



Leeds College of Art and Design



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Inspection report

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Contents

Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4

Summary of grades awarded	5
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Overall judgement	6
Main findings	9

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Leeds College of Art and Design
Type of college:	Specialist art and design
Principal:	Edmund Wigan
Address of college:	Blenheim Walk Leeds LS2 9AQ
Telephone number:	0113 202 8000
Fax number:	0113 202 8001
Chair of governors:	Polly Browne
Unique reference number:	130547
Name of lead inspector:	Sandra Tweedie, HMI
Dates of inspection:	15 - 19 May 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Leeds College of Art and Design has played a central role in providing specialist education and training in art, design and crafts for more than 150 years and is one of four specialist art and design colleges in the further education (FE) sector. The college has two main centres in Leeds at Blenheim Walk and nearby at the original art college building in Vernon Street. The college provides specialist courses in art and design from level 1 to higher education (HE). Courses on offer include a wide range of art, design and craft subjects for diagnostic or specialist study. The college offers a range of A-level and AS-level courses in arts related subject areas, GCSE English and key skills qualifications. There are also taster activities for school pupils aged 14-16, who come from a large number of Leeds secondary schools to attend the applied GCSE art and design course at the college.
2. The majority of further education learners are 16-18 years old, studying full-time at level 3. The college attracts learners aged 16-18 from a wide geographical area. In 2005/06, the college recruited 606 full-time equivalent (FTE) learners aged 16-18. The number of adult learners declined to 282 FTE in 2005/06 from 439 FTE in 2004/05 due to changes in external funding priorities for this group. Leeds College of Art and Design has around 800 higher education learners. The minority ethnic population of the college is 10.5%, which is broadly in line with the local population. Some 65% of learners are female.
3. The college works in partnership with Leeds Federation of Colleges and Education Leeds to implement recommendations arising from the 2002 area wide inspection and the recent Strategic Area Review (StAR) for the Leeds area.
4. In its mission, the college states that it aims to provide a distinctive education in art, design and the crafts, enabling students to fulfil their creative ambitions and to progress to, and through successful careers.

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	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

6. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are well above average for learners at almost all levels. Low attendance and retention rates, noted at the last inspection, are now good. Pass rates are high. Learners evaluate their work and art and design practical skills are very well developed. Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) learners make significantly good progress. Key skills overall achievement rates are low. There is insufficient analysis of high grade achievement to ensure that all learners reach their potential.
7. Teaching and learning are good. The college thoroughly assesses learners' skills and abilities. The characteristics of lessons are identified clearly; occasionally, less effective aspects are not communicated directly enough. The college provides well managed and maintained resources that are used well to develop skills and knowledge of learners.
8. The colleges offers an outstanding range of specialist and diagnostic courses in art and design, with clear progression routes from level 1 to higher education. Highly effective partnerships with local schools, colleges and employers contribute to coherent curriculum planning. Progress has been made in developing key skills but not all students are aware of their value and vocational relevance.
9. Social and educational inclusion are good. The college has an inclusive and strong culture of equality of opportunity and is proactive in working with local agencies and community groups. 'Aim higher' work is effective. Adults without arts and design experience and skills progress from level 1 to HE. Learners receive good guidance and support and make good progress on their courses. They are prepared well for higher education or employment. Those with disabilities or specific learning needs are very well supported. Evaluation of the impact of support is informal at present.
10. Leadership and management are good. The college is well led and the principal communicates a clear educational vision for the college. Strategic planning is good with outstanding partnership working. Curriculum management is good. Managers have implemented strategies and improved retention and attendance successfully. Some aspects of quality improvement are underdeveloped. Governors make a significant contribution to the work of the college. Resources are deployed well and the college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

11. The college's capacity to improve further is good. Leaders have a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Success rates have improved and high pass rates have been maintained; retention rates are now good. Quality assurance arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning are robust and the judgements of the internal observers closely match the findings of the inspection. There is scope for more sharing of good practice following observations. Strategic planning is good, with investment in accommodation and very good studio resources. Relationships with external partners are productive. College managers have made skilful decisions; for example, in maintaining the breadth of curriculum offer and meeting local needs.
12. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate; inspectors agreed with most of the findings and judgements. However, key strengths of the college were understated and did not include good teaching and learning. Guidance and support, which are good, were accurately evaluated within the report.

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

13. The college has made good progress to promote improvement and consistency since the last inspection. It has addressed all of the weaknesses. Strategies to improve low retention and low attendance for 16-18 year olds have been successful. Success rates are well above average at most levels. The arrangements for the observation of lessons are good. At the previous inspection, teaching and learning were less effective in a minority of curriculum areas but they have improved overall and are now judged to be good.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- success rates above average for all learners at most levels
- high retention rates and much improved attendance
- good development of learners' critical and practical art and design skills
- good teaching and learning
- outstanding range of provision to meet individual needs
- good additional learning support
- strong leadership with a clear educational vision
- good strategic planning and outstanding partnership working
- successful quality improvement
- good curriculum management
- effective contribution and business expertise of governors
- strong culture for equality of opportunity and inclusion.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- improve 'high grade' achievement for some 16-18 year olds
- improve the sharing of good and better practice in teaching and learning
- promote the relevance of key skills more effectively and improve achievement further.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

