



Solihull College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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130481

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Solihull College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Brenda Sheils
Address of college:	Blossomfield Road, Solihull, B91 1SB
Telephone number:	0121 678 7000
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Chair of governors:	Rod Turner
Unique reference number:	130481
Name of reporting inspector:	Pauline Hawkesford, ALI
Dates of inspection:	22-26 May 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Solihull College is a large general further education college which operates from two sites, one in the north and one in the south of the area, as well as a range of community venues. North Solihull, with 45% GCSE passes at grades A*-C and 5.5% unemployment is significantly different from South Solihull, with 72% GCSE passes at grades A*-C and 1.5% unemployment. National averages are 57.1% and 5.2% respectively. The college serves the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull (SMBC) and surrounding areas, recruiting many learners from the City of Birmingham. It has two Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE), in retail and, in partnership with two Birmingham colleges, for adult care. It is a contractor for SMBC's adult and community learning provision and works in partnership with local secondary schools in two 14-19 age group collegiate partnerships serving the north and south of the borough. Its mission is 'Solihull College aims to provide high quality learning opportunities for all'.
2. The population of Solihull is around 200,000. Around 5% of the population are from minority ethnic backgrounds, as are 30% of the population of Birmingham. Black and minority ethnic groups make up 16% of learners overall and 26% of full-time learners. In 2004/05, 31,534 LSC funded students were on roll at the college, of whom around 90% were part-time and 88% were aged 19 and over. Some 56% of full-time learners were aged 16-18. Around 40% of learners are from areas of high deprivation.
3. College provision is organised into four faculties and two directorates. It offers courses in all 15 of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) sector/subject areas. Around two thirds of learners are on courses from entry level to level 2. Work-based learning is a growing area of the college's provision.

Scope of the inspection

4. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management

- specialist provision in: health, public services and care; information and communication technology; leisure, travel and tourism; languages, literature and culture; preparation for life and work; and business administration and law. Also inspected in the adult learning inspectorate single remit inspection were Jobcentre Plus (JCP); Entry to Employment (E2E); Learndirect; adult and community learning (ACL); and the employer training programme (ETP).

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: grade 1
Achievements and standards	Satisfactory: grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2

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

Curriculum areas

Health, public services and care	Good: grade 2
Information and communication technology	Good: grade 2
Leisure, travel and tourism	Good: grade 2
Languages, literature and culture	Satisfactory: grade 3
Preparation for life and work	Outstanding: grade 1
Business, administration and law	Good: grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

5. This is a good college. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Success rates have risen, many significantly, at all levels and are either around the national average or above. Learners attend well and successfully achieve appropriate skills for employment and progression to further courses.
6. Teaching and learning are good. An appropriate and well supported focus on teaching and learning is central to improved provision. Teaching is very well planned and includes a good variety of activities. Learner participation is good. Overall, learners' work is accurately and helpfully assessed. Learning targets are not always sufficiently explicit. Punctuality of learners is improving, but is still unsatisfactory in some areas of the college.
7. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners and to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. A wide range of courses and strong links with schools, the community and employers effectively promote inclusion. Successful initiatives have increased participation from groups traditionally under-represented in education. The college has a culture of respect for individuals and diversity is celebrated. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of learners are good.
8. Guidance and support for learners are good. Tutorial provision is strong and helps learners progress. Arrangements to support vulnerable learners are very good. Support for progression to further study or employment is good. The take up of numeracy support by learners is low.
9. Leadership and management are good and some aspects are outstanding. The principal, senior managers and governors set a clearly focused strategic direction which is well understood by staff. Self-assessment is rigorous. Quality improvement arrangements, such as performance monitoring and lesson observations, are particularly effective. The college is very committed to equality of opportunity and inclusion. Resources are satisfactory and improving.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

10. The college demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve. Its quality improvement arrangements are comprehensive and have been highly successful in securing improvement in rates of retention and achievement. Robust strategies are now in place to monitor learners' progress closely. The college's lesson observations are accurate in identifying both good practice and areas for development. Measures to target staff development and support are very successful in helping the college improve its teaching and learning.

