



Leicester College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
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Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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131863

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Basic information about the college

Name of college: Leicester College

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Maggie Galliers

Address of college: Freeman's Park Campus,
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Chair of governors: George Ridgway

Unique reference number: 131863

Name of lead inspector: John Evans, HMI

Dates of inspection: 13-17 March 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Leicester College is the only general further education college (GFE) in the city of Leicester and one of the ten largest colleges nationally. Leicester also has three sixth form colleges, four schools with sixth forms, an adult education college and around 90 private training providers. The college has four main campuses, and offers provision in over 100 community venues in partnership with others. The college has around 1,700 staff and an annual budget of £43 million, of which 83% comes from the LSC. Extensive plans are in place for major improvements to accommodation and work had just begun at the time of inspection.
2. Leicester is the 29th most deprived local authority area in the country and its unemployment rate is double the national level. In 2005, the proportion of 16 year olds achieving 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C was 45%, 12% below the national average. Participation at 16 and 17 is broadly in line with the national picture. The city has a very diverse population, with the highest proportion of minority ethnic groups in the country.
3. The college makes provision in all 15 subject sector areas, although most enrolments are in vocational areas. It also provides higher education courses and is an associate college of De Montfort University. The college has three centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs) in print skills, construction and retail, the last two in partnership with other colleges in the region. In 2004/05, there were 4,295 full-time students, 65% of them aged 16 to 18, and 32,500 part-time students, 95% of whom were adults. There are around 700 work-based learners, the majority based in construction. The college's mission is 'To deliver a wide range of high quality learning experiences to support the diverse communities we serve and the personal, social and economic development of individuals and enterprises. We believe in learning for success'.

Scope of the inspection

4. 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 visits; 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: construction, sports and leisure, hairdressing and beauty therapy, visual and performing arts, media and print, literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: grade 1
Achievements and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2

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

Construction	Good: grade 2
Sports and leisure	Satisfactory: grade 3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Outstanding: grade 1
Visual and performing arts, media and print	Good: grade 2
Literacy and numeracy	Good: grade 2
English for speakers of other languages	Good: grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

5. Leicester College provides a good standard of education and training and some aspects are outstanding. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high, particularly for adult learners. A strong trend of improvement has resulted in success rates on long courses improving to well above national averages at all levels for both age groups, except at level 3 for 16 to 18 year olds, where the success rate is around national average. Learners of all abilities make good progress at the college.
6. Teaching and learning are good. Most courses are well organised and lessons are well planned. Processes for checking and raising the quality of lessons are rigorous and effective. Information and communication technology (ICT) is often used well to maintain learners' interest. Assessment is generally satisfactory.
7. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The curriculum is well-matched to the needs of the community and individual learners. Participation is widened through very good partnership work. Courses in basic skills and ESOL and vocational options for 14 to 16 year olds are extensive. The college is very responsive to the needs of employers. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported. There are limited college-wide enrichment activities.
8. Learners receive good guidance and support. Personal support for learners is very good. A comprehensive range of support services are readily accessible across the main sites. Students show good respect and support for each other. Initial assessment identifies effectively learners needing additional support, and learning support is provided promptly. Tutorials are effective at reviewing the progress of individual learners, but the quality of group tutorials is inconsistent.
9. Leadership and management are good. Leadership and the effectiveness of communications across a very large college are outstanding. There is clear strategic direction and governors closely monitor college performance. Quality improvement procedures have been very effective in raising standards. Self-assessment is very thorough and accurate. Financial management is robust. Significant capital investment has been secured to make much needed improvements to the accommodation, too much of which is not readily accessible to learners with restricted mobility. Some aspects of the learners' experiences are insufficiently monitored.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

10. Inspectors agree with the college that its capacity to improve is outstanding. The college's key priorities and strategic direction are clear. Quality improvement strategies are very effective in raising the quality of provision and performance is monitored closely at all levels. The lesson observation process is rigorous and effective action is taken to improve unsatisfactory teaching. Staff development is extensive and good. The executive team monitors performance in curriculum and support areas each term. There is a high level of accountability and a strong focus on the use of learner feedback to ensure the college is meeting learners' needs. The accuracy and use of data is good.
11. Self-assessment is well established, comprehensive, self-critical and accurate. It covers curriculum and support areas, includes most staff and is subject to a rigorous validation process. Franchise partners complete their own self-assessment which feeds into the whole college report. The self-assessment report identifies accurately the college's main strengths and areas for improvement. Subsequent action planning is appropriate, detailed and thoroughly monitored.

