



Telford College of Arts and Technology



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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130796

Contents

Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	5
<hr/>	
Overall judgement	6
Main findings	8

Basic information about the college

Name of college: Telford College of Arts and Technology

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Doug Boynton

Address of college: Haybridge Road, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire TF1 2NP

Telephone number: 01952 642200

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Chair of governors: Mike Lowe

Unique reference number: 130796

Name of lead inspector: William Baidoe-Ansah, ALI

Dates of inspection: 15-19 May 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Telford College is a large general further education college. The college mission is 'To meet the needs and aspirations of individuals, communities and employers for high quality vocational and adult learning'. The college operates from a single campus in Wellington in the new town of Telford, but has a substantial amount of provision delivered in the community and on employers' premises. In 2004/05, the college completed the development of its campus 'master plan'. The final phase of investment involved the construction of a three storey teaching and administration building, a sports building and super dome which houses an undercover artificial turf playing surface. The college is a Centre of Vocational Excellence in manufacturing engineering.
2. Telford is a low wage economy and attainment at age 16, whilst improving, is still relatively modest with 49% A*-C GCSE passes in 2005. In 2004/05, 34% of the college's level 3 students had four or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. In Telford and Wrekin, 34% of the population live in areas which fall within the fifth most educationally deprived areas at national level. Telford has double the national average of jobs in manufacturing.
3. In 2004/05, the college had 16,800 learners on courses leading to externally accredited qualifications, of whom 1,815 were aged 16-18. The college managed 133 work-based learners on apprenticeship programmes. During 2003/05, it was the largest provider in the country of the Employer Training Pilot with over 4,300 learners engaged from a variety of employers. The majority of the college curriculum is vocationally based.
4. Some 80% of learners aged 16-18 and 53% of the adult learners are from Telford. Many are from wards ranked in the top 10% in terms of multiple deprivation. Nearly 86% of the students are white with Pakistani (2.8%) and Indian (2.4%) being the main minority ethnic groups. There are slightly more female learners overall but 54% of 16-18 learners are male.

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.

Summary of grades awarded

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

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

6. Achievements and standards are outstanding. Overall success rates have improved significantly since the last inspection and are well above national averages for most courses. Retention rates have improved substantially and are excellent. Attendance rates are good. Learners' progression to further education, employment and higher education is good. The achievement of the full apprenticeship framework by work-based learners is satisfactory.
7. The quality of provision is outstanding. Most teaching, training and learning is good. Course and lesson planning are very thorough. Effective use is made of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons. Teachers monitor students' progress closely. However, some action planning within progress reviews is too imprecise. Assessment practices are good and initial assessment is thorough. Students' work is accurately and fairly assessed.
8. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The college successfully widens the participation of adults, and raises the aspirations of younger people. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is extensive. The college has wide ranging links with employers, the local community and secondary schools and is highly responsive to their needs. In most curriculum areas, courses are enhanced by an excellent range of enrichment activities.
9. Learners receive outstanding guidance and support. Pre-course advice and guidance is thorough. Induction is well planned and informative. The tutorial system is strong and effective. Teachers provide a high level of informal support outside of lessons.
10. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal and senior managers provide strong strategic leadership and direction for the college. The excellent links forged with employers contribute to improving the skills base of the local economy. A clear focus on improvement permeates the college. Financial management is excellent and has supported the college in providing an outstanding learning environment in many curriculum areas. Value for money is outstanding.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

11. The college demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve. Leadership and management are highly effective. Governors, staff and management share a clear focus on improvement and commitment to the mission of the college. Success rates have risen significantly, driven by a strong improvement in retention rates. The new management structure has been very effective in defining roles and responsibilities. Staff are highly motivated. The self-assessment process is thorough and a wide range of evidence is used to make

judgements. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. However, it gives insufficient attention to strengths and areas for improvement relating to learning within the classroom. Quality assurance arrangements are robust. However, some targets and actions identified through the self-assessment process are insufficiently precise. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment and quality assurance process. They are well qualified and effectively supported by very good staff development. Other resources are of high quality and appropriately deployed.