11. The college's self-assessment process is comprehensive and thorough. The college accurately identifies its strengths and areas for development, and takes well considered and effective actions to improve. The self-assessment report produced prior to inspection was largely accurate in its identification of strengths and areas for improvement, some of which have already been addressed.

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

12. The college has made good progress in addressing areas for improvement noted at the last inspection in 2001. The college's observation process is thorough. Teaching and learning has improved significantly. Since 2003, most curriculum areas have improved considerably.
13. Other aspects for improvement noted at the previous inspection, such as quality improvement arrangements and performance monitoring, are now strengths. Quality improvement measures have been very effective. Improvements in attendance, retention and learner achievement are significant. Overall success rates in all areas show an improving trend. The college is well advanced in implementing its strategy to improve accommodation and specialist resources for vocational learning and in creating a new campus which offers wider access for disadvantaged learners.
14. The achievement of key skills is still too low. The college has carefully considered curriculum areas which have underperformed, and in some cases significantly adjusted provision to reflect changing needs and other provision in the area.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- particularly effective strategic leadership
- very wide range of collaborative and productive partnerships
- highly effective quality improvement arrangements
- outstanding provision of preparation for life and work courses
- effective learner support
- very good promotion of educational and social inclusion
- rigorous and accurate lesson observation process
- good sharing of innovative teaching and learning strategies.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- short term target setting for learners
- achievement rates for key skills
- numeracy support for those identified as needing it
- learner punctuality
- further improvement of success rates.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

15. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Some aspects are good. The self-assessment process has identified the areas of concern, and has led to improvements. Overall success, pass and retention rates have risen, many of them significantly. Level 2 success rates for 16-18 year olds are now well above the national average. Success rates for adults at levels 1 to 3 and for level 1 and level 3 16-18 year old learners are around national averages. Achievement of key skills is very low, especially application of number at levels 2 and 3 and information technology at level 2.
16. Overall success rates for both males and females are around or above national averages except for males aged 19 or over at level 1, where success is slightly below the national rate. Success rates for learners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are generally around or slightly above national averages. Pakistani learners aged 16-18, who make up the largest minority ethnic group at the college, achieve success rates higher than the national average. Adult and community learning achievements are satisfactory.
17. NVQ timely success rates for apprentices are high and timely framework success rates are around the national average. Progression rates for E2E learners are currently above national averages. Success rates on ETP, JCP, ACL and Learndirect provision are satisfactory.
18. Standards of work are generally satisfactory. There are plentiful examples of very good work which reach professional standards. Learners achieve good skills of working independently. On many courses, personal confidence, enjoyment of learning and employment skills are very well developed. Work produced in ACL is of a high standard. Learners make satisfactory progress, overall. In some areas of work, their progress is good.
19. Attendance is good, at 86% against a national average of around 80%. It is consistently at least 5% above the college's own target. Health and safety issues are highlighted well to learners, and they adopt appropriate safe working practices.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

Learndirect

Satisfactory: grade 3

20. Teaching and learning are good on most courses and satisfactory in Learndirect and work-based learning provision. The college judges that most teaching and learning are of good quality and inspectors agreed with this. Most learning is planned effectively. Teachers prepare classes carefully, taking note of individual learners' needs to make learning relevant and effective. As the college has recognised, in a few lessons, planning and the range of strategies used to meet the needs of all learners are insufficient. In these lessons, more able learners are not always sufficiently challenged and their learning extended. In most lessons, individuals and groups are effectively supported. Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to engage and sustain learners' interest. Teaching and learning are particularly good for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities where learners' skills and confidence are developed effectively. Learning resources are used well to motivate learners. Learning materials are very good and widely available through the college intranet. Information and learning technologies are good. Many teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards to make lessons lively and interesting. The college recognises that not all teachers take full advantage of this resource and it remains an area for further development.
21. Learning objectives are made clear and progress in lessons is checked carefully. Learners are well motivated and enjoy their lessons. Most participate effectively and enter discussions and tasks enthusiastically. A minority of lessons are disrupted by learners arriving late. Learning is made relevant to real life and professional circumstances. Workplace skills are well developed. Teachers often provide useful and well produced materials to support learning. Learners' ability to study and progress independently is encouraged effectively. Learners' successes are celebrated and teaching is supportive and encouraging. Assessment is helpful in identifying where learners need to improve and how they can achieve better results. Most work is marked fully and learners receive helpful verbal feedback.
22. The college's response to the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The curriculum is exceptionally well planned and offers a wide choice of courses and progression from entry level to advanced courses. Flexible and highly responsive provision meets local needs. Careful and collaborative planning of the new college in North Solihull ensures that learners can benefit from increased vocational provision. The college has been very successful in increasing participation from under-represented groups including young people from North Solihull schools, disengaged and disaffected young people and unemployed adults. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is