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

12. Improvements since the last inspection are good. Success rates have increased at all levels and most are above national averages. This reflects the success the college has had in improving retention at levels 2 and 3, while maintaining high pass rates. Strategies to improve teaching and learning have been effective. Curriculum management, a weakness at the last inspection, is now good in most areas and outstanding in hairdressing and beauty therapy and adult basic education. The accuracy and use of management information data has improved significantly. The college has established three CoVEs in print skills, construction and retail and these are well-resourced. Accommodation remains inadequate, but plans and investment to secure the improvements needed are firmly in place. The college has been slow to rectify weaknesses in work-based learning and key skills although recent improvements have been made.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- high success rates
- strong trend of improvement in performance
- well organised courses and lessons leading to effective learning
- very supportive relationships between learners
- strong and effective action to improve teaching and learning

- outstanding approach to social and educational inclusion
- strong personal support for learners
- outstanding leadership
- excellent communication with staff and students
- comprehensive and rigorous quality assurance and self-assessment.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- inadequate accommodation
- success rates in some types of qualification and by certain groups of learners
- the consistency of key skills provision
- insufficient cross-college enrichment
- underdeveloped monitoring of some aspects of the learners' experience.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 14 to 16

Learners aged 19+

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

Outstanding: grade 1

Satisfactory: grade 3

13. The college has accurately assessed learners' achievements and standards of attainment as good. Success rates are high on long and short courses, particularly for adult learners. At level 1, long course success rates for 16 to 18 year olds and adults have been much higher than the national average for the last three years; up to 20% higher for adults. At level 2, success rates for both age groups have improved very significantly in the last two years and are also well above national averages. At level 3, much needed improvement was secured in 2004/05. The success rate for adults is now much higher than the national average and the success rate for 16 to 18 year olds has reached the national level. This represents a very strong trend of improvement with success rates increasing much faster than the national rate. The overall long course success rate has improved from 49% to 69% over the last three years and is now 11% above the national average. On this indicator the college was ranked 30th among GFE colleges in 2004 and the success rate has improved by a further 5% in the intervening year. Success rates are above national level in the large majority of curriculum areas.
14. In several types of provision success rates are not strong. Completion rates in work-based learning and pass rates in key skills have been low, but both are now improving. Recent improvements in work-based learning are reflected in above average completion rates in the current year. Pass rates are low on vocational courses for 14 to 16 year olds and below national average on GCE AS level courses. The college has identified accurately underachievement by a few minority ethnic groups and by male learners on level 3 courses.
15. Retention rates for both age groups on level 1 courses have been consistently high and retention of adult learners is generally above average at other levels. In recent years, the college has focused its attention on improving the retention of 16 to 18 year old learners at levels 2 and 3. This has been effective and retention at both levels is now above national averages. Overall, retention on long courses has improved from 72% in 2002/03 to 81% in 2004/05, which is 7% above the national level. Pass rates are generally high with the overall pass rate on long courses 6% above national average.
16. Learners' attendance has improved steadily since the last inspection and is above national average. Inspectors found standards of students' work to be at least satisfactory overall and good in several curriculum areas. In a city where attainment at 16 is relatively low, learners make good progress at the college.

17. The college does not comprehensively monitor learners' destinations after completing their courses, but there is evidence of good and improving progression. Inspectors found good progression in sports and in ESOL and a high proportion of learners on full-time advanced level courses go on to higher education.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

18. The quality of provision is good. Inspectors agree with the college's own judgement that teaching and learning are good. Recent improvements to quality systems have made lesson observations more accurate and consistent. College observers receive good training and provide rigorous feedback. Inspectors agreed with their judgements when they shared observations of lessons. Curriculum managers work effectively with staff to improve teaching and especially learning. The college has correctly identified too much variability in teaching and learning within curriculum areas. Part-time teachers are not observed frequently enough.
19. Teachers generally plan well for lessons and include an appropriate range of learning activities to keep learners interested. In some curriculum areas, teachers develop useful learning materials on the virtual learning environment (VLE) which learners then access from home. Most learners value highly the extensive support teachers give them to help them to learn more effectively. In the best lessons, small group and individual learning are good. Teachers review previous learning well, use questioning and prompting techniques to engage learners, and make learning lively and relevant. Learners focus well on the different activities and develop knowledge quickly. Many teachers make good use of ICT to maintain learners' interest. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not introduce new topics well or explain the aims of the lesson clearly. They ask questions but answer them before learners do and students lose interest. Work-based learners benefit from improved links between their learning in the college and the workplace. Many teachers make the teaching of key skills vocationally relevant. In other lessons, however, the relevance of key skills to learners' main courses is not highlighted adequately.
20. Most assessment is satisfactory. In some curriculum areas, teachers give clear grading criteria and provide constructive feedback. In other areas, assessment strategies are underdeveloped. Although most course teams plan assignments evenly over the year, others set assignments too closely together and learners feel overloaded. Internal verification systems have been improved. Arrangements for initial and diagnostic assessment have improved and are now good. On most courses, the outcomes from these assessments inform each learner's profile and their individual learning plan (ILP). In other areas, there are insufficient links between these assessments and learners' targets. Additional learning support is provided promptly. Teachers and learners value

