



Sandwell College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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130479

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Sandwell College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Val Bailey
Address of college:	Pound Road Oldbury B68 8NA
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Chair of governors:	Mike Bailey
Unique reference number:	130479
Name of lead inspector:	Bernard McDonald, ALI
Dates of inspection:	27 – 31 March 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Sandwell College is a large general further education (FE) college situated in the West Midlands. The college has campuses in Oldbury, Smethwick and West Bromwich. It plans to build a new main campus in the borough of Sandwell. The college offers provision in all 15 of the sector subject areas except for history, philosophy and theology. The college's mission is to provide "excellence and success for all learners".
2. Nearly two-thirds of all learners come from Sandwell, which ranks 16th out of 354 local areas within England for indices of high levels of deprivation. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE subjects at A* to C in Sandwell is 43% compared to a national average of 55%. The rate of unemployment, at 4.7% in December 2005, is almost twice the national rate.
3. In 2004/05, the college enrolled 20,487 learners, 68% of whom were adults. In terms of full-time equivalent learners, just over one-third take courses at level 1, just under one-third are at level 2 and a quarter are at level 3, with the remaining learners taking higher level courses. The overall gender split is even, although amongst learners aged 16 to 18 the proportion of females is 52%. There are significant numbers of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds, principally of Indian, Black Caribbean and Pakistani heritage. In 2004/05, 54% of the learners on roll were registered as white. The corresponding figure for the local community is around 80%.
4. The college is a partner in three Centres for Vocational Excellence (CoVEs). Through its links with local schools there are over 400 pupils aged 14 to 16 attending a range of vocational courses. There are 194 apprentices in work-based learning and a small number of learners involved in an Employer Training Pilot (ETP) programme. Since the last inspection the college has reduced the level of franchised provision significantly. It now accounts for less than 5% of its income.

Scope of the inspection

5. 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: health and social care, construction, information and communication technology (ICT), sport, leisure and travel, preparation for life and work and business administration and law.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Inadequate : grade 4
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Capacity to improve	Satisfactory : grade 3
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Achievements and standards	Inadequate : grade 4
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Quality of provision	Satisfactory : grade 3
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Leadership and management	Inadequate : grade 4
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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 and social care	Satisfactory : grade 3
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Construction	Satisfactory : grade 3
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ICT	Inadequate: grade 4
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Sport, leisure and travel	Satisfactory : grade 3
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Preparation for life and work	Inadequate : grade 4
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Business administration and law	Inadequate : grade 4
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Inadequate: grade 4

6. The college has not improved since the last inspection and it is now inadequate. Learners' achievements overall are inadequate. Although college success rates on most long courses rose in 2004/05, nearly all are below the national average and are not much better than they were three years ago. Key skills' achievements are low. The achievement of the full framework within the agreed timescale by advanced apprentices is good, and for apprentices it is in line with the national average. Learners aged 14 to 16 achieve well. Attendance rates are below the national average.
7. Much teaching is satisfactory, but there is insufficient teaching which is good or better and some is inadequate. The college has been slow to implement an effective system for realistically judging the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are making increasing use of ILT to enhance teaching and learning, but some learners are not sufficiently challenged in their lessons. Assessment practice is satisfactory.
8. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. The broad range of provision is responsive to local needs, promotes inclusion and widens participation. There are strong collaborative links with local secondary schools and the community. The provision for learners aged 14 to 16 is good. Arrangements for employer engagement are underdeveloped.
9. Support and guidance for learners are satisfactory. There is a good range of information and welfare services. Tutorial provision is inconsistent. Support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Arrangements to identify and provide literacy, numeracy and language support for learners are not sufficiently effective. The take-up of additional learning support is low.
10. Leadership and management are inadequate. The principal provides clear leadership and strategic direction. Curriculum management is inadequate in some areas. Overall achievements are low. Quality assurance arrangements have been revised since the last inspection, but the self-assessment process is not yet effective in bringing about improvements. The quality of accommodation is poor. Arrangements to promote equality and diversity are good. The college does not provide satisfactory value for money.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: grade 3

11. The college demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve its provision. Its leadership provides clear strategic direction. New self-assessment and quality assurance arrangements provide a useful basis for monitoring and improving

performance. The system for observing teaching has improved. College success rates rose on most courses in 2004/05. Work-based learning is improving. Management information is now reliable although it is not sufficiently well used to plan, monitor and improve provision. A strategy is in place to address the weaknesses in accommodation. Staff morale is good.