higher than the local community profile at 16%. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good opportunities to study and progress to further courses.

23. Employer engagement is highly effective. Partnerships, such as those with Solihull Community Housing, have resulted in valuable training and employment opportunities. Links with schools are strong and improving. The college has approximately 250 learners aged 14-16 who are studying a wide range of vocational courses. Two commonly timetabled days allow learners to study at the college in conjunction with their school courses. A well developed collegiate arrangement allows rational collaboration and planning of post-sixteen developments. A wide range of enrichment activities is available to learners who take an active part in designing and publicising community and charity events.
24. Guidance and support for learners are good. Clear information and impartial guidance and advice ensure that learners are placed on the most appropriate course. Well designed induction helps learners settle into their studies quickly. Arrangements to assess the literacy and numeracy support needs of full-time learners are good. Support is provided promptly, particularly for learners on courses at level 2 and below. Learning centres provide effective individual and small group support. Too few learners take advantage of the numeracy support offered.
25. Tutorial provision is good and highly valued by learners. Short term learning targets set with learners are often insufficiently precise. Effective arrangements are in place to monitor and improve attendance and identify learners at risk of leaving their course early. Strategies to improve punctuality are not wholly successful. Reporting of learners' progress to parents, carers and employers is good.
26. Learners benefit from the good range of support services including health and welfare, accommodation, finance, counselling and support with childcare. Support for learners with a learning difficulty and/or disabilities is particularly good. Specialist resources are provided promptly. The safety of learners, especially those aged 14-16, receives careful attention. Healthy lifestyles are actively promoted. Strong support services contribute to the economic wellbeing of learners. Learners' views are actively sought and acted upon. Careers advice and guidance are good. Learners progressing to higher education, further study or employment receive a high level of support.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

27. Leadership and management are good and some aspects are outstanding. Strategic leadership by the principal, senior managers and governors is particularly effective and sharply focused on meeting the needs of learners, the local community and employers. Staff are committed to the aim of raising standards.

28. The college has extended its engagement with the community and employers. It has very productive collaborative links with many community groups and employers, the local authority and other organisations, such as the probation service and sector skills councils for transport and for sports. These links help the college to develop new learning opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged learners. The college works responsively with its partners to support the social and economic development of the area, for example, through its involvement in CoVEs. Revised management structures are helping to increase work-based learning, including workforce development.
29. Since the last inspection, the college has improved the quality of its provision significantly. Revised college structures, good communications and an open and inclusive approach to staff by managers, have helped to achieve this. The college has focused successfully on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The formal lesson observation process is comprehensive and identifies accurately strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers benefit from the feedback and training. Good practice is identified through the observation of teaching and learning and very well disseminated. Joint observations carried out by inspectors and college managers resulted in closely aligned findings and confirmed the accuracy of the college observation system. The college and inspectors identified significant improvements in teaching and learning both in the curriculum areas inspected and most other areas. Strong performance management and clear targets are very effective in improving attendance and success rates.
30. Curriculum management is good in most areas and outstanding in preparation for life and work. Standards of teaching and learning have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Staff are generally well qualified and have extensive, well planned opportunities to develop new skills, in for example the use of information and learning technology (ILT). The lesson observation system leads to well targeted staff development and support. The college recognises that further development is required in target setting for learners, and ensuring high levels of punctuality.
31. Commitment to equality of opportunity and educational and social inclusion is very strong. The college meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. It very successfully creates a strong ethos of mutual respect among learners and secures good outcomes for young people as identified in the Children's Act. Equality of opportunity and learners' achievements are monitored very closely. Very positive action through school and community links attracts learners from minority ethnic groups.
32. Resources are satisfactory. The college is currently undertaking substantial investment in accommodation and resources, including the creation of a new campus in North Solihull.