- individual tutorials highly, but systematic, formative reviews of progress are too infrequent. Reviews of the progress of work-based learners are more frequent and effective. They involve the college assessor, learner and employer and focus on a wide range of issues to support each learner's progress. The college reports twice yearly to parents and carers on the progress of students aged 14 to 18 and more frequently to employers of students under 19. Most reports are comprehensive and constructive.
21. Although graded as good in the self-assessment, inspectors judge that the college makes an outstanding effort to meet the needs and interests of learners. It offers a very good range of provision which is well matched to local needs. Appropriate use is made of local labour market information to review the courses available. There are excellent arrangements with local secondary schools to offer a range of academic and vocational options in Key Stage 4 for learners at all levels of ability. The college has played a key role in creating common timetabling arrangements to ensure these options are available to all pupils. Links with employers are very strong and they perceive the college as highly responsive to their needs. Training is provided at convenient times and places. The college pursues energetically a wide range of funding streams to support training in different contexts.
22. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Provision to address basic skills and ESOL needs in the local community is particularly extensive and supported by good partnerships with community groups. There are many excellent projects to promote participation and success by under-represented groups, such as women into the printing industry. Participation rates in disadvantaged wards in Leicester are rising faster than those in other wards. The college is sensitive to the needs of individual cultural groups and makes every effort to accommodate their needs. There is extensive provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they are well integrated into college life. The relative success of different groups is analysed and some work has been done to address differences.
23. Cross-college enrichment activities are satisfactory. Group tutorials include lifestyle issues and sports and social activities are available, although only a minority of learners take part. There are specific projects to stimulate participation in college life and encourage reflection on citizenship issues.
24. Inspectors agree with the college that guidance and support for learners are good. The college's harmonious ethos fosters very supportive relationships between learners of diverse backgrounds, abilities and cultures. Learners respect each other and their teachers. More vulnerable learners are well cared for by other students as well as staff. Personal support on financial, welfare and childcare issues is good. The counselling unit liaises closely with the very effective learning mentors and with curriculum staff. The college has strong links with the Connexions service and specialist support agencies.

25. The college has responded very positively to learners' need for a multi-faith chaplaincy. Learners with disabilities receive assistance from support workers which helps them to progress well. Induction is mostly effective and enables learners to settle into college life and make new friends. Information, advice and guidance are comprehensive and very effective. Procedures to track the progress of learners receiving support and analysis of its impact on their progress are underdeveloped.
26. Group tutorials cover important issues and enhance group unity. However, some tutorials do not sustain learners' interest. Careers advice raises learners' aspirations to progress within and beyond the college. Learners applying to university receive strong encouragement and good advice and guidance. As well as being an associate college of De Montfort University, the college also has good links with the universities of Leicester, Leeds and Coventry.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

27. Leadership and management are good and some aspects are outstanding. Leadership itself is outstanding. Governors, the principal and the senior management team set a clear strategic direction which is well understood by staff. Progress towards meeting strategic priorities is monitored closely. The whole college approach to providing skills for life is particularly well developed. Governors are highly experienced with a wide range of skills. They have a good understanding of the college's performance and key issues affecting it.
28. Curriculum management is mostly good and is outstanding in hairdressing and beauty therapy and adult basic education. Curriculum managers are very well supported by senior managers. Success rates have improved very significantly. Management information, which was a weakness at the last inspection, has improved enormously and is well used by staff.
29. While many weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been resolved, poor accommodation remains an issue. Although learning and social areas within the buildings are generally attractive, much of the estate is in poor condition and inaccessible to students with restricted mobility. Comprehensive plans are in place to bring accommodation up to a high standard and some work has already begun. Actions to address the unsatisfactory management of work-based learning and poor delivery of key skills have been slow but improvements are now evident.
30. Communication across this large, multi-site college is outstanding. The strategies used are varied, extensive and highly effective. Partnership working is strong. The college has a wide range of partners and staff at all levels participate effectively in many collaborative groups, locally and nationally.