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

12. The college has made inadequate progress in addressing areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leadership and management have been slow to implement effective arrangements for self-assessment. Success rates on most courses remain below the national average for similar colleges. The quality of teaching and learning has not improved. The arrangements for providing additional learning support are insufficient and the new quality assurance arrangements have not yet had a significant impact. Although steps to improve childcare, humanities and work-based learning in hairdressing proved to be effective, ICT has not improved and achievements remain low for work-based learners in construction. None of the curriculum areas has improved upon the grade awarded when last inspected, and three have received a lower grade.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- strong collaborative working with other educational providers and community groups
- good approach to educational and social inclusion
- good provision for learners aged 14 to 16.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 and adults
- the attendance of learners
- the quality of lessons so that many more are good or better
- the extent of employer engagement
- the arrangements for providing additional learning support
- the use of data for planning, monitoring and improving the provision
- the rigour and effectiveness of self-assessment
- the quality of the accommodation.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Inadequate: grade 4

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

13. Inspectors did not agree with the judgement in the college's self-assessment report that achievements and standards are satisfactory overall. In some of the construction crafts and in sport, leisure and tourism, learners develop good practical skills, and, in preparation for life and work, learners aged 16 to 18 years acquire good work-related skills. However, in ICT, practitioners at levels 1 and 2 do not reach a satisfactory standard. There is no clear trend of improvement in success rates since the last inspection. At level 2, a significant rise in success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 years means that the college is now performing better than the national average for similar colleges. However, there has been no improvement in success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 years at levels 1 and 3 over the last three years, and the rates have remained below the national average. There has been some improvement in success rates for adults at level 1, but very little improvement at levels 2 and 3 where the rates are well below the national average. Key skills' success rates have risen as retention has improved, but only one-third of those who start actually succeed.
14. Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 are good and in some areas there is good progression to college courses. The college's overall performance in work-based learning has improved since the last inspection and it is now satisfactory. Both overall and timely success rates for advanced apprentices rose significantly in 2004/05, and are now well in excess of the national averages. Success rates for apprentices were in line with national averages in 2004/05. The good performance by apprentices in hairdressing and advanced apprentices in motor vehicle engineering is not matched in construction or business administration and law.
15. There is no significant difference between the performance of male and female learners. The performance of learners belonging to minority ethnic groups, in terms of success rates, is improving and is in line with the national average. For example, there have been significant increases in success rates for learners of Bangladeshi, Black African and Pakistani heritage. However, success rates for white learners have not risen over the last three years, and they are below the national average.
16. Value added measures suggest that most learners achieve the grades predicted on the basis of their prior attainment. The college acknowledges the need to develop this aspect of its self-assessment process. It also identified

the need to improve learners' attendance and punctuality. The college's attendance rate of 75% is below the national average and, in the lessons observed by inspectors, the rate fell to below 70%. Health and safety practices are effective.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is insufficient teaching that is good or better. The college has been slow to implement an internal system of lesson observation in order to make an accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. As part of new self-assessment arrangements it has started to implement a comprehensive lesson observation scheme in which all teachers will be observed. The outcomes of lessons observations are well linked to the revised appraisal process and are used to plan continuing professional development. The summary lesson observation report provided by the lead observer to curriculum managers provides a clear overview of the strengths, areas for improvement and recommendations for the area. The new lesson observation scheme is yet to be embedded, but early signs indicate that lessons are graded rather generously.
18. In the better lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They use good techniques to manage classroom activities. Learners actively engage in lessons, and use technical language proficiently. The good integration of theory and practice enables learners to develop their vocational skills. Teachers use questioning techniques effectively to review and check learning. Teachers are making increasing use of ILT to enhance teaching and learning. For example, inspectors noted the good use of interactive whiteboards in sport and literacy and numeracy.
19. In the less successful lessons there is inadequate planning, the range of activities in lessons is narrow and the pace is too slow. Learners are unresponsive and become easily bored. The more able learners are not sufficiently challenged in order to extend their knowledge or to have the opportunity to work at a higher level. Lessons are frequently characterised by teachers talking for long periods and reading large amounts of text.
20. There is insufficient integration of key skills in vocational courses and learners make unsatisfactory progress in developing their key skills. Too many learners fail to achieve key skills qualifications.

21. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Written feedback on learners' work does not always indicate what learners should do to improve. Effective procedures for internal verification are in place and issues identified in external verification reports are actioned and carefully monitored.
22. The college offers a good range of courses to meet the needs of school leavers and local communities. A high proportion of students are from deprived areas. There are good progression opportunities from entry to higher level provision. The range of curriculum-related enrichment activities is good. The students' union organises additional leisure and sporting activities. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. This is contributing to widening participation and improving the staying-on rates in education and training of young people in Sandwell. Provision is offered in community venues and this is successfully attracting learners who are under-represented in education. Curricular links with employers and employer engagement in training are acknowledged by the college as areas for further development.
23. The college's initiatives to work collaboratively are good. It is an active partner in various projects to help regenerate the area and engage more learners in education and training. It is involved in three CoVEs in partnership with other colleges. Links with local secondary schools are strong. There is effective curriculum planning to better meet the needs of learners. Over 400 learners aged 14 to 16 attend vocational courses, including those who are at risk of leaving full-time education. There is good partnership work with various community and voluntary organisations to provide programmes for vulnerable groups such as those with mental health problems and those who misuse alcohol and drugs.
24. Support and guidance for learners are satisfactory overall. Initial advice and guidance are generally effective. The induction programme helps learners settle into their studies quickly. Many full-time learners aged 16 to 18 and adults benefit from good tutorial provision but this is not consistent across the college. Target setting with learners to help them improve their performance is weak. Part-time learners generally receive good support from their course tutors. Information and advice about progression into higher education, further training and employment are generally satisfactory. Enterprise awareness and financial literacy are areas for development. Support for students applying to university is good. The facilities and resources for careers guidance on each campus are inadequate. Initiatives to remedy poor punctuality and attendance have had little impact. There is no regular reporting of the progress of learners aged 16 to 18 to parents and carers of learners. There is a comprehensive range of information and welfare services including finance, accommodation, health, counselling, and assistance with childcare. These services are not promoted to community-based learners.

25. Good support is available for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, dyslexia and sensory impairment. Care and support for learners aged 14 to 16 are good. Learners who need help with literacy and/or numeracy do not always have those needs identified. This was a weakness at the last inspection. However, when a need is identified, or where learners subsequently refer themselves for additional help, they benefit from the good support they receive. Overall, the take-up of additional learning support is low. The impact of additional learning support is not systematically evaluated. Arrangements to identify the language support needs of bilingual learners are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: grade 4

Learners aged 14 to 16
Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3
Satisfactory: grade 3

26. Leadership and management are inadequate. Clear leadership and strategic direction is provided by the principal, and supported by senior managers and governors. Governors now monitor effectively the performance of curriculum areas. Communications are effective. The management information system is much improved. Actions by leadership and management to raise learners' achievements have had insufficient impact. Curriculum management is inadequate in some curriculum areas. There is insufficient effective additional learning support.
27. Overall, learners' achievements are low. Although most success rates rose in 2004/05, nearly all are below the national averages for similar colleges. There is no consistent trend of improvement for learners aged 16 to 18. There are good success rates for learners aged 14 to 16, and there has been an improvement in success rates by most minority ethnic groups and by work-based learners.
28. Quality assurance arrangements have recently been revised and include appropriately detailed policies and processes. The roles and responsibilities of managers are now clearer. Course reviews are satisfactory, overall, but in some curriculum areas they are inadequate. The self-assessment report is too descriptive and is insufficiently rigorous. There is insufficient use of achievement and progression data to evaluate the quality of provision or to plan improvements. There is little critical analysis of teaching and learning. Inspectors did not agree with the college's assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. Too much teaching is at best satisfactory and some is inadequate.
29. Actions to promote equality of opportunity and diversity are good. The college is successful in securing positive outcomes for young people as identified in the Children Act. The college is making useful progress towards meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. Most areas of the college are accessible to learners with

