvement in achievement. Learners benefit from the use of high class facilities, are well behaved and very well motivated.
25. Activity to support workforce development is excellent. The college has secured substantial funding for a highly innovative project working with the hospitality industry. This work is exemplary. Bespoke training and the ETP programme are highly responsive to employers' and learners' needs.
26. The college has responded effectively to child protection legislation and staff receive comprehensive training. Learners feel safe in college. They have access to a satisfactory range of enrichment activities and are encouraged to take additional short courses, but some do not have sufficient information about the wider opportunities available to them.
27. Learners receive outstanding guidance and support. A well-qualified team of staff provide impartial advice and guidance. The well-designed induction programme ensures learners are on the right course and are aware of the demands and expectations. The wide range of learner services are very well promoted and used extensively by learners. The college has very good links with external organisations and specialist agencies for referral purposes.
28. The timetabled tutorial programme for full-time learners is excellent. This is complemented by very good resource materials for personal tutors which they adapt to meet the needs of their groups. Personal tutors are particularly effective in working with learners to agree individual challenging targets and action plans. Motivational interviewers have helped to secure the good retention and achievement of learners. The very good links between personal tutors, curriculum staff and support staff enable the college to respond quickly to meet learners' needs. Appropriate adaptations have been made to the tutorial and induction arrangements to provide very good guidance and support to part-time learners and those on work-based and ETP programmes.

Additional learning support is particularly effective in helping learners to achieve their qualifications and gain in personal confidence.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

29. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal provides inspirational leadership and is ably supported by a strong senior management team. The college has a clear vision which is well understood by staff. Decisive and effective action is taken to address poor performance. Training provided for managers has enhanced their leadership and management skills. The sharing of good practice between section managers is effective and supports quality improvement.
30. Management information is used very effectively by managers for monitoring performance. The electronic registration system has supported well the college's strategy for improving retention. Curriculum and personal tutors have ready access to information on learners and their progress.
31. Self-assessment is excellent. It is well established and thorough. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self assessment report. Quality improvement continues to be a priority. Staff, including those from agencies, participate in excellent opportunities for staff development. A high proportion of full- and part-time staff have teacher training qualifications. Bursaries are available to support agency staff to gain qualifications.
32. The college has made good progress in its promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity. There is an active equality and diversity focus group and staff have taken part in a wide range of training opportunities. Learners have been involved effectively in producing an equal opportunities information pack and in organising events. At present the profile of staff does not reflect the diversity of learners. The college is targeting potential governors to increase representation of minority ethnic groups on the board. The college has made good progress in its response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. The college has recently updated its child protection policy and staff are well aware of procedures.
33. Resources are good and in vocational areas they are outstanding. New information technology (IT) facilities have improved communications with staff at the Learning Gateway. The college acknowledges that facilities for a minority of learners require updating and have submitted a bid for funding to build a new sixth form centre.
34. Governance of the college is excellent. The college governors monitor the performance of the college rigorously. There is very good communication between governors and college staff. Governors have a wide range of

knowledge and the college has benefited from their high level skills in finance and accountancy.

35. The college has made very good progress in implementing its skills for life strategy and has in place a comprehensive action plan. Lecturers and the business development team have participated in training in this priority area. Skills for life are actively promoted with employers. Learners derive much benefit from the relevance of the skills for life programme to their lives.
36. There are very productive links with employers, and with other educational establishments for planning 14 to 19 provision in the area. The college manages its finances well. Resources are deployed effectively to drive up performance and maintain high standards. The college offers outstanding value for money.

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	1,040	61	53	8	1,802	57	50	7
	02/03	811	59	56	2	1,303	60	55	5
	03/04	948	73	60	12	1,252	77	59	18
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	49	59	54	5	17	53	41	11
	02/03	29	76	60	16	2	100	47	
	03/04	33	58	65	-8	1	100	52	
NVQs	01/02	138	62	52	10	37	46	49	-3
	02/03	96	65	56	9	14	71	57	15
	03/04	132	64	61	3	63	63	62	1
Other	01/02	853	61	53	8	1,748	57	50	8
	02/03	686	57	56	1	1,287	60	55	5
	03/04	783	75	60	15	1,188	78	59	19

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	1,307	59	50	9	1,282	62	48	14
	02/03	987	59	52	7	1,086	70	49	20
	03/04	993	70	56	14	1,173	67	53	14
GCSEs	01/02	297	54	54	0	219	67	53	13
	02/03	187	53	57	-4	131	61	55	6
	03/04	103	63	61	2	100	75	59	16
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	159	62	56	7	10	80	50	30
	02/03	147	66	59	7	15	40	53	-13
	03/04	75	65	63	2	7	57	57	0
NVQs	01/02	249	59	43	16	320	52	45	7
	02/03	191	58	42	16	205	65	49	16
	03/04	182	71	52	20	220	59	53	6
Other	01/02	602	60	49	11	733	65	48	16
	02/03	462	59	50	9	735	73	48	25
	03/04	633	72	54	18	846	69	52	16

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	1,907	61	60	1	1,352	59	50	9
	02/03	1,928	63	62	2	1,350	60	51	8
	03/04	1,822	68	64	4	1,296	68	53	14
A/IA2 levels	01/02	311	76	80	-4	133	60	57	3
	02/03	326	75	82	-7	93	68	63	5
	03/04	329	84	84	0	121	65	66	0
AS levels	01/02	844	59	60	-1	236	56	47	9
	02/03	900	60	61	-1	215	59	48	11
	03/04	782	60	63	-2	196	57	50	8
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	553	54	47	7	32	44	43	1
	02/03	484	63	50	13	27	59	45	14
	03/04	321	69	52	16	20	70	43	27
NVQs	01/02	47	62	49	13	118	53	41	12
	02-03	42	57	51	7	129	62	45	17
	03/04	50	56	54	2	200	67	47	20
Other	01/02	152	63	54	9	833	62	54	8
	02/03	176	64	55	9	886	59	54	5
	03/04	340	72	56	16	759	71	56	15

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2003-04 to 2004-05.

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	22	0%	31%	23%	48%
	Advanced	***	***		***	
2004/05	Apprenticeship	50	40%	32%	60%	48%
	Advanced	18	22%	38%	44%	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 NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	25	0%	19%	20%	30%
	Advanced	***	***		***	
2004/05	Apprenticeship	23	28%	16%	58%	50%
	Advanced	***	***		***	

- * 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'
- *** Less than 15 learners

Outcomes for Employer Training Pilots and National Employer Training Programmes managed by the college 2002-03 to 2004-05.

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Still in learning
2002/03	36	26	0
2003/04	323	187	0
2004/05	238	182	0

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