33. Governance is effective. Governors are very aware of their duties and maintain a strong oversight of the college's performance and finances. Financial management is good, and managers and governors monitor finances closely through detailed monthly reports. The college provides good value for money.
34. Self-assessment is comprehensive and rigorous. Staff contribute fully to self-assessment reports. The college identified the strengths and most significant areas for improvement noted by inspectors.

Curriculum area inspections

Health, public services and care

Good: grade 2

Context

35. Full-time courses in care, early years and public services are offered at levels 1 to 4, and part-time courses include NVQs at levels 2 to 4 along with a range of short courses. Four hundred learners are enrolled on full-time courses, of whom 365 are aged 16-18. Part-time courses have 1,465 learners, most of whom are adult. There are 63 apprentices and 40 14-16 year olds from local schools. Most care and early years learners are female, and most public services learners are male. The area is a partner with two other colleges in a CoVE, the Adult Care Training Partnership.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates in many courses
- good teaching and learning
- wide range of learning resources
- well planned and used progression routes
- successful measures to improve quality.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficient use of precise written feedback to help learners improve their work.

Achievements and standards

36. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high at all levels. For example, for the NVQ2 care, the success rate was 73% in 2005, well above the national average. Learners on the Learning Disabilities Award Framework (LDAF) achieved a 98% success rate in 2004/05, significantly above the national average of 72%. The proportion of high grades achieved in level 3 qualifications is significantly above national averages. Learners develop good vocational skills and work to a high standard. Attendance and punctuality are good in most lessons.

Quality of provision

37. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan well and learners make effective links between theory and practice. Learners are successfully encouraged to work independently. Teachers use a wide variety of approaches to stimulate and challenge learners. In a minority of lessons, learners have insufficient opportunity to respond to questions. A wide range of resources, including ILT, is used effectively in lessons. Vocational

purpose is very evident in the teaching environment. Learners' achievements are celebrated well.

38. Assessment is well planned and effectively quality assured. Teachers mark work promptly and provide helpful comments. Most learners have a clear idea of their progress and how to improve. Some feedback is too brief to be useful. Parents of younger learners are invited to parents' evenings and receive helpful progress reports.
39. The range of provision is good. Well used progression routes benefit learners across the full range of provision. Practical skills are enhanced by good access to relevant work placements. Enrichment opportunities are useful and learners participate well in a variety of activities. Many learners are involved in voluntary activities. Local employer needs are well met, especially through the CoVE partnership.
40. Support for learners is satisfactory. Regular tutorials focus on learners' personal and professional development and help them monitor their progress. Most learners receive diagnostic assessment for literacy and numeracy. Key skills are integrated effectively into vocational lessons in most courses. Enhanced criminal record bureau (CRB) checks during induction ensure that learners are able to work with children and vulnerable adults.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are good. Effective measures have improved quality and raised standards. Regular team meetings result in clear action points. Most teachers are qualified and vocationally experienced. Staff development opportunities include vocational updating and frequent development days to share best practice. Good working relationships promote a safe and inclusive environment for learners. Effective partnership arrangements are further supported by the CoVE. Self-assessment is an inclusive process and the self-assessment report is accurate in most respects.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

Good: grade 2

Context

42. The college offers a wide range of user and technical ICT courses from entry level to level 4. Part-time courses are offered on site and at other centres across the area including employers' premises. There are 173 full-time, 415 part-time, 525 Learndirect and 13 New Deal enrolments. Most learners are aged 19 and over.

STRENGTHS

- high retention on full-time courses
- good development of personal and vocational skills
- much good teaching
- wide variety of programmes meeting employer and community needs
- good learning support
- effective action to improve provision.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- poor quality of some learning resources
- insufficiently specific targets to help learners to improve
- insufficient vocational enhancement for full-time learners.