mobility difficulties. The race equality implementation plan is effectively monitored. Improvement targets are set for under-represented groups. Staff and governors receive useful awareness training on equality and diversity. The college has good links and partnerships with various local communities, and schools, to widen participation and to contribute to the regeneration of Sandwell. However, the extent of its involvement with employers is an area for improvement.

30. The standard of some accommodation is very poor. The college is seeking to work with partners in order to progress its plans for new accommodation. Staff are adequately qualified and experienced and receive effective staff development. Learning materials and equipment are satisfactory in most areas. Health and safety arrangements are effective. Governors take appropriate actions to safeguard and protect the welfare of young people.
31. The college provides inadequate value for money. Financial management and the deployment of resources are appropriate but too few learners succeed in achieving their goals. Accommodation is under-utilised. The college's financial operating position is weak.

Curriculum area inspections

Health and social care

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

32. The college offers a range of courses to meet the needs of the local community. Courses include care, early years, counselling, child minding and access to nursing. There are entry level courses for 31 part-time learners aged 14 to 16. There are 14 full-time learners aged 16 to 18 on level 1 courses, 23 on level 2 courses and 45 on level 3 courses. There are 108 part-time adult learners on level 2 courses, 83 on level 3 courses and 17 full-time learners on the access to nursing course. NVQs are offered on an outreach basis in early years and education. Learners have access to a variety of work placements in nurseries, schools and care homes.

Strengths

- high pass rates on the caring for children and certificate in childcare courses for the last three years
- good integration of theory and practice in vocational lessons
- good progression routes for learners in early years' courses.

Areas for improvement

- poor success rates on the NVQ 2 and NVQ 3 in early years, care and education courses
- insufficient challenge in lessons for the more able learners
- ineffective use of key skills to support learning.

Achievement and standards

33. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. The caring for children and certificate in childcare courses have had high pass rates for three consecutive years. Retention rates for both these courses and the introduction to child minding course are high. There are low success rates on the NVQ level 2 and NVQ level 3 in early years care and education courses. However, retention is improving for current learners on these courses and the Diploma in child care and education course. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners are keen and enthusiastic to learn and their behaviour is good. Attendance rates have improved and are now above the national average.

Quality of provision

34. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Theory and practice are successfully integrated and this enables learners to develop vocational skills for the workplace. Learners contribute productively in lessons. There is insufficiently demanding teaching in most lessons for the more able learners. Key skills are

poorly integrated in the vocational programme. Assessment practices are satisfactory.

35. Provision from entry level to level 3 ensures good progression routes for early years' learners into employment or university. Learner support is satisfactory. Effective systems are in place to monitor the progress of learners and provide support in both academic and personal matters. Resources are satisfactory. Teaching accommodation is spacious. There are colourful and relevant displays. In some lessons, interactive whiteboards are used by staff and learners.

Leadership and management

36. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, actions plans have been implemented to good effect. There are improved pass rates on NVQ level 2 and NVQ level 3 courses. Staffing has been improved and NVQ assessment takes place on a regular basis. The internal grading of lesson observations is over generous. A lesson observation scheme is in place and all staff are observed. It is still in an early stage of development. Quality assurance systems are satisfactory. Provision for equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Good efforts are made to promote equality and diversity. The self-assessment report is satisfactory. Inspectors agreed with most of its key judgements. The requirements of the Children's Services Inspectorate are satisfactorily met.

