



# West Kent College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

Better  
education  
and care

## Inspection report

Audience  
Post-sixteen

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## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	West Kent College
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	Bill Fearon
Address of college:	Brook Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2PW
Telephone number:	01732 352791
Fax number:	01732 350470
Chair of governors:	Valerie Stead
Unique reference number:	130727
Name of reporting inspector:	David Martin, ALI
Dates of inspection:	27 February – 3 March 2006

## Background of the organisation

1. West Kent College is a large general further education college, mainly located in the town of Tonbridge. Construction, motor vehicle and engineering training centres are located in nearby Tunbridge Wells. The college's mission is 'to provide high quality learning experiences to equip our learners throughout life with the skills to meet their needs and those of the economy'. School staying-on rates in the area are high and the college operates in a very competitive environment for full-time learners. The west Kent area has a large number of small medium-sized enterprises, with few large employers. Unemployment is well below the national average for England.
2. Most learners come from Kent, but nearly 25% come from neighbouring East Sussex. Just over 90% are white, reflecting the extent of ethnic diversity in the area. Over the last academic year, 2004/05, there were 11,761 learners; 1,855 aged 16-18 and 9,861 adults. Most adult learners attend part-time. The college offers a wide range of vocational qualifications from further education (FE) entry level to higher education (HE) degree level, together with programmes for the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and general certificate of education (GCE) advanced subsidiary (AS) level and advanced (A) level.
3. Courses are offered in all areas of learning other than agriculture, horticulture and animal care. The largest areas of learning are health and social care and preparation for life and work, each with around 20% of total enrolments, followed by business, arts, media and publishing and hairdressing and beauty therapy. Most enrolments by adults are in these areas. For learners aged 16-18, the two largest areas by enrolments are preparation for life and work and arts, media and publishing. An increasing number of school pupils, aged 14-16, attend the college to undertake vocational training. There were some 240 in 2004/05 and so far in 2005/06, some 360. Provision for work-based learning is small, but growing, with 106 apprentices in 2004/05 and 96 in training at the time of the inspection. The college is a major provider of the employer training pilot scheme, 'Profit from Learning', and intends to deliver the successor scheme, 'Train to Gain'. The college has a CoVE (Centre of Vocational Excellence) in health and social care.

## 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment 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 and early years care; information and communications technology (ICT); hairdressing and beauty therapy; visual and performing arts and media; literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); business

## Summary of grades awarded

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

Health and social care and early years care	Good: grade 2
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory: grade 3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good: grade 2
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory: grade 3
Literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages	Satisfactory: grade 3
Business	Good: grade 2

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

5. Learners' achievements and standards of attainment are good. Overall success rates have improved consistently year on year and are now at the national average for similar colleges. Many are above national averages, although retention at level 2, for adults, requires improvement. The timely achievement of frameworks by work-based learning apprentices, although still low, is improving to acceptable levels. Key skills achievements are now at or around the national averages. The standards of learners' work and their attainment of practical skills are often good. They attend well and make good progress.
6. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory and are sometimes good or better. Better teaching is characterised by realistic planning, where teachers know what they want to achieve in a lesson, have a clear view of the needs and abilities of their learners, and use a skilful blend of approaches to aid learning. Too many lessons are no better than satisfactory because insufficient attention is paid to basic principles of sound teaching. Learning resources and staffing are appropriate. The use of information and learning technologies (ILT) in teaching is much improved since the last inspection.
7. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. A good range of provision meets diverse needs and the college has worked hard to develop extensive and strong partnerships. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well catered for. The provision for school pupils aged 14-16 is now considerable. Links with employers are good. Learners feel safe and enjoy their courses. The college works hard to ensure that learners adopt healthy life styles. Improved success rates and learners' community activities suggest that they are helped to achieve and to make a positive contribution.
8. The college's provision for the advice, guidance and support for learners is good. A comprehensive range of expert services supports learners through all stages of their college life. Additional support needs are identified and promptly addressed. Personal support is effective. Tutorial provision is adequate, but there are inconsistencies in its application.
9. Leadership and management are good. The college has improved steadily. An effective team culture and spirit of enterprise prevail. Self-assessment is largely accurate. Quality assurance is good. The lesson observation scheme is rigorous. The college has established outstanding partnerships and is very responsive to local demand. Financial management and value for money are good.



## Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

10. The college has made sustained progress over the last five years and has a good capacity to improve further. The college correctly identified most of its strengths and weaknesses in its self-assessment report. A few course action plans need further improvement. Management data are now timely and reliable, but more widespread use needs to be made of them to inform planning. Enterprising leadership, effective quality assurance processes and strong teams provide a good platform for continued improvement.

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

11. The college has made good progress since the last inspection in 2001 and has remedied most of the weaknesses that led then to the judgement of inadequacy. Learners' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning have improved. Six curriculum areas have improved their provision and one has declined.

## Key strengths of the college

*Strengths*

- strong leadership
- good governance
- improvements since the last inspection, including achievements
- extensive and productive partnerships
- the enterprising and highly responsive curriculum
- the range of provision
- good support and guidance for learners
- the comprehensive and accurate self-assessment
- good financial management

## Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- further improvements to the quality of teaching and learning
- achievements for some courses
- the development and use of value added measures
- the planning and monitoring of actions for improvement
- embedding the promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity within the curriculum
- the further development of a cross-college approach to skills for life
- the need to improve some accommodation

## Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

*Contributory grades:*

*Learners aged 19+*  
*Work-based learning*

*Satisfactory: grade 3*  
*Satisfactory: grade 3*

12. Achievements and standards are good. The college's self-assessment report correctly identifies the considerable improvements in success rates since the last inspection. They have increased consistently year on year and overall are now at the national average for similar colleges. Many are well above national averages.
13. Success rates on long courses in 2004/05, for learners aged 16-18, are above national averages at all levels and at levels 1 and 2 are significantly above. Success rates for adults, in 2004/05, are at or above national averages, with the exception of level 2 long courses where they have fallen to 11 percentage points below the national average in 2004/05.
14. The highest pass rates, well above the national averages for the last three years, are for learners of all ages on level 2 courses and for adults on level 3 courses. They have fallen to slightly below in 2004/05 for adults at level 1.
15. Retention is often at or above national averages. In 2004/05, it was highest for learners of all ages at level 1. At level 2, for adults, however, it fell to well below the national average because of poor retention on the employer training pilot scheme. Also at level 2, for learners aged 16-18, retention has fallen over the last three years from well above to only just above the national average.
16. For the relatively small number of work-based learning apprentices, the achievement of full frameworks is improving. For trainees finishing in 2004/05, the achievement was 37% in hairdressing and 33% in early years care, representing improvements of 17 and 19 percentage points respectively since 2003/04. Inspectors identified much speedier completion of frameworks in the current academic year.
17. The standard of learners' work is often good. Inspectors noted the development of particularly good vocational skills in health and social care and early years, ICT and hairdressing and beauty therapy. Learners make good progress in their lessons and develop confidence and sound personal and social skills.

18. In all areas of key skills performance, retention, success and pass rates have improved since the last inspection. Results in key skills tests have improved to around national averages.
19. Average attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was 85%, which is similar to the college's 'all year' calculations. Learners are invariably punctual.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

*Contributory grades:*

*Learners aged 14 to 16*

*Good: grade 2*

20. The quality of provision and of teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. They are good for learners aged 14 to 16. Since the last inspection, the college has introduced a more rigorous system for the observation of teaching and learning and significantly increased the emphasis upon staff development, directed at improving teaching and learning.
21. In the most productive lessons teachers have a clear idea of their objectives and the learning outcomes they have set. They provide a good variety of activities to motivate learners, often using their own and learners' life and work experiences to make lessons more interesting and challenging. They make good links between theory and practice in health and social care and early years and in beauty therapy lessons. Resources to support learning are largely satisfactory and sometimes good. The use of ILT in lessons is much improved since the last inspection, although not consistently.
22. Too little teaching is better than satisfactory. Less successful lessons are dominated by teachers who speak too much and answer their own questions. In hairdressing lessons, there is insufficient use of oral questioning and in ICT, checks on learning are sometimes insufficient, questions are too broad and learners become inattentive. Learners are sometimes insufficiently stretched. For example, in the visual and performing arts, the level and pace of activity is too leisurely. In hairdressing, some practical lessons do not reflect a realistic working environment and learners do not experience commercial pressures.
23. Assessment and verification are effective. Teachers give clear and constructive feedback on assignments. In some areas, such as health and social care and early years and in the visual and performing arts and media, the tracking of learners' achievement is rigorous and assessment is good. In ESOL and in literacy and numeracy, the potential of individual learning plans is not exploited. Opportunities for assessment in hairdressing are limited by a shortage of clients. The outcomes of regular reviews of learners' progress and performance are appropriately reported to parents and carers.