31. Quality improvement procedures are highly effective in raising standards. Performance monitoring is comprehensive with a high level of accountability. Detailed reviews of performance are carried out three times a year in curriculum and support areas. Very good use is made of student feedback and the lesson observation process is thorough. Target setting and monitoring are rigorous in most areas. Very good use is made of peer reviews by staff from five other colleges in the area. Self-assessment is well established, comprehensive and accurate; it includes most staff and is subject to a rigorous validation process.
32. In a few areas, there is insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of services. The number of students withdrawing or transferring to other courses in September is not monitored to judge the effectiveness of advice and guidance. The impact of additional learning support is not monitored and destination data are only collected for a sample of learners. The response rate to the staff satisfaction survey is low, particularly from academic staff.
33. The college has a strong commitment to equality and diversity, and provides a safe and inclusive environment for all students. Governors, managers and staff have been trained in the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. The percentage of learners from minority ethnic groups is higher than that of the city, but the proportion of staff is well below it. Learner achievement data is compared by gender, age and learning difficulty and/or disability. Action plans are in place to address areas of concern but these lack rigour.
34. Staff development is good and is linked to an effective appraisal system. A less comprehensive appraisal system is used for part-time staff. Child protection procedures are well documented and most staff have had relevant training. Most teachers are well qualified. Financial management and control is very good. The high success rates indicate that the college provides good value for money, although class sizes are very small in some areas.

Curriculum area inspections

Construction

Good: grade 2

Context

35. The college offers courses in electrical installation, plumbing, painting and decorating, trowel trades and wood occupations, certificate and diploma technical courses, work-based apprenticeships and provision for 14 to 16 year olds in many of the crafts. There are over 1,000 learners, one third of whom are work-based. Most of those on apprenticeship programmes are on level 2 courses. Training is also sub-contracted from the Construction Industry Training Board. Adults comprise 60% of learners in construction and mainly study part time at level 2. The area has a joint CoVE in construction with another Leicestershire college.

STRENGTHS

- high pass rates
- effective use of ICT to promote learning
- good monitoring and planning of learning and assessment
- good curriculum management.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low progression rates from level 2 courses to level 3 courses
- insufficient curriculum enrichment
- insufficient action to improve the participation rates of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Achievement and standards

36. Success rates are generally high. Pass and retention rates on most courses are above national rates. On national diploma courses, too many learners leave their course before completing it. However, those who do complete the course achieve good standards. Completion rates in work-based learning have been poor, but recent trends in retention, key skills' achievement and framework progression show good improvement.
37. Learners make good progress in practical and theory lessons and the standard of work is generally high. They acquire good practical skills which meet the needs of local employers. In addition, many learners develop personal confidence and communication skills. Learners take pride in preparing their portfolios of evidence, which are of good quality. They speak confidently about the progress they are making and know what they still need to achieve.

Quality of provision

38. Teaching and learning are good. Learners enjoy their courses and good attention is given to their health, safety and welfare. Teachers work effectively in teams to monitor learners' attendance and progress. Good use is made of tutorials and reviews to track progress, set learning aims, plan assessments and organise additional reviews. Courses are particularly well managed. Tutors maintain comprehensive learner records. Lessons and assessments are well planned to meet learners' needs and assessment for work-based learners is scheduled systematically.
39. CoVE funding has enabled the curriculum area to improve resources for learning. In classrooms, new technology and interactive teaching aids are routinely used by teachers and students.
40. Programmes are well matched to learners' needs and aspirations. Courses are provided from entry to higher education level across a broad range of subjects. There is a popular school links' programme and an expanding 14 to 16 curriculum at level 1. However, no work experience is organised for full-time students. Few additional qualifications are offered to learners, for example in manual handling, abrasive wheels or working at heights, and few learners on craft courses progress from level 2 to level 3 training.
41. The provision for additional learning support is particularly effective for those needing help with literacy, numeracy or dyslexia. Specialist support staff work closely with teachers to provide group and individual support that improves learners' ability to progress successfully through their qualification.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are good. Managers set and monitor demanding performance targets for their course teams. Most targets are met and they are often exceeded. However, actions taken have not been effective in improving the participation rates of learners from minority ethnic communities. Self-assessment draws well on learners' feedback, observation of lessons and external verifier reports, and is self-critical and accurate. Curriculum development plans focus strongly on improving teaching, support and learning through better sharing of good practice and new accommodation.