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

12. The college has made outstanding progress since the last inspection and has made consistent and continuous improvements in achievements and standards. The successful implementation of retention strategies has led to substantial improvements on most courses. There has been sustained improvement in attendance. The college has completed a significant building programme resulting in outstanding accommodation. The college has effectively addressed the key areas for improvement in the last inspection report. The process for course reviews has been standardised and these are used effectively to identify appropriate targets for improvement. Arrangements for internal verification are now thorough. Additional learning support for part-time learners has improved and is now good. The quality assurance of work-based learning is also good.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- strong strategic leadership and direction of the college
- very high overall success rates
- particularly good improvement in retention rates
- very successful approaches which enable learners to succeed
- outstanding guidance and support for students
- outstanding responsiveness to employers' training needs
- effective widening participation and raising of aspirations
- clear focus on improvement that permeates the college
- very good management of provision
- particularly effective promotion of the wider interests of young learners.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- aspects of the internal observation system
- the precision of action plans and targets
- self-assessment for governors.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Outstanding: grade 1

13. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that achievements and standards are outstanding. Since the last inspection, there has been a continuous and sustained improvement in overall success rates, which are now very high. Overall success rates have risen from 59% in 2002/03 to 75% in 2004/05 on all long courses, making the college one of the highest achieving providers for its size. Overall success rates on all short courses for all learners are excellent at 96%. Long courses at level 3 for learners aged 16-18 have improved at a slower rate over the past three years and are similar to national averages. Success rates in curriculum areas, such as visual and performing arts, languages, literature and culture, and engineering have shown exceptional improvement of over 25% in the past two years and are well above national benchmarks. Success rates on the employer training pilots are also significantly above national averages.
14. Retention rates, which were a weakness at the last inspection, have improved significantly over the last three years; particularly for adult courses at levels 2 and 3 and for courses for 16-18 learners at level 2. The substantial increase in retention rates represents the major factor driving the improvement in success rates across the college. Success rates are similar for learners regardless of gender or ethnicity. Similarly, students in receipt of additional learning support achieve as well as other students. Achievement for learners aged 14-16 at the college is above the national average.
15. Attendance rates have improved year on year and are above average for similar colleges. Progression is generally good. Trends for 16-18 year old learners progressing within college and gaining employment have been increasing whilst progression to higher education (HE) has declined slightly. More than half of the learners on the Access to HE programme progress to this destination. Progression rates for students aged 14-16 are very good with 77% of the 2003/2005 cohort continuing from the increased flexibility programme to college courses. Since the last inspection, full framework success rates have improved, and are close to national averages. Success on advanced apprenticeships is slightly above national averages but slightly below on apprenticeships.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

16. The quality of provision is outstanding. Most teaching, training and learning are good. Some teaching, for example in art and sport, is outstanding. All teachers have a well developed understanding of the components of a good lesson. The quality of course and lesson planning is consistently high and often exemplary. Consequently, lessons provide a good variety of activity for students. Information and learning technology is used well to maintain students' interest. In a small number of lessons on full-time courses, teachers set individual or

group tasks which do not challenge learners sufficiently. The pace of the lesson then slows, with some learners consequently losing concentration. Independent learning is well developed and students can access materials for specific lessons, from home if necessary, via the Intranet. The quality of key skills provision for full-time students varies considerably between curriculum areas. There are extensive arrangements for developing the quality of teaching and learning. These include appointing teachers for their vocational expertise, very strong support for new teachers, good staff development and frequent sharing of good practice. The current lesson observation system aims to cover every teacher each year and the current profile suggests an extremely high proportion of lessons are good or better. It has some features which could be improved, for example, the long notice given, and the insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of learning.