24. Key skills are well taught and managed. Both in teaching, and through assignments, they are well integrated into learners' core studies, helping them to appreciate their relevance. They are particularly well embedded in hairdressing and beauty therapy.
25. Educational and social inclusion are good. A good range of provision meets diverse needs, including courses for young people excluded from schools, refugees and learners with a range of additional support needs and disabilities. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well catered for and are fully integrated into college life, including those with sight and hearing impairments. Learners make good progress and develop their skills. They feel safe and enjoy their courses. The college works hard to ensure that learners adopt healthy life styles. Improved success rates and learners' community activities suggest that they are helped to achieve and to make a positive contribution.
26. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. The college has built up a wide range of effective partnerships with local high and special schools. It has been forward thinking and responsive in developing courses for learners aged 14-16 and in addressing fully all child protection matters. Progression routes are plentiful. There are productive links with a wide range of external agencies and organisations who all commend the college on its commitment to local need and collaboration. The college has gained 'Action for Business' accreditation. Outreach centres further promote learning in the community. A good range of additional activities for learners enriches their programmes of study, including college-wide sports provision through the sports academy.
27. The college's provision for the advice, guidance and support for learners is good. The new admissions service offers comprehensive and impartial advice. An exhaustive range of other services is well used. Vulnerable students are well catered for. Learners aged 14-16 are very carefully supported in the largely adult environment. Careers guidance is good and carefully integrated with Connexions support. The college acknowledges that it cannot fully meet demand. All learners have a detailed initial assessment. Additional learning support is appropriately chosen and carefully monitored. Individual learning plans are used to set individual goals, although targets are not sufficiently challenging.
28. Tutorials are effective for many learners, but they are not of consistent quality. The college has recently introduced the audit of tutorial records and observes tutorial lessons. A comprehensive tutorial handbook contains sound practical advice. A robust training programme updates staff about tutorial and child protection developments. Procedures for monitoring and following up punctuality and attendance are good.

## Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

29. Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection the college has improved steadily. Success rates have risen consistently over the last three years and many are now high. The principal and senior management team have placed the improvement of teaching and learning and the rigorous assurance of quality at the heart of the college's work. There is a strong team culture rooted in a shared responsibility for ensuring that learners succeed. Morale is high. Leaders are respected at all levels. The governing body is effective in holding the college to account and supporting the drive to improve. Governors are highly committed and well informed.
30. Quality assurance is good. Staff understand the processes and most use them very well. The lesson observation programme is firmly established and makes a good contribution to raising the standards of teaching and learning. Self-assessment is good. It is comprehensive and largely accurate. A few curriculum areas neither identify all their weaknesses nor adequately develop their action plans. Information about learners is accurate, timely and accessible. It is well used by most managers to set targets and monitor progress.
31. Staff are well qualified, motivated and supported. Their performance at individual and team levels is rigorously analysed. Staff development is apposite and purposeful. New teachers and those undergoing training are well looked after. Resources are satisfactory and some more recent developments are good. The college is imaginative, flexible and prudent in its pursuit of entrepreneurial activity. It has fostered outstanding partnerships with local schools, other colleges, employers and statutory authorities; it has revised its curriculum to respond directly to the needs of the local community; it has established a secondary site to house engineering and new construction provision; it has invested significantly in ILT, although this is not yet fully exploited by enough teachers. Its vision for future developments is clear and realistic.
32. The environment is safe and healthy. The college meets its statutory requirements under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002, and the Children Act 2004. Young learners and vulnerable adults are adequately protected. Reasonable measures have been taken to ensure physical access for all. The college monitors equality of opportunity well and has developed a number of initiatives to promote diversity. The promotion of diversity through the curriculum is less well developed.
33. The college is financially secure and resources are used efficiently. The college offers good value for money.

## Curriculum area inspections

Health and social care and early years

Good: grade 2

### Context

34. There are 138 learners on full-time courses and 85 on part-time courses. Full-time courses in early years and care are offered at levels 1 to 3 and in social care there are courses for the national vocational qualification (NVQ), level 2 to 4, including the registered managers' award. Part-time courses are in counselling, level 1 to 3, with NVQ courses in early years at level 2 and 3. Short courses include those for first aid, dementia and safe handling of medicines. Work-based learning includes foundation apprenticeships and apprenticeships, some 25 at the time of the inspection, together with over 700 learners following NVQs in the workplace and learners on the employer training pilot scheme.