Sport and Leisure

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

43. The college provides full-time courses in sport and uniformed public services, as well as part-time courses in exercise and fitness teaching. Full-time provision includes an entry level sports foundation course, NVQs at levels 1 and 2, first and national diplomas in sport and public services and a sports massage therapy course at level 3. Most of the 250 full-time learners are aged 16 to 18. A franchise arrangement with the Young Men's Christian Association Fitness Industry Training (YMCAfit) provides courses in exercise and fitness teaching to 2,200 learners. Similar courses are also provided to a further 1,100 students through the college's own East Midlands and Pennine Training (EMPT) department.

STRENGTHS

- good development of practical skills
- high levels of student progression
- good individual support and mentoring for learners
- leadership strongly focused on improvement.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficient challenge for all ability levels in lessons
- inadequate sports enrichment courses
- some poor accommodation and sports' facilities.

Achievement and standards

44. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates have improved on many courses and are satisfactory overall. Learners make satisfactory progress relative to their prior attainment. Key skills are insufficiently developed with low success rates in application of number. The progression rates of learners from one level to the next are high, with many then moving into sport and public service careers or higher education. Standards of work are satisfactory and learners display good attitudes to learning. They quickly develop good practical skills, especially on the franchised exercise and fitness teaching courses. They are able to make the links expected between theoretical concepts with practical examples. Learners' leadership and teamwork skills are well developed on public services courses. On other courses, such as the activity leaders' course, learners' organisational and planning skills are satisfactory and help to increase their confidence.

Quality of provision

45. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lesson objectives are clear and realistic and a feature of good lessons is the variety of learning activities that capture

the interest of learners. In one lesson observed, group competitions motivated students well and resulted in a better understanding of motor skill acquisition. Less effective lessons are not planned carefully enough and do not provide a sufficient range of tasks to meet the needs of the full range of abilities. Teachers do not use questioning effectively to challenge the most able students and this impedes the rate of progress they make. More rigorous assessment methods have helped to raise standards.

46. The wide range of provision encourages satisfactory progress at different levels. Additional courses are provided to extend learners' experiences, for example in sports leadership and first aid, but insufficient sports activities are available, especially for female students.
47. Guidance and support for students are good. Support from learning development assistants and learning mentors is well-targeted to help learners needing extra support with assignments and with pastoral issues. Individual tutorials are used effectively to identify issues that impede learning and tutors provide good informal support.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management are good. Self-assessment is accurate and pays close attention to issues that affect learning. Success rates have improved since the last inspection. Curriculum leadership now has a strong focus on improving the quality of provision. Quality assurance is good. The rigorous internal observation scheme provides teachers with clear areas for development. Equal opportunities are satisfactory. Courses provide for the differing interests and abilities of learners, but male sport is too prevalent in the content of sports theory lessons with insufficient references to sport and disability or female participation in sport.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Outstanding: grade 1

Context

49. The college provides full and part-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Courses include NVOs at levels 1, 2 and 3 in hairdressing, and at levels 2 and 3 in beauty therapy, artistic make-up and special effects and holistic therapies. About 70% of the 600 learners on full-time courses are aged 16 to 18. Almost 90% of the 450 part-time learners are adults. There are also 34 work-based learners, mostly on apprenticeships, in hairdressing. School pupils in Years 10 and 11 also take hairdressing and beauty therapy courses.

STRENGTHS

- very good success rates
- good standard of practical and written work
- extremely well-planned and resourced learning
- extensive range of provision
- highly effective pastoral and subject support
- excellent responsiveness to learner feedback
- outstanding leadership and management.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficient use of evidence from practical lessons for key skills.

Achievement and standards

50. Success rates are good on long courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 and on short courses. The success rates on most of the significant courses are above national averages and retention rates are improving across most courses. In 2004/05 there were no framework completions in work-based learning. However, this year, the majority of learners have achieved their apprenticeships. Attendance is consistently high. There is a good standard of practical and written work across college and work-based provision. Learners are highly motivated and enjoy their studies.

Quality of provision

51. The quality of provision is outstanding. Learning is exceptionally well planned and resourced. Consequently, learning is very effective and learners make good progress. Lessons are very carefully planned and well linked together, taking account of the preferred learning styles of the students. Relevant key skills are identified in schemes of work but not in lesson plans or practical salon sessions. Learners therefore miss good opportunities to provide evidence for their key skills portfolios. Attendance is monitored very keenly and any time lost through absence is recovered by learners infilling into other classes and using the college's commercial salon to make up the deficit.