Construction

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

37. The college offers a range of mostly part-time foundation and intermediate level courses in craft and services including trowel occupations, plastering, wood occupations, painting and decorating, plumbing and electrical installation. There are 355 learners on level 1 courses, 326 at level 2 and 169 at level 3. Of these 77% are adults. There are 42 electrical installation apprentices and 19 plumbing apprentices. In addition, there are 80 pupils aged 14 to 16.

Strengths

- high success rates on basic skills courses in plastering and carpentry
- high success rates in plumbing in 2004 and 2005
- good practical training in building craft and plumbing
- highly effective strategies to motivate learners
- good development of learners' understanding of equal opportunities in work-based reviews.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates in building craft and electrical installation at level 2
- very low pass rates for apprentices
- low attendance in electrical installation
- ineffective target setting in work-based reviews for electrical apprentices
- very few learners receiving literacy and numeracy support.

Achievement and standards

38. Learners' achievements are satisfactory. Success rates on basic skills courses, apart from brickwork, are high and are well above national averages. Success rates in plumbing are 20% above the national average. Success rates are low on level 2 courses in electrical installation and in craft areas. Achievement of full frameworks has been very low with only two apprentices successfully completing in 2004 and 2005. However, a further seven apprentices have completed in the last six months. The development of practical skills is good in wet trades, painting and decorating, plumbing and carpentry and satisfactory in all other areas. Attendance in electrical installation is low, at 66%.

Quality of provision

39. Practical training is good and theory teaching is satisfactory. In the best practical sessions, individual objectives are set for each learner and these are reviewed at the end of each session. Workshops have a good range of display boards showing the practical tasks to be completed and the overall progress of each learner. Theory sessions are clearly structured, but often fail to

address individual learning needs. The use of information learning technology (ILT) in lessons is not well developed. Formal assessment is rigorous and fair.

40. Highly effective strategies are used to motivate learners well. Prominent workshop displays highlight learners' achievements such as outward bound enrichment activities and a 'learner of the week' award. This is highly valued by learners.
41. Learner support is satisfactory overall. However, the identification and take-up of additional support is low. The provision of formal support through tutorials is ineffective. Targets set in reviews for electrical apprentices are not sufficiently detailed or measurable.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Many of the issues identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed. There are improved resources in brickwork, plumbing and electrical installation. Improved management and better communications are benefiting work-based learning. Quality improvement and self-assessment processes are satisfactory. However, the use of data is not sufficiently well developed. There is effective promotion of equality of opportunity particularly for work-based learners. Reviews are used to challenge learners' views on equality and deepen their understanding.

Information and communication technology

Inadequate: grade 4

Context

43. There is a range of courses for information and communication technology (ICT) practitioners and IT users with progression routes from level 1 to higher education. Full-time provision includes foundation, first and national diplomas for ICT practitioners; GCE AS and A2 ICT. Part-time ICT users' courses include computer literacy and information technology at levels 1 and 2; and the European computer driving license. Some courses are available in community venues. Part-time ICT practitioner courses include certificates for ICT practitioners in software development and also systems support at level 2. There are 314 learners aged 16 to 18 and 1,100 adults.

Strengths

- high success rates on adult courses and GCE AS ICT in 2005
- high retention rates on full-time vocational courses
- good specialist additional support for adult learners.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates for most full-time learners
- too much inadequate teaching
- inadequate target setting in tutorials for full-time learners
- insufficient additional support for full-time learners.

Achievement and standards

44. Achievements and standards are inadequate, overall. Success rates for GCE AS ICT learners were good in 2005 with positive value added. Retention rates have been high for some years on full-time courses. However, success rates on many full-time courses are below national averages. Attendance has improved on full-time courses but it remains low on many part-time courses. The quality of IT practitioner learners' work is satisfactory at level 3 but unsatisfactory at levels 1 and 2.

Quality of provision

45. Much teaching is inadequate. The better lessons involve a good range of activities, move at a challenging pace and successfully engage learners' interest. In the weaker lessons, the pace is slow and there are insufficient checks on learning. There is insufficient use of ILT. Too much emphasis is given to whole group teaching. The differing needs of learners are not met. Vocational assessment arrangements are satisfactory but records indicate that many learners are not progressing sufficiently well.