### *Strengths*

- high success and pass rates on full-time courses
- very effective development of learners' skills
- good range of courses, meeting learners' and employers' needs
- highly effective support for learners
- good leadership and management of provision

### *Areas for improvement*

- poor retention on NVQ courses
- insufficient challenge to poor behaviour in a minority of lessons

### Achievements and standards

35. Success and pass rates are high on level 2 care and early years care courses, for the certificate in childcare and education and on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) health and social care, intermediate. They are also good for the level 2 NVQ for early years. For all these courses, the three year trend is above national averages. At level 3, success and pass rates are good on full-time courses in care and early years care.
36. Retention on NVQ courses is poor, and has declined over the last three years. In 2004/05, retention on the NVQ level 3 care and the early years care courses was 20 and 30 percentage points below national averages respectively.
37. Framework achievement for work-based learners has been poor. Learners in early years care are now making good progress towards the qualification and are on target to achieve their frameworks within a realistic timescale. There are currently no learners following frameworks in care.

38. Learners' portfolios show a good standard of work and are meticulously presented. Attendance is good. Employment and progression opportunities are good.

#### Quality of provision

39. Teaching and learning are satisfactory or better. Learners' skills are very effectively developed in lessons. They acquire a good range of transferable skills, with good collaboration and team work. Teachers make good links between theory and practice and use a well planned and imaginative range of activities in lessons to build and maintain learners' enthusiasm. Teachers and learners extensively and productively use ICT and the college's 'virtual learning environment'. Poor behaviour in a minority of lessons is insufficiently challenged by teachers.
40. Tracking of achievement is rigorous and assessment is good. Support for learners is highly effective, including a lively and relevant programme of additional activities, including charity work and additional work-related qualifications. Learners have good academic and pastoral support and teachers are particularly responsive to learners' needs.
41. Resources are good. Teachers have appropriate vocational qualifications and experience. New teachers have mentors, both subject specific and for teaching. Appraisal of teachers is thorough, with extensive staff development.

#### Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are good. There is a strong team ethos with good communication. Regular team meetings are productive. The management of work-related and work-based learning has significantly improved within the last six months and learners now make good progress. Links with employers are extensive and productive. A good range of courses meets their and learners' needs. The CoVE is well managed and has forged effective partnerships with employers. Much training is delivered in work placements.
43. Quality assurance systems are satisfactory. Procedures to further improve learning are developing and becoming effective, with some under-developed target setting. All staff are involved in the development of the self-assessment report. The report is accurate and inspectors agreed with the majority of key findings.
44. There is good promotion of equality and diversity. Activities are arranged in group tutorials and within the curriculum to respond to the requirements of the Children's Services Inspectorate standards.

## Information and communications technology

Satisfactory: grade 3

## Context

45. ICT courses for full-time learners allow progression from level 1 to level 4. The current courses include the BTEC introductory and first awards and the BTEC national diploma for IT practitioners. GCE AS level is available in computing and ICT as is the GCE A level in computing. Learners can progress to a foundation degree. The courses are taken by 140 learners, mostly aged 16-18. The college is withdrawing its provision at community IT centres where many adults have taken a variety of courses in IT. Courses at four centres are continuing, for around 2,000 learners.

*Strengths*

- good development of IT application skills
- effective curriculum support for learners
- wide range of courses for full-time learners enabling progression
- accurate and open self-assessment

*Areas for improvement*

- low success rates at level 2 for full-time learners
- insufficient engagement of learners in too many lessons
- underdeveloped external links
- insufficient monitoring of action plans to successful completion

## Achievements and standards

46. Overall success rates for full-time learners are mostly satisfactory and around the national averages. The GNVQ course success rate was low in 2004/05 although improved from previous years. Success rates for adult courses are mainly good. Learners develop good IT application skills in lessons, working quickly and productively, creating successful solutions to problems. Their written work is not always of the same good standard. Attendance is good and learners are punctual.

## Quality of provision

47. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Learners generally enjoy lessons. Lessons are usually well-planned and working relationships between teachers and learners are good. Good exercises are set for learners, although too much emphasis is placed on further work for the more able rather than challenging all learners. Checks on learning by teachers are too often insufficient and questions are not sufficiently directed to individuals. Some teachers talk too much without ensuring all learners are involved and sometimes learners become inattentive. Progress on integrating key skills into lessons is good.