52. The curriculum offer is extensive and provides clear progression pathways from entry and level 1 through to higher national diploma. Employer engagement is good. The curriculum area has been awarded centre of excellence status and is used by two large product manufacturers to introduce new product ranges and to train local salon owners. Learners' work is displayed very engagingly in classrooms, salons and corridors. Positive images are promoted well in publicity and display material. A very strong base of external clients has been built up to support assessment and each course has an incentive scheme which highlights the therapist or stylist of the month. Targets, progress made towards them and names of successful learners are displayed within the salons and this helps to keep students highly motivated.
53. Subject and pastoral support is highly effective. Teachers provide thorough and constructive feedback on the work and the progress of each learner. The virtual learning environment is well-developed and this allows learners to make direct contact with their tutor on-line, network with other learners and access course material remotely. Learners particularly value the learning mentor scheme.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are outstanding. Comprehensive procedures have been developed for all aspects of the area's work. Leadership of a large and diverse team is excellent, communication is highly effective and roles and responsibilities are well understood. Teachers are well qualified and participate well on good continuing professional development. They have all been trained to support basic skills. There have been significant improvements in the management of work-based learning. The area is extremely responsive to learner feedback and all course groups have learner representatives. Students provide many examples of how they have brought about change through this system. Extensive facilities include a very successful commercial hair and beauty salon. The accommodation is well maintained although some salons are cluttered. Self-assessment is both evaluative and largely accurate.

Visual and performing arts, media and print

Good: grade 2

Context

55. Full and part-time courses are provided from level 1 to level 4. The majority of the provision is in visual and performing arts, which includes fashion, footwear and textiles. Media, print and the visual arts are based at St. Margaret's campus and dance, drama and music at the Abbey Park campus. There are over 1,200 learners, about half of whom are aged 16 to 18 and half are adults. In print there are some 170 work-based learners. Provision for 14 to 16 year olds currently involves 162 pupils. A franchise arrangement with the National Design Academy has over 2,000 learners enrolled on distance-learning courses. The print area is a CoVE.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates on visual arts and National Design Academy courses
- good standard and variety of student work
- challenging teaching in visual and performing arts
- excellent external links to enhance students' vocational experience
- outstanding accommodation and resources.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- poor retention on media, print and music technology courses
- small class sizes with a negative impact on learning.

Achievement and Standards

56. Success rates on most visual arts, textiles, fashion and national design academy courses are good. Retention on media, print and music technology courses has been poor; however, current in-year retention shows considerable improvement. Learners' work is of a consistently high standard. In all subjects learners acquire good skills and apply them with assurance. Learners confidently use specialist vocabulary and demonstrate correct techniques in practical work. Several art and music students have been successful in winning national competitions. Performing arts students have performed at the DfES Star Award ceremony in London and drama students have participated successfully in the prestigious national students' drama festival. Learners on print courses are successfully introduced to industry standard equipment. There is a satisfactory level of progression within the college and to higher education.

Quality of provision

57. Teaching and learning are good in visual and performing arts and satisfactory in media and print. Learners in visual and performing arts are encouraged effectively to take responsibility for their own learning. In some lessons the

impact of recent staff development is evident from teachers implementing new types of activity which successfully engage learners. In one print lesson, the teacher skilfully mixed a variety of visual aids and real tools to make learning more meaningful. Assessment is satisfactory. The progress of work-based learners is monitored closely and reviews are thorough.

58. There is a good range of provision. Learners in visual and performing arts benefit from additional study, enrichment activities and visits by practitioners eminent in their field. School pupils take part in an invigorating programme of art and design activities. Resources at St Margaret's campus are outstanding. There are extensive links with employers who appreciate the responsiveness of the college in delivering training.
59. There is good individual support for learners and they value the advice and guidance provided. Tutorials help learners to manage their own progress. However a number of learners in media and print do not take advantage of the additional learning support identified for them.

Leadership and management

60. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications between staff are good and teachers value the increased emphasis on teaching and learning. However, actions for improvement are not sufficiently rigorous. Managers have not developed effective strategies to address the issues caused by small class size. In these small classes learners are deprived the stimulus of sharing ideas with others and of participating in group activities. Self-assessment is largely accurate. The management of work-based learning is good.

Literacy and numeracy

Good: grade 2

Context

61. The college's discrete literacy and numeracy provision extended to more than 3,600 adult, part-time learners during 2004/05, including over 1,500 learners at entry level, 1,400 at level 1 and 680 at level 2. Additional learning support is offered on-course, in small groups and in-to-one sessions, to over 1,200, predominantly 16 to 18 year old learners on full-time courses. In key skills last year there were 1,500 learners at level 1, 1,600 at level 2 and 100 at level 3.