Achievements and standards

43. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Success rates have risen on most courses and are above national averages at level 3 and on European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and GNVQ foundation courses. Learners on several courses achieve grades above the levels predicted from previous results. Full-time retention rates are very high. They are low on some on part-time courses. Learners progress well to higher level courses.
44. Personal and vocational skills are developed well. Adults learn valuable technical skills on advanced professional qualifications. Full-time learners produce work of high standard. They learn tolerance and self-control and work well in teams.

Quality of provision

45. The quality of provision is good. Most teaching is good. Lessons are well structured. Teachers engage learners by using a good range of innovative activities. They use learning materials and technology effectively. In the best lessons, they set clear negotiated goals and check progress frequently. Learning targets are set for full-time learners but they are often insufficiently specific to be helpful. Teachers' written comments on some work are not detailed enough. The pace of a few lessons is too slow.

46. The range of provision is good. A wide variety of programmes meets employer and community needs well. Customised programmes help employees to learn at work. Community venues are conveniently sited. Learners have a good choice of ways to study. Learndirect provision is easily accessible. Full-time learners have insufficient vocational enrichment activity. Some projects focus on real case studies, but few opportunities exist to visit industry, hear relevant speakers or undertake work experience.
47. Learners receive good support. Teachers make time for individuals. Support for learners with disabilities is well planned and inclusive. Initial assessment is appropriate. Individual support for literacy and numeracy needs is planned and monitored carefully. Support is available for part-time learners but some are unaware of it.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management are good. A carefully planned strategy developed with local partners has shaped the provision to meet local needs. Reorganisation has created cohesive teams. Targeted staff development and use of the lesson observation process has improved teaching and learning. Learners' attendance, punctuality and progress have improved through effective action.
49. Staff are well qualified and benefit from frequent professional updating opportunities. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. In some community venues, computers do not permit access to functions learners need. Some learning materials are unsuitable. Noise in open plan areas sometimes disrupts learning.
50. The self-assessment process involves all staff and the report is accurate. Good attention is paid to health and safety, although some learners are not given a sufficient understanding of the risks of working with computers. The promotion of equality for learners from different backgrounds is good.

Leisure, travel and tourism

Good: grade 2

Context

51. The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time courses in sport, travel and tourism from level 1 to level 4. Courses include sport studies, sports development, sports massage, fitness, coaching, travel and tourism, and specialist sports routes in football, rugby and cricket. Sports courses have 310 full-time and 1,631 part-time learners, most of whom are adults. Courses in travel and tourism have 85 full-time and 38 part-time learners. Fewer than 10% are adults.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates at level 2 in 2004/05
- high pass rates on many courses
- good development of learners' practical skills
- wide range of teaching methods which meets the needs of individuals
- successful partnerships with organisations including industry
- good leadership and management.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- very low achievement of apprenticeship framework
- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities.

Achievements and standards

52. Achievement and standards are good. Many courses have high pass rates. In 2004/05, level 2 courses had high success rates. The standard of work is good with learners demonstrating good practical skills which prepare them well for employment and industry. Most learners successfully complete a wide range of additional industry related qualifications. Attendance rates are satisfactory. Achievement of the apprenticeship framework is very low. Retention on the national diploma in travel and tourism is low; however, in-year retention is high. and learners are making good progress.

Quality of provision

53. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Learning is made relevant and meets the differing needs of learners, partly through the use of a wide range of teaching methods. Most learners are sufficiently challenged and reach their potential. Assessment practices are good. Resources overall are good. Many learners access specialist facilities that enhance their learning. The use of ICT to promote learning is good.

54. Successful partnerships with sports organisations, the sector skills council and industry support the development of specialist sport routes and benefit the learner. Successful arrangements with, for example, international airlines, enhance learners' experience. Most learners attend educational visits as part of their enrichment and many have secured relevant part-time work through these partnerships. Curriculum provision offers learners a wide range of courses which meet their needs and those of the community.
55. Guidance and support arrangements are good. Initial advice and guidance is effective at placing learners on the correct course. Induction is good and includes a range of activities to introduce learners into the college and to their studies. Initial assessment and support for literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Learners' progress is reviewed regularly by teachers and recorded in both the individual learner plan and group profile file. Individual tutorial sessions successfully support learners.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are good. Direction is clear and managers are well aware of areas for improvement. Effective measures have been introduced to address weaknesses. Communication is good. Monitoring of targets is good with a clear focus on raising standards. The internal observation scheme is robust and effective. Staff receive good levels of support and are well informed. The promotion of equality and diversity is insufficient. The college has acknowledged this and action has already taken place to make improvements.