48. Teachers monitor learners' progress well and give extra support. Support workers provide effective help for learners. Initial assessment is used effectively to identify learners' literacy and numeracy skills. However, too many level 3 learners decline the support offered. Learners find the reviews of their progress with teachers helpful. Targets set are not always sufficiently clear and teachers have not always reviewed targets previously set in the changeover to new individual learning plans. Contact with parents is good.
49. Resources to support teaching are satisfactory. Ample computers are provided, although not all software is available throughout the college. Occasionally computers are slow. Learners can obtain handouts, assignments and much support material from the college's 'virtual learning environment'. Accommodation is good but some chairs are not adjustable for safe working.
50. Full-time learners benefit from a wide range of courses offered and opportunities for progression are good. External links are underdeveloped. Teachers do not have recent industrial experience, contact with employers is insufficient and there are few opportunities for vocational learners to gain insight into current practices.
51. Assessment of learners' work is satisfactory. Internal verification is thorough. Feedback on assignments varies in detail. Some feedback does not provide learners with sufficient information on how to improve, but much is helpful.

#### Leadership and management

52. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff work together well. Courses and documentation are well organised. The absence monitoring system works well and retention is improved. Attendance is good. Regular course and team meetings take place. However, actions arising are not reviewed at the next meeting. Many action plans are not monitored sufficiently to ensure that the actions are successful. Targets are limited to retention and achievement and progress overall is not sufficiently reviewed. Staff have good opportunities for staff development. The self-assessment process involves all staff and the report is honest and accurate.
53. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory, but there is too little use of equality of opportunity and diversity themes in teaching.

## Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Good: grade 2

## Context

54. Courses are offered in hairdressing and in beauty and holistic therapies. There are 221 full-time and 200 part-time learners. Some 60% of full-time learners and 14% of part-time learners are aged 16-18. Only 4% of all learners are male. Full-time courses are available in hairdressing, levels 1 and 2, and in beauty therapy, levels 2 and 3. Complementary therapy at level 3 is also offered. Part-time courses include a range of holistic therapies, theatrical and media make-up and salon hygiene. There are 50 foundation apprentices. Fifty-five local school pupils, aged 14-16, undertake level 1 hairdressing.

*Strengths*

- high success rates on beauty therapy courses
- good development of practical skills
- highly skilled and enthusiastic teachers
- good curriculum and pastoral support for all learners
- good and embedded quality assurance, leading to improvement

*Areas for improvement*

- poor retention and declining success rates in hairdressing
- insufficient opportunities for development and assessment in hairdressing

## Achievements and standards

55. Success rates on beauty therapy courses are high and often well above national averages. At level 2, for example, pass rates are consistently high, falling no lower than 97% over the last three years on the diploma in beauty therapy. Level 3 performance is equally good. Success on holistic courses is often good. In 2004/05, 84% of learners in beauty therapy achieved 3 key skills. In contrast, there is poor retention and declining success rates in hairdressing. For example, retention on level 1 hairdressing courses has declined in 2004/05 and is now just below the national average. Retention and success rates on level 2 hairdressing courses are low.
56. Work-based learning successes of apprenticeship framework are still low, but have increased from 37% in 2004 to 57% in 2005. School pupils benefit considerably from their experience of working in the adult environment of the college. They develop increased confidence and good communication skills. Nearly 15% progress to level 2 qualifications.

57. Overall, most learners make at least satisfactory progress and their development of practical skills is good. For all learners, written work in portfolios is good and assignments using ILT are of a high standard. Attendance is good.

### Quality of provision

58. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers are highly skilled and enthusiastic. They motivate their learners well with their good occupational skills. Teachers provide good individual support in practical lessons and link practice and theory particularly well in beauty therapy lessons. In the best lessons, teachers allow time for learners to evaluate the work they have done, including the efficacy of treatments in beauty therapy, and for sharing their thoughts with other learners. Good use of information learning technologies supports learning effectively. Key skills are successfully embedded in the vocational area. Learners benefit from an extensive programme of additional studies and they attend well.
59. In less effective lessons, there is insufficient use of oral questioning and learners are not stretched enough. In hairdressing, some practical lessons do not reflect a realistic working environment and learners do not experience commercial pressures. There are too few clients for practical assessments in hairdressing. Learners are hampered in their progression and some activities are not specifically directed towards their qualification.
60. Curriculum and pastoral support for learners is good. Tutorials for full-time learners are well managed. Additional learning needs are identified through rigorous initial assessment screening. Sixty-one per cent of learners in hairdressing and 25% in beauty therapy are receiving additional support. There is some late assessment and unit completion on level 2 hairdressing courses.
61. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. In some salons there is insufficient storage for equipment and for learners' and clients' personal belongings. Two beauty salons are small. Learners work in cramped conditions and groups are split to accommodate the lack of couches.

### Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are good. Teamwork and sharing of good practice across the curriculum area are good. Quality assurance is rigorous and most actions for improvement from the last inspection have been successfully implemented. The self-assessment report is accurate. Training needs identified through teaching observations and staff appraisals have been successfully addressed. The co-ordination and delivery of work-based learning have improved greatly. Promotion of equality and diversity is good.

## Visual and performing arts and media

Satisfactory: grade 3

## Context

63. A wide range of courses primarily recruit learners aged 16-18, constituting some 80% of all learners. There are 587 full-time learners in this area, 80% of whom are on level 3 courses. Courses are offered from level 1 to level 4 and the college also provides higher education courses. Different study pathways are offered, for example, in music technology and music practice, dance, acting and music theatre. In art and media there are options across a range of disciplines. The level 2 course is a national open college network (NOCN) course specifically designed to integrate art and media. All courses recruit well.

*Strengths*

- good range of provision
- good standard of professional expertise amongst staff
- good and well used resources in music, art and media
- good standards of work in music, art, media and dance

*Areas for improvement*

- wide variation in success rates across the area
- inappropriate strategies for improving the quality of provision
- insufficiently challenging teaching in some lessons

## Achievements and standards

64. Overall success rates are at the national average and are satisfactory. However, there is a wide variation across the area, with insufficiently clear plans to improve lower performance. In the diploma in foundation studies in art, success rates are well above the national average and have been at 100% for the past three years. They have consistently improved on the national diploma in media studies, to around the national average. In contrast, they are declining in some courses and are well below national averages, as in GCE AS fine art and AS media and the national diploma music techniques.
65. Some courses, such as the national diploma in photography and fine art, have declining retention rates and for the first diploma in performing arts, retention is well below the national average.
66. Standards of learners' work are good in art, media, music and dance. Learners present individual and striking work and show good development of playing and performing skills. In art, learners create their own very personal responses to the set tasks, working in a variety of media. The NOCN level 1 and 2 courses, with good pass and retention rates, are taken as additional studies by music students, enhancing their overall experience.

67. There are good systems in place for monitoring attendance and punctuality. Attendance, at 87% for 2004/05, is good.

### Quality of provision

68. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In good lessons teachers set tasks that encourage learners to develop new skills and try out new ideas and techniques. They provide activities appropriate to the different levels of learners. Key skills are well integrated into full-time provision for learners aged 16-18 and are planned for in schemes of work.
69. In poorer lessons learners are not sufficiently challenged. They are not required to reach appropriate standards of professional practice and the level of activity in lessons is too leisurely. In rehearsals, learners were not adequately prepared to undertake their roles competently, and technical students were not well prepared to support the production.
70. Assessment and the monitoring of progress are good. Learners are given clear and appropriate feedback and realistic advice on how to improve their work. Learners are set appropriate targets for improvement. There are good opportunities for learners to progress from levels 1 to 4 within the college, with a good range of courses available.
71. Resources for art, media and music are very good. There are plenty of practice rooms and well equipped and spacious studios. Learners benefit from the use of specialist resources such as the TV studio. Learners' work is affected by ongoing problems with the use of computers in art and media. Teachers are well qualified and many have professional expertise, which considerably enriches the learners' experience.

### Leadership and management

72. Management of the area is satisfactory, but leadership is weak. There is a lack of drive to achieve improvement. The self-assessment report for 2004/05 evaluates the area well, although it overstates the standard of learners' work in the performing arts, and does not have clear action plans for improvement. There is insufficient attention to improving teaching and learning in the self-assessment report. It identifies problems with retention and achievement but does not suggest any strategies to improve the quality of the courses. There is insufficient promotion of equality and diversity in teaching.

## Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

73. The college offers part-time courses in literacy, numeracy and ESOL and one full-time ESOL programme for asylum seekers. Skills for life programmes are run for 17 external organisations with a total of 245 enrolments. There are currently 416 enrolments on college-based skills for life programmes. Fifty-nine percent of the learners are female. In addition, 310 learners receive in-class and curriculum support for literacy and numeracy. Over 80% of the skills for life learners are aged over 19. All full-time and substantial numbers of part-time learners are assessed for literacy and numeracy and support is offered where appropriate.

