Hartlepool College of Further Education

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ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE

Inspection report

Contents

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Basic information about the college

Name of college: Hartlepool College of Further Education

Type of college: General Further Education College

Principal: David Waddington

Address of college: Stockton Street, Hartlepool, TS24 7NT

Telephone number: 01429 295111

Fax number: 01429 292999

Chair of governors: Councillor Mr Ray Waller

Unique reference number: 130567

Name of reporting inspector: Garth Clucas, ALI

Dates of inspection: 16 to 20 January 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Hartlepool College is a medium sized general further education college. The college is the major provider of post-16 education in the unitary authority of Hartlepool. The authority also has a sixth-form college and an 11-18 Catholic school. Cleveland College of Art and Design has a centre in Hartlepool. The college is based on a single site.

2. The college serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. Hartlepool unitary authority is ranked 14th out of 354 authorities in England for the highest levels of deprivation. In December 2005 the proportion of unemployed was 4.1% in Hartlepool compared with 3% in the North East and 2.4% nationally. In 2004 the proportion of school leavers gaining five or more GCSEs at A*-C in Hartlepool was 48.6%, below the national average for England of 53.7%. The 2001 census recorded 39.2% of the Hartlepool population aged 16-74 as having no qualifications compared with a national figure of 29.1%.

3. In 2004/5 the college enrolled a total of 9,463 students of whom 7,895 (83%) were aged 19 or over and 58% were male. Of the 2,079 full-time students, 1,053 (51%) were aged 16-18. The majority of learners are from the local area. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is very small and comparable to the proportion of these groups in the local population of 1.2%.

4. The college offers programmes in all subject sector areas with the exception of agriculture, horticulture and animal care. In 2004/5 the highest enrolments were in health, public services and care, preparation for life and work, and ICT. There were 375 learners aged 14-16 on an increased flexibility programme and 382 New Deal clients. There were 276 work-based learners, the majority in construction and engineering, including 66 on E2E programmes, and a further 184 employer training pilot learners.

5. A new divisional operational structure was introduced in 2004/05 and a new principal was appointed from August 2005. The college has a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in technical design engineering. A second CoVE in building services has been approved and the college is working in collaboration with a neighbouring college. A third regional CoVE has been approved in health and care, led by the Strategic Health Authority. The college's mission is defined as "enterprise and innovation in the pursuit of academic and vocational excellence for all learners".

Scope of the inspection

6.   In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment 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

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	Good: Grade 2

Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision   Good: Grade 2

7.   Learners' achievements are good. The college's programmes are effective in developing learners' skills and in raising their aspirations. The standard of learners' work is good. Overall college success rates have steadily improved and are good for adults at levels 2 and 3 and satisfactory for 16-18 year olds. Work-related provision is particularly good, and the framework completion by work-based learners is satisfactory.

8.   Teaching and learning are good. Staff have good working relations with learners and make effective use of ILT to enhance learning. Most systems to monitor learners' progress work well. Improvements have been made in the provision of additional learning support, but its overall impact needs more systematic evaluation. The delivery and achievement of key skills is an area for improvement recognised by the college.

9.   The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. The college has developed a wide range of courses including work with partner schools, community partners and provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Engagement with employers is outstanding.

10.   Learners receive good guidance and support. Initial assessment and tutorial support is effective. Learners' views are actively sought and acted upon to bring about improvements to courses and to other operational aspects of the college. The provision of specialist equipment to support learning is good.

11.   Leadership and management are good. The college has a clear strategic direction and the recent restructuring of the college into divisions has been well managed. Procedures for quality assurance are thorough and effective in identifying areas for improvement. Accommodation is good and some specialist resources are outstanding. The Skills for Life strategy is underdeveloped. Some aspects of governance require improvement. There is insufficient promotion of equality and diversity. Overall the college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve   Good: Grade 2

12.   The college demonstrates good capacity to improve its provision. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous. The self assessment process is well established and the report for 2004/05 provides accurate judgements on most aspects of the college's work. The college's teaching observation scheme is comprehensive. Development planning is realistic and there is sufficient resource and expertise within the college to secure further improvement. The

new divisional structure has been successfully implemented and improvements have been seen in adult success rates. Similar improvements have yet to be realised in the success rates for 16-18 year olds and greater consistency is needed in target setting at divisional level.