Languages, literature and culture

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

57. The college teaches a range of English and modern foreign languages (MFL) courses. English courses have 325 learners, many of them full-time and MFL has 1,105 part-time learners, mostly aged 19 or over, on the main campus, in their workplace or in the community.

STRENGTHS

- much good use of teaching and learning resources
- good partnerships to promote participation and learning
- effective measures to raise achievement and standards.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficient fluency displayed by learners in a few MFL lessons
- poor punctuality
- insufficient planning for individuals' learning needs in lessons.

Achievements and standards

58. Learners' achievements and standards are satisfactory overall. Success rates on many courses were around the national average in 2005. They have improved significantly in the college's further education provision. In English, between 2002/03 and 2004/05, the success rate rose from 62% to 78%. However, the performance of individual courses varies markedly. The pass rate grades A*-C in GCSE English is low although most learners make satisfactory progress. Pass rates on ACL modern foreign language accredited provision are low.
59. Most MFL learners achieve satisfactory levels of fluency. Some speak well, but a few attain poor levels of fluency. They speak haltingly, relying too much on dictionaries or notes and resort too readily to English. Most learners of English express themselves satisfactorily or better when speaking or writing.

Quality of provision

60. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory. Many teachers use resources well to enhance learning. Interactive whiteboards are used imaginatively to stimulate good discussion. Learners participate actively in these lessons. Teachers of MFL make good use of cue cards and audio and video recordings to help them conduct lessons in the taught language. In these lessons, most learners practise and develop their speaking effectively. Teachers of English make good use of poems and other resources. Some MFL teachers rely too heavily on grammar-based paper resources. Too many learners arrive

late for lessons. When they do, they delay or interrupt others' learning. Despite the existence of college procedures to discourage lateness, too few teachers implement them.

61. The college has developed an impressive range of partnerships which promote participation and learning. It has developed a business English course for university employees, and foreign language tuition for employees of a local vehicle manufacturer. A video, produced as part of a national project, features potential airline employees enjoying learning Spanish as part of their college course. Teachers have contributed materials to the website of a national body promoting language learning. It has developed a link with a French fashion college to enable learners to correspond with French learners.
62. Good individual support is offered to learners outside the classroom. However, teachers pay too little attention to individuals' learning needs in lessons, particularly those of the most able.

Leadership and management

63. Leadership and management are good. Curriculum managers use measures, such as the the analysis of data, effectively to improve achievement. Observations of teaching and learning are thorough and accurate, and include helpful suggestions for improvement. Internal observations show that the quality of teaching has improved significantly. Staff receive good staff development. Teachers understand and support improvement measures. Their morale is high and they are ambitious to secure further improvement.

Preparation for life and work

Outstanding: grade 1

Context

64. The college offers discrete courses in literacy, numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLNN), E2E, Prince's Trust and programmes for adults with learning differences. There are eight 14-16 year olds and 167 16-18 year olds on full-time programmes. The majority of the 1,972 adult learners are part-time. Courses are offered from pre-entry to level 2 on the main college sites and in over 50 community venues.

STRENGTHS

- very good achievement
- good progression
- excellent development of confidence and employability skills
- outstanding teaching which meets individual need
- flexible and responsive provision
- particularly productive external links to widen participation and raise aspirations
- very good support for learners and learning
- outstanding curriculum management.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- no significant areas for improvement.