### *Strengths*

- high retention in skills for life and key skills
- good support for learners
- responsive outreach provision
- effective initial assessment to identify learners' needs

### *Areas for improvement*

- some unsuitable accommodation
- inconsistent use of individual learning plans
- underdeveloped use of data to measure improvements
- insufficient qualified teachers of numeracy and ESOL

### Achievements and standards

74. Learners' achievements are good. There are high retention rates for all courses and pass rates are good on many. Pass rates on adult literacy level 1 are substantially above the national average. Key skills results have recently improved and are at or above the national average. More learners are being entered for the skills for life qualifications at all levels. Learners' standards of work are good. They gain in confidence and acquire valuable new skills. Learners are punctual and attendance is good.

### Quality of provision

75. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory. They are good in the outreach provision, and largely satisfactory in the college-based lessons. Teachers prepare and plan their lessons well. In the best lessons, teaching methods take account of learners' individual needs and preferred ways of learning, with targets set and progress tracked. In the weaker lessons the outcomes are poorly defined, tasks fail to stimulate the learners and individual learning plans are not used consistently to support teaching and learning. They do not

contain specific short term targets and learners do not use them to track their own progress.

76. Key skills are well taught and managed. Assignments are integrated into the learners' main programme. Learners appreciate their relevance.
77. Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Some of the open plan accommodation used is crowded and noisy and hinders learning. This has been recognised in the self-assessment report but little has been done about it to date. Teachers are adequately qualified. They are well qualified in literacy but there are none, as yet, with recent skills for life qualifications in numeracy or ESOL.
78. Learners are well supported. All full-time and substantive part-time learners receive an effective initial assessment and support is offered immediately if needed. Learning support assistants provide effective, consistent support for learners in class. Specialist literacy, numeracy and dyslexia teachers provide good individual support which increases learners' confidence and performance. Small group and one-to-one learning support by teachers is good.

#### Leadership and management

79. Leadership and management of the curriculum area is satisfactory. The outreach and learning support provision is well managed. The extensive outreach provision responds well to local and community needs with programmes held for family literacy and a range of business and community organisations. The overall ESOL programme lacks coherence and a plan for its development.
80. The self-assessment report correctly identifies key strengths and areas for improvement, but follow up action for improvement cannot always be traced. Equality of opportunity and diversity are effectively embraced within the area, but insufficient opportunities are taken to reinforce their promotion in teaching.

Business

Good: Grade 2

Context

81. There are some 500 enrolments each by learners aged 16-18 and adults. The college offers a wide range of full-time courses in administration and secretarial skills, including those for personal assistants, executive assistants, legal secretaries, NVQ administration and European business skills. Full-time business and professional courses include the first diploma in business, GCE A level and applied A level in business studies, the advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) in business, GCE AS accounting and GCE AS and A level law. Part-time provision includes foundation, intermediate and technician level courses in accounting and certificate and diploma courses for professional marketing qualifications. Under the increased flexibility programme, 14-16 year old learners attend administration classes.

*Strengths*

- high pass rates on most courses
- high retention on AVCE business and secretarial courses
- high standard of learners' work
- good support for learners

*Areas for improvement*

- poor retention on some accounting and GCE A level business courses
- poor pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate in business

Achievements and standards

82. Learners' achievements are good. There are high pass rates on most courses, some of which have been above the national average for three years. However, the pass rate on GNVQ intermediate has been significantly below the national average over the same period. Retention rates are high on AVCE business and secretarial courses, but significantly low on some accounting and on GCE A level business courses.

83. Learners' work is of a high standard. On business administration courses learners demonstrate high levels of practical skill development. On advanced business courses, learners exhibit good skills of analysis and reach well reasoned conclusions. They articulate their ideas confidently and well. Learners' attendance is good and they are punctual to lessons.

Quality of provision

84. Teaching is satisfactory and sometimes better. The majority of lessons are well planned, with clear learning outcomes. In the better lessons teachers provide



challenge and use a range of activities to motivate learners and enable them to develop and demonstrate their learning. However, in a minority of lessons teachers plan for too little variety, make inadequate use of effective questioning and monitor learning poorly. Some teachers use ILT effectively to support learning, but in some lessons opportunities are missed to use available resources imaginatively.