46. The range of courses is satisfactory. There are clear progression routes from entry level to level 3. Engagement with local employers, albeit improving, is inadequate. There is insufficient opportunity for learners to gain experience of industry.
47. Support for full-time learners is inadequate. Where initial assessment of individual learners has identified a need for literacy and numeracy support, this has not been adequately provided. Tutorial targets for many full-time learners are inadequate and are not well monitored or recorded. Progress monitoring and review is good at a new learning centre in the community. There is good support for two groups of adults with a variety of disabling conditions.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management are inadequate. The curriculum area has a new manager who has made progress in improving some areas but it is too soon to see the impact. The quality improvement plan includes appropriate data and mostly reflects the areas for improvement found at inspection. However, quality logs are insufficiently well used to evaluate standards of learning and therefore bring about improvements. The quality assurance of teaching and learning is ineffective. There is insufficient sharing of good practice and industrial updating of staff. Some rooms lack adequate ventilation and blinds to eliminate glare.

Sport, leisure and travel

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

49. The college offers a range of courses in sport, recreation, travel and tourism at levels 1 to 3. Courses include introductory certificates and progression awards in sport and leisure, first and national diplomas in sport and travel, NVQ in sport and recreation, and certificates in travel. Of the 323 current learners, 111 are at level 1, 124 at level 2 and 88 at level 3. Of these, 5% are aged 14 to 16, 72% are aged 16 to 18 and 27% are adults. Of the 220 16 to 18 year old learners 65% are following sport related courses.

Strengths

- high retention rates at levels 1 and 2
- good achievement on the NVQ 2 sport and recreation course
- good use of ILT to support learning
- very good external links to develop the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- low success rate on the first diploma in sport
- low attendance on full-time courses in sport
- poor fitness facilities
- insufficient rigour in the analysis of course performance.

Achievement and standards

50. Learners' achievements are satisfactory. Retention rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 are high and improving. Success rates for the first diploma in travel and tourism and the NVQ in sport and recreation have been above the national average for two years. Success rates on several level 2 courses fell below the national average in 2004/05. In particular, the success rate on the first diploma in sport is low and has been significantly below national averages for the last three years. Attendance is unsatisfactory on full-time courses in sport. The standard of learners' written work in sport and travel is satisfactory. Learners' practical skills in sport and travel are good. Key skills achievements are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

51. Much teaching is satisfactory. In the better lessons, there is good use of ILT to support learning. Learners are enthused by well paced and challenging lessons involving a wide range of interesting activities. In the weaker lessons, the more able learners are not adequately challenged, and there is too much reliance on whole group teaching.

52. Assessment is fair. Learners' receive prompt detailed written feedback. Teachers are appropriately qualified although, for many, coaching qualifications and experience need updating. The range of accommodation and equipment for fitness is poor.
53. Good external links with local schools, employers, community groups and others successfully extend the curriculum and enable learners to develop coaching and event management skills. Learners have the opportunity to work abroad or to organise sporting events.
54. Learner support is satisfactory. Teaching staff offer a range of drop in sessions, and workshops to help learners who need extra help.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications are excellent. New arrangements for quality assuring teaching and learning have been introduced. Internal verification is thorough. Course leaders work well together to provide a wide range of courses designed to meet the needs of the local community. Learners' progress and attendance is closely monitored. There is, however, insufficient rigour in the analysis of course performance. The self-assessment report does not acknowledge poor success rates. Course reviews are descriptive and action plans are not routinely monitored to evaluate their impact.

Preparation for life and work

Inadequate: grade 4

Context

56. The college offers day and evening courses in discrete ESOL, literacy and numeracy, from pre-entry to level 2. Over 1,300 adults are enrolled on college-based ESOL programmes and 229 in community venues. There are 365 adults on part-time literacy and numeracy courses and 214 learners aged 16 to 18 on college based programmes. Most learners aged 16 to 18 are on level 1 and 2 vocational courses. Literacy or numeracy support is given to 110 learners. A programme for learners aged 14 to 18 with challenging behaviour and low prior achievement has 37 learners. A further 10 school pupils attend the college for a dedicated part-time ESOL course.