STRENGTHS

- very high achievement in literacy and numeracy
- highly effective teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy
- good support for learners with dyslexia
- outstanding leadership and management in literacy and numeracy
- very good staff development in literacy and numeracy and additional learning support.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficient variety in the use of resources
- some unsatisfactory teaching and achievement in key skills.

Achievement and standards

62. Learners' achievements in literacy and numeracy are very good. Retention rates are high at over 90%. In 2004/05 there was a significant increase in the number of learners accessing national accreditation at levels 1 and 2, with high success rates at around 86%. Development of learners' skills in literacy and numeracy is very good. Learners make very good progress in class and work to a high standard. They make considerable gains in confidence and personal skills and can clearly describe how they apply these skills at home, in securing employment and at work. The overall success rate in key skills improved significantly in 2004/05 from 17% to 45%. However, considerable variation exists across curriculum areas, with low success rates remaining in visual and performing arts, media and print, particularly in application of number.

Quality of provision

63. The quality of provision is outstanding in literacy and numeracy and satisfactory in additional learning support and in key skills. In literacy and numeracy, planning to meet individual learner and group needs is good. One-to-one teaching is excellent, with very skilled use of questioning techniques and a strong focus on learning. Learners are extremely well motivated and work very productively both independently and when working with a tutor.

64. Support for learners with dyslexia is good. Well-established processes are used very effectively in the identification, assessment and provision of dyslexia support. Skilled and well-qualified staff provide good learner support and useful training and resources for all college staff.
65. Additional learning support is good in construction and hair and beauty, and satisfactory overall. The quality of key skills provision varies considerably, with too much unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Initial and diagnostic assessment, reviewing and recording are satisfactory across all the provision. Teachers do not use sufficiently varied resources. There is over-reliance on paper-based materials.
66. Literacy and numeracy provision is extensive and available on all college campuses and in a wide-range of community venues. Partnership arrangements to widen participation are very productive. Learners have good opportunities to access provision from entry level to level 2. Guidance and support are good.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management of discrete literacy and numeracy provision are outstanding. Managers provide strong leadership, setting a clear strategic direction and very high standards. Team working is particularly effective, with clear roles and responsibilities, good staff support and good communication. Quality assurance arrangements are effective in securing improvements in teaching and learning. There are good opportunities for volunteers to progress onto teacher training programmes and this supports capacity building and teacher recruitment in a national shortage area. Leadership and management are satisfactory in additional learning support and key skills. Staff development in literacy and numeracy and additional learning support is very good, both in take-up and its impact on improving provision. Self-assessment is comprehensive and accurate.

English for speakers of other languages

Good: grade 2

Context

68. ESOL courses are provided at two college campuses, on the premises of 12 employers and at 33 other centres across the city. Full and part-time courses are available from entry level to level 2. There are also ESOL opportunities for students aged 14 to 16, workshops of various types and vocational courses, for example in beauty therapy, with ESOL support. Provision for refugees and asylum seekers is extensive. At the time of inspection there were 370 full-time and over 3,000 part-time learners.

STRENGTHS

- comprehensive and very effective ESOL strategy which meets local needs
- good achievement of learning aims and national qualifications
- high progression to vocational courses
- effective sharing of good practice between teachers to improve teaching and learning.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- a minority of unsatisfactory teaching
- insufficient resources at community venues.

Achievement and standards

69. Achievement across ESOL provision is significantly above the national average. Where learners complete their programme they achieve their learning aim. Success in national qualifications has increased from 45% to 79% over the last year. Progression of learners to other courses is good. Last year 73% of learners progressed to level 1 and level 2 courses, including GCSEs. Learners are proud of their achievements. Portfolios are well presented but show insufficient use of ICT.
70. Retention on long courses in 2004/05 was below national average. However Leicester is a dispersal centre for asylum seekers and many are moved on before they can complete their course. Retention has improved in the current year, but there is a pattern of poor attendance and punctuality where teaching is weak.

Quality of provision

71. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In good lessons, teachers engage learners through a range of teaching strategies, regular change of activity and a good balance between individual and group work. In one lesson the teacher used humour very effectively to orchestrate a successful communications exercise in which learners had to describe unusual inventions. In weaker

lessons teachers do not provide clear direction and classroom management is weak. Learners are insufficiently challenged and become disengaged. Some teachers do not adequately address learners' different language needs. In some lessons worksheets are poor and little use is made of audio-visual aids or ICT to support learning. Although some unsatisfactory teaching remains, procedures to improve teaching and learning have started to remedy this.