85. Assessment and verification are carried out effectively. Teachers give clear and constructive feedback on assignments.
86. Support for learners is good. They value the tutorial programme. Individual tutorials have a clear focus on learner performance, with effective joint problem solving and target setting. Learners receive good additional support where necessary. Much additional support is given on an informal basis outside lessons.
87. Resources are used effectively. Teachers have appropriate qualifications and experience and most have had, or are undergoing, professional training. Teaching accommodation is generally adequate. There has been significant investment in facilities to support ILT.

#### Leadership and management

88. Leadership and management are good. Curriculum managers give a clear priority to learners' experiences and success. Course teams work together well in the interest of learners. Communication within the area is good. Self-assessment is largely accurate. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the report. Some course reviews and improvement action plans lack rigour and are not used to best effect to drive up standards of teaching and learning. Staff receive appropriate and relevant training on ILT. Equality of opportunity is insufficiently promoted in teaching.

## 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	Expected End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts-Transfer	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts-Transfer	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
GNVQs and precursors	2002-03	10	60%	60%	0%	4	50%	48%	2%
	2003-04	10	40%	65%	-25%	2	50%	53%	-3%
	2004-05	11	64%	65%	-1%	0	n/a	53%	n/a
NVQs	2002-03	64	39%	56%	-17%	353	40%	57%	-17%
	2003-04	50	54%	61%	-7%	116	60%	62%	-2%
	2004-05	69	77%	61%	16%	97	60%	62%	-2%
Other	2002-03	588	46%	56%	-10%	945	72%	55%	17%
	2003-04	487	69%	60%	9%	566	69%	59%	10%
	2004-05	737	66%	60%	6%	423	62%	59%	3%

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	Expected End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts-Transfer	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts-Transfer	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
GCSEs	2002-03	147	61%	57%	4%	76	71%	55%	16%
	2003-04	146	62%	61%	1%	112	70%	59%	11%
	2004-05	163	69%	61%	8%	109	62%	59%	3%
GNVQs and precursors	2002-03	74	59%	59%	0%	4	25%	53%	-28%
	2003-04	61	57%	63%	-6%	4	0%	56%	-56%
	2004-05	87	56%	63%	-7%	4	50%	56%	-6%
NVQs	2002-03	115	27%	42%	-15%	188	55%	49%	6%
	2003-04	29	48%	52%	-4%	159	73%	53%	20%
	2004-05	105	44%	52%	-8%	735	43%	53%	-10%
Other	2002-03	608	68%	50%	18%	770	56%	48%	8%
	2003-04	393	71%	54%	17%	407	59%	52%	7%
	2004-05	440	63%	54%	9%	508	59%	52%	7%

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	Expected End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts-Transfer	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts-Transfer	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
A and AS level	2002-03	902	63%	66%	-3%	230	76%	53%	23%
	2003-04	879	62%	70%	-8%	198	63%	54%	9%
	2004-05	691	68%	70%	-2%	197	76%	54%	22%
GNVQs and precursors	2002-03	329	58%	50%	8%	105	59%	45%	14%
	2003-04	141	66%	52%	14%	10	70%	43%	27%
	2004-05	130	63%	52%	11%	9	56%	43%	13%
NVQs	2002-03	11	64%	51%	13%	173	47%	45%	2%
	2003-04	1	100%	53%	47%	87	59%	47%	12%
	2004-05	7	29%	53%	-24%	165	47%	47%	0%
Other	2002-03	240	70%	55%	15%	454	68%	54%	14%
	2003-04	362	57%	56%	1%	345	64%	56%	8%
	2004-05	397	63%	56%	7%	313	64%	56%	8%

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2003/4 to 2004/05

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVO rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	39	15%	30%	38%	43%
	Advanced	12	17%	32%	33%	46%
2004/05	Apprenticeship	58	31%	40%	40%	51%
	Advanced	8	0%	38%	50%	52%

\* 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	26	12%	n/a	23%	n/a
	Advanced	15	7%	n/a	27%	n/a
2004/05	Apprenticeship	48	23%	n/a	27%	n/a
	Advanced	10	0%	n/a	20%	n/a

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

Outcomes for Employer Training Pilots and National Employer Training Programmes managed by the college 2003/04 to 2005/06.

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Still in learning
2003/04	609	1**	516**
2004/05	241	72**	144**
2005/06	112	261**	369**

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

\*\* Cumulative numbers, representing the total by the given year