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

13.   The college has made good progress in addressing areas for improvement identified at the last inspection in 2001. Overall success rates have improved and a good standard of teaching and learning has been maintained. Considerable improvements have been made to the accuracy, effectiveness and use of the college's management information systems. Links with employers involved in work-based learning have improved. Significant improvement has been made to the quality of general and specialist accommodation. However, since the last inspection there has been insufficient promotion of equality and diversity and the college has been slow to respond to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- good management of change
- good accommodation with some outstanding specialist resources
- effective initiatives and partnerships to widen participation in learning
- good success rates for adults at levels 2 and 3
- good teaching and learning
- outstanding employer engagement
- good guidance and support for learners

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- success rates for 16-18 year olds at level 3
- approaches to the achievement of key skills
- further development of the Skills for Life strategy
- arrangements to evaluate the performance of the governing body
- promotion of equality and diversity

Main findings

Achievements and standards   Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 16 to 18   *Satisfactory: Grade 3*

14. During the three year period 2002/03 to 2004/05, success rates for adults have risen above national averages for courses at levels 2 and 3. The success rate at level 1 has significantly improved during this period, but is below the national average. Success rates on short courses have been consistently above national averages.

15. Retention rates have improved for adults at all levels. Pass rates have remained generally at or above the national average at all levels. NVQ success rates are above national averages at level 1 and significantly so at levels 2 and 3 and on GCSE programmes.

16. For learners aged 16-18, success rates have remained at the national average at level 1 and risen to slightly above the national average at level 2. The success rate at level 3 has fluctuated, but in 2004/05 was below the national average. Success rates in key skills are poor.

17. Retention rates for 16-18 year olds have remained near to national averages at levels 1 and 2 but have remained below national averages at level 3. Pass rates have been at the national averages. The college-devised scheme shows positive value added in most GCE A level subjects. Performance on some long vocational courses at level 3 is below national averages, with the exception of construction, where success rates are above national averages. For 14-16 year-olds on college vocational programmes, progression to further study at the college is good.

18. In work-based learning there is a high standard of work and good completion of planned learning on the college's Employer Training Programme. The proportion of E2E learners who complete their programmes and progress to other training or work has recently improved and is now good. There has also been recent improvement in the framework completion rate by work-based learners which is now satisfactory. However, too few work based learners complete their framework within the timescales set for them. The proportion of Job Centre Plus clients who complete their learning programme is good and progression to employment is satisfactory.

19. The standard of learners' work is good. Appropriate attention is paid to health and safety. Learners are well motivated and enthusiastic about their studies. Average attendance in 2004/05 was satisfactory overall at 84%. Internal

progression within the college and progression by full-time students to further study or employment is good. Most of the areas for improvement were accurately identified in the college's self-assessment report.

Quality of provision   Good: Grade 2

20.   Teaching and learning are good. The self-assessment report accurately identified the strengths and areas for improvement. Managers have a clear focus on monitoring and continuing to improve teaching. A feature of recent staff training has been to ensure teachers meet the needs of different learners and this is evident in the range of methods used in classes. Many teachers are skilful at building good relationships with more challenging learners to keep them focused on their work in lessons. In a minority of poorer lessons, teachers deliver their planned lesson without sufficient regard to whether learning is taking place.

21.   Resources to support leaning are good. Learning materials are generally well chosen to engage learner interest. Information learning technology is used effectively to make lessons more interesting and to help learners with their assignments.