Strengths

- good acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills by challenging and vulnerable young people
- good initial assessment and on-course support in ESOL
- responsive provision in ESOL for a wide range of learners
- good learning resources in literacy and numeracy.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on most certificated ESOL courses
- low success rates in key skills
- too high a proportion of inadequate and satisfactory teaching
- insufficient analysis of data for management of programmes and action planning
- insufficient quality assurance of classroom practice.

Achievement and standards

57. Achievements and standards are inadequate. Other than the good achievement on pre-entry courses, success rates in externally certificated ESOL courses are low. Success rates for numeracy certificates and in key skills at all levels are low, although these are improving. Success rates in literacy certificates at level 1 are above the national average.
58. Challenging young learners with low prior attainment develop work-related skills which enhance their confidence and help them re-engage in learning. A group of ESOL learners aged 14 to 16, recently arrived in the country, are swiftly acquiring essential skills in speaking and understanding.

Quality of provision

59. Too high a proportion of teaching is either inadequate, or, at best, satisfactory. In ESOL, such teaching is often teacher-dominated and over reliant on the text book. Learners have too few opportunities to develop their speaking skills. Teachers talk too much or allow the same people to answer all the questions.
60. In literacy and numeracy, target setting and reviews of progress are not always carried out satisfactorily. The results of initial assessment are sometimes not used adequately to plan teaching or support. Lessons on the discrete literacy and numeracy programme, however, are usually well planned for the development of learners' different levels of skill. Resources for learning are good. Materials are designed well and teachers use ILT well. In ESOL, initial assessment and subsequent target-setting is good.
61. The range of courses is good. ESOL provision is highly responsive to the needs of the community. There is little literacy and numeracy provision in partnership with employers or community organisations. Learner support is satisfactory. Learners value highly the support they receive on ESOL courses. However, ESOL learners in the community do not have access to the college's advice and guidance services.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are inadequate. The implementation of the Skills for Life strategy, whose action plan makes little reference to language, has been slow. There is insufficient use of data to manage the programme. Quality assurance is inadequate. There are too few checks on the quality of classroom practice. Resources have been overstretched by the rapid expansion of provision over the last two years. The self-assessment report is insufficiently critical. Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted. Staff development is satisfactory overall, with good opportunities for ESOL teachers.

Business administration and law

Inadequate: grade 4

Context

63. Full-time courses are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3 in business and include GCE AS and A-level accounts business and law, GCSE business, and office administration. Part-time courses include office administration, accounting, management and professional and logistics courses. There are 227 learners aged 16 to 18, and 106 adults, studying full-time, 701 learners studying part-time and 23 work-based learners.

Strengths

- wide range of provision with good progression opportunities
- good links with schools
- good individual subject support.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on many courses
- poor attendance rates
- underdeveloped curricular links with industry for full-time learners
- insufficiently rigorous self-assessment and weak action plans.

Achievement and standards

64. Achievements and standards are inadequate. Success rates on many courses are low. They have been below national averages on full-time vocational business courses for the last three years. Success rates on GCE courses have been more variable and are now close to national averages. Work-based learning success rates are poor.
65. The standard of work on adult programmes is satisfactory. Standards achieved by learners aged 16 to 18 are more variable. They make slow progress at level 1, have poor levels of understanding in A2 business but they make good progress on the certificate in financial planning. Attendance is poor at 70% and even lower than this on full-time courses.

Quality of provision

66. Standards of teaching are satisfactory and broadly in line with the college's own assessment. The better lessons are characterised by well-developed lesson plans, good use of presentation software, skilful questioning to check understanding and appropriate use of the learners' own experience. The weaker lessons lacked connections with the world of business, the more able learners were not challenged, and learning was not checked.