72. ESOL provision is extensive. Partnerships with other providers, schools, job centres, social services, asylum seeker support groups and employers help to ensure the provision can meet demand. There is a waiting list for some courses. The embedding of ESOL into vocational courses provides good progression opportunities. Many courses are provided in community centres where learners feel comfortable and can be eased into education using appropriate support. However, classrooms in many of these venues are cold, noisy and dull.
73. Initial assessment is thorough and includes initial interview, assessment of individual skills, free writing and verbal discussion. Diagnostic assessments help place learners on the most appropriate course. ILPs are completed but not used consistently. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Careers guidance is delivered on full-time programmes and support is available through student services and the Connexions service.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and management are good. There are very effective strategies to recruit and support ESOL learners and improve the quality of provision. Self-assessment is largely accurate. The outcomes of lesson observations closely match those found in inspection, but only one-third of teachers have yet been observed. Clear action plans are in place to address issues that have been raised. Teachers use regular staff meetings and peer observations to share good practice and there is a good range of staff development, including level 4 subject specialist courses.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, 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	02/03	1,339	69	56	+13	5,444	75	55	+20
	03/04	1,661	74	60	+14	5,751	78	59	+19
	04/05	1,605	67		+7	5,247	77		+18
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	101	73	60	+14	29	62	47	+15
	03/04	80	64	65	-1	16	63	52	+10
	04/05	31	84		+19	1	-		
NVQs	02/03	181	51	56	-4	214	33	57	-24
	03/04	178	72	61	11	101	76	62	+14
	04/05	221	76		+15	78	68		+6
Other	02/03	1,057	72	56	+16	5,201	77	55	+22
	03/04	1,403	75	60	+15	5,634	78	59	+19
	04/05	1,353	65		+5	5,168	78		+19

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, 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	02/03	2,166	46	52	-5	2,479	42	49	-7
	03/04	1,656	59	56	+3	2,045	57	53	+4
	04/05	1,406	64		+8	1,885	62		+9
GCSEs	02/03	445	55	57	-2	187	57	55	+1
	03/04	317	63	61	+2	188	62	59	+4
	04/05	224	62		+1	165	64		+5
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	190	51	59	-8	35	54	53	+1
	03/04	178	62	63	-1	45	56	57	-1
	04/05	112	71		+8	35	74		+17
NVQs	02/03	497	36	42	-7	897	37	49	-12
	03/04	412	46	52	-6	821	58	53	+5
	04/05	353	61		+9	775	59		+6
Other	02/03	1,034	47	50	-4	1,360	43	48	-5
	03/04	749	64	54	+10	991	55	52	+3
	04/05	717	65		+11	910	63		+11

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, 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	02/03	1,700	54	62	-8	4,836	63	51	+12
	03/04	1,576	54	64	-10	4,498	54	53	0
	04/05	1,485	65		+1	3,701	64		+11
A/A2 Levels	02/03	126	79	82	-2	70	70	63	+7
	03/04	121	75	84	-9	64	67	66	+2
	04/05	157	84		0	107	70		+4
AS Levels	02/03	447	54	61	-7	220	51	48	+3
	03/04	433	55	63	-8	226	47	50	-2
	04/05	458	59		-4	201	53		+3
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	655	47	50	-3	208	39	45	-6
	03/04	180	56	52	+4	38	32	43	-11
	04/05	121	69		+17	31	65		+22
NVQs	02/03	24	50	51	-1	1,389	76	45	+31
	03/04	46	57	54	+3	297	52	47	+5
	04/05	33	73		+19	257	64		+17
Other	02/03	448	56	55	+1	2,949	60	54	+6
	03/04	796	49	56	-7	3,873	54	56	-1
	04/05	716	64		+8	3,105	64		+8

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2003 to 2005

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	84	29%	32%	69%	47%
	Advanced	104	18%	31%	54%	48%
2004/05	Apprenticeship	126	27%	38%	56%	50%
	Advanced	75	13%	34%	41%	48%

* 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	47	15%	16%	30%	24%
	Advanced	91	9%	19%	41%	30%
2004/05	Apprenticeship	147	19%	21%	41%	29%
	Advanced	76	9%	21%	29%	31%

* 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'

Table 5

Outcomes for Employer Training Pilots managed by the college, 2003 to 2005.

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Still in learning
2002/03	n/a	n/a	n/a
2003/04	816	72%	0
2004/05	957	73%	78 learners

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