Achievements and standards

65. Learners' achievements and standards are outstanding. In literacy and numeracy, success rates are consistently above national averages. ESOL success rates are high and improving. The majority of learners progress to higher levels of study. Learners on the Access to further education course have high success and progression rates. Progression rates for E2E learners are good and improving. Learners produce a very high standard of work in lessons. They gain significantly increased confidence and employability skills from attending courses. For example, learners on FLNN courses have moved onto mainstream courses and in a significant number of cases have become qualified as classroom assistants. Learners studying in the workplace have greatly increased their skills and assumed roles of greater responsibility.

Quality of provision

66. The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching is outstanding. Highly contextualised lessons take learners' individual needs into account and provide motivation and challenge. Learners are actively engaged in lively and relevant lessons. Staff provide a supportive learning environment through the use of well managed group and individual work. Teachers produce excellent resources

which effectively integrate personal and subject skills development. A particularly wide range of enrichment activities offers additional learning experiences.

67. Responsiveness to local needs is outstanding. Very flexible provision enables learners to move between courses appropriately. Learners appreciate attending classes in their own locality and also the offer of crèche provision. Learning in the workplace is promoted well and take up is high. Links with local businesses offer opportunities for employees to improve their skills.
68. Support for learners is outstanding. Learners with additional needs are given both discrete support and support embedded in their programmes. Very effective links are in place with external support agencies who respond well to requests for specialist services. Staff are highly responsive to learners' circumstances and develop useful strategies to overcome barriers to learning. Attendance is effectively managed.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management are outstanding. Communication is excellent across the area. Both full-time and part-time staff are fully included in decision making, suggestions for improvement and the sharing of best practice. A newly introduced college website for Skills for Life provides a vehicle to share ideas and resources. This is well used by staff and particularly valued by those who work in outreach centres. A very good programme of staff development is offered. Teaching and learning strategies are much improved. Clear direction is given to support a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Quality assurance procedures lead to action and clear and measurable improvements. The self-assessment report is accurate.

Business, administration and law

Good: grade 2

Context

70. The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time courses from levels 1 to 5. Full-time learners study GCE AS and A levels or vocational programmes in business studies and business administration. Part-time provision includes accountancy, marketing, specialist secretarial or personnel courses. There are 336 full-time learners, mostly aged 16-18, 992 part-time learners and 20 business administration apprentices. A high proportion of learners come from areas of economic and social deprivation.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- wide range of provision which meets local and community needs
- good support for learners
- good leadership and management which effectively promotes improvement.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low pass rates on many part-time professional courses and apprenticeships
- too few checks on learning in lessons
- insufficiently precise short term target setting with learners.

Achievement and standards

71. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high on most courses. In 2004/05, success rates were significantly above national averages in GNVQ foundation and intermediate business, GCE A-level business studies and in NVQ accounting. Success rates are low in legal secretarial, medical secretarial, and marketing courses and business apprenticeship frameworks. Vocational learners produce well researched and clearly presented assignments. They develop good skills for employment in their specialist areas. GCE A level learners analyse their work critically and present clear and reasoned arguments. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

72. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan and prepare their work carefully. Lessons are well managed and teachers expect and gain high standards of conduct and commitment from learners. Teachers have detailed knowledge of their learners' individual needs, and this is reflected in the use of a variety of active teaching and learning methods. Lessons are challenging and staff have high expectations of learners. The progress of learners is carefully monitored. Learners value the feedback which they receive and teachers write detailed, constructive advice on assignments.

However, in many lessons, teachers do not check individual understanding sufficiently. Many teachers are using new e-learning facilities with increased confidence and ability to support learning.

73. The range of provision is good and meets local and community needs well. Many learners successfully progress through different levels of programmes and move on to higher education or employment. Learners enjoy participating in a wide range of enrichment activities, and benefit from visits to industry and listening to specialist speakers.
74. Support for learners is good. Learners are given good academic and vocational advice and receive strong personal support. Individual needs are identified at the start of programmes. All learners have personal tutors who give helpful advice and direction. Tutors set short term targets but these are often not precise enough to help learners improve. Many teachers track learners' progress in regular team meetings and individual learners at risk are identified and helped.