17. The college has developed extremely effective arrangements for enabling students to succeed. Students' progress is closely and frequently monitored. For full-time and some part-time students, progress reviews take place during twice termly learner management weeks. These provide crucial opportunities for students to catch up on outstanding work, enjoy curriculum enrichment activities and take additional qualifications. Curriculum support workers ensure that attendance is tightly monitored. Such arrangements have had a very positive impact in improving retention. Action planning within progress reviews, however, is not precise enough to help apprentices make specific improvements in their approach or skills.
18. Assessment practices are good. Initial assessment, particularly on full-time courses and work-based learning, is thorough and ensures that learning support needs are identified and responded to early. Part-time students complete a self-screening questionnaire which can be followed up with more focused tests. Extensive analysis of preferred learning styles and the characteristics of individual students, compiled by many teachers, influences the planning of learning. Students' work is assessed fairly and accurately and the requirements of awarding bodies are well met. Students have a good understanding of what they need to do to achieve particular grades. Feedback from teachers is mostly informative and constructive. Assessment on national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and internal verification have been improved substantially since the last inspection and are now very thorough. Parents, carers and employers are kept well informed about learners' progress.
19. The college makes an outstanding effort to meet the needs and interests of a wide range of learners. Between 2003 and 2005, enrolments of full-time 16-18 year olds increased by 20%, those for basic skills by 95% and employer-based learners by 130%. The broad range of provision is well matched to local needs and provides clear progression routes. Decisions about which courses are offered are precisely informed by local labour market intelligence. The college's responsiveness to employers' training needs is outstanding. In close collaboration with employers, programmes are tailored to the needs of some 8,000 employer-based learners, including those who work continental shifts or

- at weekends. These learners are very appreciative of their newly acquired skills, knowledge and qualifications. Many of them take up additional information technology (IT) courses in 1 of the 11 learning centres the college has located on company premises.
20. The college has developed good links with local secondary schools to broaden curriculum choices at Key Stage 4. Some 500 school students currently access college provision. This includes 30 learners on young apprenticeships, 90 learners from special schools and over 300 studying as part of the 'Increased Flexibility Programme' (IFP). The quality of courses for 14-16 year olds is good, the students achieve well and subsequent progression from school to the college is very high. The college is capable of making a larger contribution, but is constrained by some slow progress at area level with collaborative aspects of the age 14-19 agenda.
 21. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. It continues to successfully widen participation, particularly by adults, and is raising younger people's aspirations. Provision to address basic skills needs in the local community is extensive. Enrolments from three wards in Telford, which rank among the 10% most deprived wards in the country, have significantly increased. There is extensive provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, both in the college and in the community, and these learners are well cared for. Learning support is good and lesson planning takes account of individual learning needs. Progression rates within the college are good and the college has initiated successful links with primary schools to help raise the educational aspirations of pupils in Year 6.
 22. Curriculum enrichment activities are excellent. On many courses, students participate in a wide range of high quality activities away from the classroom which extend their experience and subject understanding. Extensive opportunities are available for all students and staff to use the outstanding sports facilities. Other 'cross-college' enrichment activities are more limited, although groups of students do organise charitable initiatives and take Duke of Edinburgh or Millennium Volunteer awards.
 23. Guidance and support for students are outstanding. Comprehensive arrangements with local secondary schools enable school students to sample college provision. Applicants receive thorough advice and guidance on the courses that interest them. Induction is well planned, informative and helps ensure students settle quickly at the college. High quality learning support, particularly in literacy and numeracy, is widely available on campus, in the community and in employer workplaces. Take-up of learning support is high. Examples of exceptional individual support have included the provision of voice-activated laptops and home visits and the main learning centre contains suitable aids for partially sighted students and students with hearing impairments. Vulnerable students are carefully identified and allocated mentors who arrange appropriate support sessions. The main student services are located together and provide a welcoming and relaxed environment. A support

team of counsellors, youth worker, health worker, mentors and diversity worker, supplemented by Connexions advisers, provides extensive guidance to students on a wide range of issues.

24. A strong and effective tutorial system provides good support on both an individual and group basis. The tutorial schedule ensures full-time students receive timely advice on academic, personal and social issues. A programme of tutorial extension activities ensures that careers advice and progression guidance is comprehensive and varied. Students also have good access to a range of additional workshops covering lifestyle issues such as relationship problems, sexual health, drug and alcohol issues, young parenting and improving self-esteem. These sessions are facilitated by student volunteers and overseen by the college health coordinator. Learners' wider interests, including their health, enjoyment and preparedness for working life, are very well promoted. Students identified the high level of informal support provided outside of lessons by teachers as the most significant single factor contributing to their success.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