67. There is a good range of day and evening professional, academic and vocational business courses. Learners are able to move easily from one level to another. There are good and developing academic links with local schools to complement their courses, for example, by offering law. A group of 37 pupils from a local school is making good progress. Links with industry for full-time learners are underdeveloped. Whilst the college does make some small use of visiting speakers, these arrangements have not had sufficient impact on learning. There is little use of work experience.
68. Learner support is satisfactory, overall. There is good one-to-one academic support. The quality of group tutorials, however, is uneven. They are often used simply to catch up with work. New systems to improve group tutorials have yet to make an impact. Additional learning support is satisfactory, although many learners for whom English is an additional language, struggle with the business vocabulary. Marking and assessment is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

69. Curriculum management is inadequate. New courses have been introduced to replace those failing to meet the needs of learners. New quality assurance systems have been introduced, but they are not yet being used systematically. A recently introduced lesson observation system has not yet had an impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The self-assessment process is insufficiently rigorous and makes little use of data. Action plans fail to address key weaknesses in success rates and lack measurable targets. The management of work-based learning has improved.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002/03 to 2004/05, 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	806	48	55	-7	3074	39	54	-15
	03/04	815	51	59	-8	2516	41	58	-18
	04/05	870	49	-	-10	2096	48	-	-10
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	108	58	56	2	39	15	47	-32
	03/04	33	58	62	-4	4	75	55	
	04/05	10	40	-	-22	1	0	-	
NVQs	02/03	18	22	58	-36	12	8	66	-58
	03/04	44	73	60	13	17	59	69	-10
	04/05	61	54	-	-6	19	63	-	-6
Other	02/03	680	47	55	-7	3023	40	54	-14
	03/04	738	50	59	-9	2495	41	58	-17
	04/05	799	49	-	-10	2076	48	-	-10

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream Level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002/03 to 2004/05, 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	838	41	51	-10	2219	39	50	-11
	03/04	899	51	55	-4	1876	34	54	-19
	04/05	823	57	-	2	1441	41	-	-13
GCSEs	02/03	234	42	58	-16	212	43	54	-11
	03/04	313	59	64	-5	157	49	58	-9
	04/05	309	71	-	7	199	64	-	6
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	84	37	53	-16	14	71	50	21
	03/04	88	39	57	-19	16	74	57	-13
	04/05	49	43	-	-14	6	0	-	
NVQs	02/03	160	26	41	-16	364	37	53	-16
	03/04	98	50	50	0	307	38	55	-17
	04/05	98	54	-	4	266	48	-	-7
Other	02/03	360	48	48	1	1629	39	48	-9
	03/04	400	48	51	-3	1396	32	52	-21
	04/05	367	49	-	-2	970	35	-	-17

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002/03 to 2004/05, 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	669	45	58	-13	1513	39	49	-10
	03/04	670	38	60	-22	1079	33	52	-18
	04/05	747	46	-	-14	1117	40	-	-12
A/A2 Levels	02/03	69	86	79	6	25	56	65	-9
	03/04	73	77	83	-6	30	57	68	-12
	04/05	56	88	-	5	39	72	-	4
AS Levels	02/03	166	50	57	-7	62	39	47	-8
	03/04	193	42	59	-17	66	30	49	-19
	04/05	249	55	-	-4	94	49	-	0
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	234	39	47	-8	36	53	45	8
	03/04	218	37	50	-13	43	37	43	-6
	04/05	96	35	-	-15	26	46	-	3
NVQs	02/03	80	26	47	-20	276	37	45	-8
	03/04	94	9	47	-38	175	30	47	-17
	04/05	64	33	-	-14	214	36	-	-11
Other	02/03	120	38	48	-11	1114	39	50	-11
	03/04	92	34	49	-16	765	33	52	-19
	04/05	222	47	-	-2	744	38	-	-14

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	75	35	32	55	47
	Advanced	18	28	31	61	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	118	36	38	44	50
	Advanced	37	49	34	65	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	74	1	16	9	24
	Advanced	14	21	19	43	30
2004/05	Apprenticeship	108	22	21	25	29
	Advanced	37	46	21	62	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'