Leadership and management

75. Leadership and management are good. Managers have a very clear focus on increasing learners' achievements and improving teaching and learning. These priorities are communicated effectively to all teachers. Morale is high, teachers have pride in their work and a strong commitment to quality assurance and improvement. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. Staff development is linked to appraisal and teachers are encouraged to update their vocational experience. Equality and diversity are effectively integrated into the curriculum.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002/03 to 2004/05, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts- Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	02-03	925	47	56	-9	7416	37	55	-18
	03-04	1252	52	60	-8	7487	50	59	-9
	04-05	1067	64	-	-	6291	58	-	-
GNVQs and Precursors	02-03	86	64	60	4	55	35	47	-12
	03-04	53	72	65	7	53	38	52	-14
	04-05	162	82	-	-	-	-	-	-
NVQ	02-03	122	50	56	-6	516	46	57	-11
	03-04	138	54	61	-7	218	47	62	-15
	04-05	44	69	-	-	168	52	-	-
Other	02-03	717	44	56	-12	6845	37	55	-18
	03-04	1061	51	60	-9	7216	51	59	-8
	04-05	861	62	-	-	6123	59	-	-

Data for 2004/05 from college sources

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream Level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002/03 to 2004/05, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts- Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	02-03	1696	48	52	-4	4,039	36	49	-13
	03-04	1459	59	56	3	5417	47	53	-6
	04-05	1503	67	-	-	5365	58	-	-
GCSEs	02-03	619	53	57	-4	231	52	55	-3
	03-04	449	76	61	15	211	64	59	5
	04-05	268	78	-	-	227	70	-	-
GNVQs and Precursors	02-03	109	70	59	11	22	55	53	2
	03-04	88	65	63	2	15	73	57	16
	04-05	75	79	-	-	-	-	-	-
NVQ	02-03	199	26	42	-16	747	34	49	-15
	03-04	114	49	52	-3	647	47	53	-6
	04-05	115	52	-	-	703	50	-	-
Other	02-03	769	47	50	-3	3039	36	48	-12
	03-04	808	51	54	-3	4544	47	52	-5
	04-05	1048	65	-	-	4430	59	-	-

Data for 2004/05 from college source

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002/03 to 2004/05, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts- Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	02-03	2270	50	62	-12	2525	49	51	-2
	03-04	1982	56	64	-8	2385	51	53	-2
	04-05	1574	62	-	-	2117	56	-	-
A/A2 levels	02-03	331	71	82	-11	218	61	63	-2
	03-04	340	74	84	-10	155	72	66	6
	04-05	271	82	-	-	110	77	-	-
AS Levels	02-03	1237	41	61	-20	354	43	48	-5
	03-04	952	51	63	-12	266	48	50	-2
	04-05	629	64	-	-	100	58	-	-
GNVQs and Precursors	02-03	456	63	50	+13	71	58	45	13
	03-04	151	51	52	-1	14	57	43	14
	04-05	75	63	-	-	18	67	-	-
NVQ	02-03	32	69	51	18	278	43	45	-2
	03-04	32	59	54	5	261	51	47	4
	04-05	34	71	-	-	305	55	-	-
Other	02-03	214	43	55	-12	1604	50	54	-4
	03-04	507	54	56	-2	1689	50	56	-6
	04-05	228	61	-	-	1575	56	-	-

Data for 2004/05 from college sources

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2003/04 to 2004/05.

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	129	17	32	44	47
	Advanced	24	4	31	33	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	104	18	38	59	50
	Advanced	27	7	34	19	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	125	10%	16%	19%	24%
	Advanced	23	4%	19%	22%	30%
2004/05	Apprenticeship	102	16% (28%)	21%	42%	29%
	Advanced	26	8%	21%	19%	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'

(x) College data from validated individual learning records for all learners completing their qualifications in 2004/05 either in a timely way or significantly ahead of time

Table 5

1. Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college 2003/04 to 2004/05 plus 2005/06 to date.

Year	Number of starts in year	Achieved Objectives *	Progression **	Still in learning
2003/04	52	39 (75%)	26(50%)	0
2004/05	54	41 (76%)	25 (43%)	0
2005/06	59	40 (ytd) 68%	33 (ytd) 56%	17

* 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

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

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Still in learning
2003/04	258	172	3
2004/05	273	112	112
2005/06	145	50	85

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