25. Leadership and management are outstanding. There is strong strategic leadership which promotes the direction of the college. The lucid college mission is communicated widely and effectively. The principal is determined and energetic in promoting the interests of the college. He is well supported by the senior management team. The recent management restructure has been very effective. It has increased accountability and improved performance across the college.
26. A clear focus on improvement permeates the college. Ready access to accurate performance data enables staff to set appropriate targets and monitor progress. Self-assessment processes are thorough. The outcomes directly inform quality improvement planning. Some targets and action plans are not sufficiently precise. Staff development priorities support the drive for continual improvement. College staff are well qualified and experienced.
27. The promotion of equal opportunities is very effective. The Equality and Diversity Policy is reinforced by posters displayed extensively on campus. The achievements of different groups of learners are monitored. The proportion of learners of minority ethnic heritage is twice that of the local population. The college has made good progress in its response to the amended Race Relations Act.
28. The health and safety policy provides a comprehensive framework to safeguard all learners. The college is fully compliant with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) requirements. There are good arrangements to protect children and vulnerable adults.

29. The standard of accommodation is excellent. The ambitious property strategy has been successfully implemented. New buildings now provide outstanding learning environments in many curriculum areas. Most specialist resources are of very high quality. Financial management is excellent and has supported the college's significant investments. Value for money is outstanding.

30. The college provides services for employers that are highly valued. Its activities help to improve the skills base of the local economy. There are positive links with partner schools and the local community. Governors are very supportive of the college. However, there is no formal systematic process for assessing their effectiveness.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	02/03	1038	73	56	17	4387	66	55	11
	03/04	1142	73	60	13	4701	72	59	13
	04/05	1552	87			4314	76		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	38	76	60	16	0			
	03/04	38	79	65	14	3	0	52	-52
	04/05	40	68			1	100		
NVQs	02/03	28	61	56	5	573	35	57	-22
	03/04	43	74	61	13	749	56	62	-6
	04/05	36	92			315	86		
Other	02/03	972	74	56	18	3814	70	55	15
	03/04	1061	73	60	13	3949	75	59	16
	04/05	1446	87			3998	73		

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	02/03	709	51	52	-1	3751	56	49	7
	03/04	586	63	56	7	4317	67	53	14
	04/05	1011	74			5876	74		
GCSEs	02/03	129	49	57	-8	82	72	55	17
	03/04	35	86	61	25	58	76	59	17
	04/05	64	84			51	61		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	152	69	59	10	9	78	53	25
	03/04	96	69	63	6	3	0	57	-57
	04/05	111	80			24	58		
NVQs	02/03	165	32	42	-10	2298	54	49	5
	03/04	166	56	52	4	2665	69	53	16
	04/05	262	79			3860	83		
Other	02/03	263	54	50	4	1362	59	48	11
	03/04	289	62	54	8	1591	62	52	10
	04/05	574	69			1941	57		

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	02/03	525	57	62	-5	2075	49	51	-2
	03/04	526	63	64	-1	1761	53	53	0
	04/05	576	65			1430	70		
A/A2 Levels	02/03	5	60	82	-22	4	100	63	37
	03/04	4	100	84	16	0		66	
	04/05	7	100			0			
AS Levels	02/03	106	43	61	-18	37	59	48	11
	03/04	29	93	63	30	10	80	50	30
	04/05	33	97			19	100		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	270	57	50	7	65	48	45	3
	03/04	211	46	52	-6	52	31	43	-12
	04/05	201	45			19	42		
NVQs	02/03	6	67	51	16	444	40	45	-5
	03/04	27	67	54	13	650	39	47	-8
	04/05	31	61			443	68		
Other	02/03	138	67	55	12	1525	51	54	-3
	03/04	255	72	56	16	1049	62	56	6
	04/05	304	74			932	70		

Table 4

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

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	80	38	32	59	47
	Advanced	31	26	31	52	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	47	26	39	41	50
	Advanced	40	37	34	50	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	51	14	16	22	24
	Advanced	30	27	19	33	30
2004/05	Apprenticeship	52	19	22	31	29
	Advanced	45	19	21	30	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'

1. Outcomes for Employer Training Pilots and National Employer Training Programmes managed by the college 2002 to 2005.

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Still in learning
2002/03	945	731	0
2003/04	2887	2199	0
2004/05	893	660	73

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