22.   The monitoring of learners' progress is effective. Learners are set targets against which their progress is regularly monitored and reports for younger learners are shared with parents. There is inconsistent practice in the progress tracking on some part-time courses and the college is reviewing this.

23.   The college has made substantial improvement this year in providing for learners who need additional support. Training is provided for staff who give extra support to learners in lessons but some staff need further help to carry out their role effectively. The effectiveness of additional learning support is not sufficiently evaluated at whole college level.

24.   The college identified weaknesses in the provision of key skills in its self-assessment report. Action plans are in place to address this issue but learners are still not making sufficient progress on some courses.

25.   The college offers a good range of programmes and progression opportunities from pre-entry to higher education including a large work-based learning provision. The college is responsive to external requirements and caters well for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. Programmes with schools include provision for excluded pupils and others with behavioural problems. The college's approach to inclusiveness is good. The college has yet to effectively address gender imbalances on some programmes.

26.   The college's engagement with employers is outstanding. The college has very effective employer partnership agreements with 120 local companies. Many employers are actively involved in all aspects of the college, providing work

placements, serving on college committees and accessing training on both government funded and full cost programmes. This was identified by the college as a key strength. The college works well with external partners including the local authority, who view the college as integral to the area's regeneration. It has very good working relationships with the local Connexions service.

27.   The college offers a wide range of enrichment activities which include sporting, cultural, social, and community activities. In addition, a number of overseas and residential trips take place yearly, often involving learners with little or no experience of travel beyond the area in which they live.

28.   The college has delivered a basic skills programme on-line and the Employer Training Pilot includes some skills for life qualifications. This area is underdeveloped and the college has plans to develop a Skills for Life programme throughout the local employer network.

29.   Guidance and support for learners are good. Staff attend school careers events, often conducting initial interviews in schools, and first time visitors to the college are met by trained information and careers advisors who provide an effective signposting service.

30.   Learners undertake initial assessment as part of new admissions procedures. The early diagnosis of additional support needs has been successful in ensuring that support is arranged in a more timely way. Induction and the provision of specialist equipment to support learning are good. Support for literacy is well covered, although it is of variable quality. There is insufficient provision of numeracy support and this is an area for development recognised by the college.

31.   The college's tutorial system is effective in supporting the progress of learners. Tutor managers in each division monitor the quality of the process well. There are very good counselling arrangements at the college.

Leadership and management   Good: Grade 2

32.   Leadership and management are good. Since the inspection in 2001, the college has addressed areas for improvement and improved its success rates for adults at levels 2 and 3. The principal and senior managers set a clear strategic direction.

33.   Quality assurance procedures are rigorous. Revised procedures for course review and evaluation have improved the quality of the self-assessment report in 2004/05. The report is self-critical and identifies key issues but some sections are characterised by description rather than analysis. The teaching observation scheme is comprehensive and staff development extensive. Management information data is now accurate and staff are more confident in

its use and analysis. Target setting is also improving but not yet consistent across all divisions.

34. Leadership and management of the curriculum are good and the recent restructure has been effective. The principal and senior managers provide inspirational leadership and have begun to create effective teams. The support given by senior mangers to the newly created divisions has facilitated the sharing of good practice. The meeting structure, staff briefings and shared staff rooms support good communications across the college.

35. The majority of full-time teachers hold an appropriate teaching qualification. Procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff are good. The Skills for Life strategy is underdeveloped. There are insufficient numbers of teachers qualified to level 4 in literacy and numeracy.

36. The recent refurbishment of the college has significantly improved the quality of the buildings. Resources are generally good and outstanding in technical and design engineering and health and care. There are good procedures for the management of health and safety.

37. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are knowledgeable about the key issues facing the college and the local community. Procedures for the recruitment and training of new governors are underdeveloped, as are arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of the governing body. These issues were not identified in the self-assessment report. Attendance at board meetings is low. Governors make significant contributions to the college's performance outside of board meetings.

38. There has been very good progress since the last inspection to meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002. Learners with mobility problems can now access all parts of the college. The college implements satisfactory procedures to meet the requirements of section 175 of the 2002 Education Act (safeguarding children). All staff have received training and hold enhanced criminal records bureau checks.

39. The college has been slow to implement Race Relations (Amendment) 2000 legislation and the governors are not aware of their duty to monitor the college's action plan. Staff development to promote racial equality has also been slow. College plans have an insufficient focus on issues of race and gender.

40. Financial management and control are good both at college and governing board level. The college provides good value for money.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2001/02 to 2003/04, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	01/02	388	60	53	7	817	52	50	3
	02/03	341	64	56	8	2,057	38	55	-18
	03/04	343	59	60	-1	1,612	42	59	-17
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	54	67	54	13	1	100	41	
	02/03	17	100	60	40	0		47	
	03/04	54	67	65	2	0		52	
NVQs	01/02	127	52	52	0	4	0	49	
	02/03	36	53	56	-3	22	64	57	7
	03/04	32	63	61	2	13	69	62	7
Other	01/02	207	63	53	10	812	53	50	3
	02/03	288	64	56	7	2,035	37	55	-18
	03/04	257	58	60	-2	1,599	42	59	-17

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream Level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2001/02 to 2003/04, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	01/02	856	62	50	11	678	52	48	4
	02/03	731	51	52	-1	856	53	49	4
	03/04	597	54	56	-2	471	52	53	-1
GCSEs	01/02	166	54	54	0	118	62	53	9
	02/03	194	53	57	-4	113	60	55	5
	03/04	143	61	61	0	79	54	59	-4
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	153	55	56	-1	3	100	50	
	02/03	45	49	59	-10	0		53	
	03/04	0		63		0		57	
NVQs	01/02	242	71	43	28	123	59	45	14
	02/03	156	55	42	13	278	65	49	16
	03/04	102	54	52	2	101	54	53	1
Other	01/02	295	61	49	12	434	47	48	-2
	02/03	336	48	50	-3	465	43	48	-5
	03/04	352	52	54	-2	291	51	52	-2

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2001/02 to 2003/04, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	01/02	899	63	60	4	900	48	50	-2
	02/03	905	58	62	-4	848	50	51	-2
	03/04	835	62	64	-2	794	59	53	5
A\A2 levels	01/02	159	82	80	2	32	59	57	2
	02/03	146	81	82	-1	27	48	63	-15
	03/04	135	79	84	-5	35	54	66	-11
AS levels	01/02	308	60	60	0	59	46	47	-1
	02/03	291	63	61	1	72	46	48	-2
	03/04	335	70	63	7	54	46	50	-3
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	282	53	47	6	58	50	43	7
	02/03	347	44	50	-6	39	46	45	1
	03/04	160	48	52	-4	1	100	43	
NVQs	01/02	85	64	49	15	166	55	41	14
	02-03	40	63	51	12	279	50	45	6
	03/04	30	50	54	-4	351	63	47	16
Other	01/02	65	77	54	23	585	46	54	-8
	02/03	81	62	55	6	431	50	54	-3
	03/04	175	49	56	-7	353	57	56	2

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college in 2003/04

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	172	27	33	49	50
	Advanced	179	26	32	43	50

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

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

b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	147	11	16	28	27
	Advanced	180	22	19	37	33

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

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

1. Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college 2003/04 to 2004/05

Year	Number of starts in year	Achieved Objectives *	Progression **	Still in learning
2003/04	46	17	11	14
2004/05	66	39	15	28

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

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

2. Outcomes for Employer Training Pilots and National Employer Training Programmes managed by the college in 2004/05.

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Still in learning
2004/05	184	159	0

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

3. Outcomes on Jobcentre Plus programmes managed by the college 2002/03 to 2004/05

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Gained employment	Still in learning
2002/03	375	211	46	0
2003/04	457	285	101	0
2004/05	382	256	93	24

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