14. The college's self-assessment report correctly identifies achievement and standards are good. The majority of full-time learners are 16-18 years old, studying at level 3. In 2005, the level 3 success rate was significantly above the national rate. At level 2, success rates for all learners improved significantly and were well above national rates. There are few enrolments at level 1 for 16-18 year olds; the success rate was close to the national rate. Adult success rates have improved markedly at all levels to well above national averages. At level 3, the improvement is significant and success rates are good. There are substantial enrolments of around 400 learners at levels 1 and 3.
15. At the last inspection, retention rates were low, particularly for 16-18 year olds. College policies on attendance, punctuality and discipline have been strengthened and implemented successfully. The attendance rate is now good at 84.5%, compared with 69% recorded during the last inspection. In 2004/05, level 3 retention rates improved to 84%. There are indications that retention rates have improved further in 2005/06 on the majority of full-time courses. Pass rates on all full-time long courses are high.
16. Pass rates at A level are high at 94%, and pass rates are good at AS level. However, the proportion of high grades at A level is low. There is insufficient analysis of achievement against prior attainment to ensure that learners reach their potential; and for national diploma courses, further analysis of high achievement is needed.
17. Achievements for key skills are low historically. Some learners are not sufficiently motivated and do not complete the portfolios. However, the test results in communication and ICT at level 2 are good. At level 3, test results are around 50%. In 2004/05, level 2 learners retaking GCSE English achieved well, with 65% achieving a grade A*-C.
18. Foundation diploma students are prepared well in critical analysis and thinking for their HE courses. They develop good research skills and critical journals contain pertinent reference to the work of contemporary and historical artists. On national diploma courses, practical and design skills are well developed in glass, graphics, photography and fashion. AVCE students make significantly good progress based on their former attainment. Their portfolios are particularly strong. They show good development of drawing from observation and a thorough grounding in visual language and the use of materials. Projects are imaginatively written to capture contemporary trends. A project set by a local employer resulted in a good experience of working on a large scale. Learners work safely in studios and workshops. National diploma fashion students work with confidence and show high standards of work in

garment construction. Graphic design students in photography make good progress, work purposefully and display good technical skills and critical evaluation for this stage in their course.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

19. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers provide useful and challenging activities; they also use their industrial experience effectively in the studio. They encourage learners to use sketch books well to reflect on and develop ideas. Learners are very well motivated and inspired to produce good work. Course programmes are well organised. The planning for teaching and learning is generally good. However, the evaluation section of the lesson plans is not always well completed. In a few lessons, learners were not involved enough in group discussion.
20. Through quality improvement measures, college lesson observers have been trained well and identify strengths and areas for development astutely. In 'paired' observations, the grades awarded and most judgements made by observers matched those of inspectors. Feedback to teachers is supportive although a few areas for development are not communicated directly enough.
21. Teachers assess learners' skills and abilities thoroughly. Assignment briefs are detailed, clear and interesting. Teachers provide constructive verbal and written feedback to learners on how to improve further in creative work. Projects are marked carefully. Learners participate well during assessment and provide good written critical reflection. Teachers facilitate individual and group critiques which are valued very highly by learners. Internal verification is satisfactory overall but the recorded documentation is not always used well.
22. Learning resources are well managed and used extensively. The college has good libraries and resources at both sites. A multi-media resource is well maintained. Technical media staff provides skilful assistance for particular projects offering extra teaching and learning sessions to help learners become familiar with industry software applications.
23. The range of specialist and diagnostic art and design courses is outstanding and effectively meets the needs of a diverse group of learners. The college makes a significant contribution to local priorities and has outstanding partnership work with schools, colleges, cultural institutions, employers and the local authority. Curriculum planning is coherent and meets local, regional and national priorities.
24. Provision for learners aged 14-16 is good. Pupils enjoy their work, gain ICT skills and develop good practical skills through imaginative project work; for example, by making very interesting three-dimensional leaf constructions in response to Andy Goldsworthy's sculpture. Full-time learners benefit from very good course related enrichment activities, such as visits, live projects and

visiting speakers. There are fewer opportunities for wider enrichment. Events are also organised by the student union.

25. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is good. Many adult learners with no previous experience of art and design or formal qualifications, progress successfully from level 1 courses to higher education or employment. The 'Aim Higher' initiative is effective in developing productive links with, and raising aspirations in, local schools. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is broadly in line with the local population.
26. While progress has been made in developing key skills, not all learners are aware of the vocational relevance and value of key skills.
27. Support and guidance are good. Learners receive good pre-course information and guidance which enable them to choose the right courses. Induction helps learners to settle in quickly. Learners are aware of the good range of support available. Student services staff interview learners individually during induction. Detailed risk assessments are carried out for learners who disclose any disability or medical condition and additional support is provided. The college works closely with external agencies to provide good support for learners with visual or hearing impairments.
28. Full-time learners, and those on substantial part-time courses, undertake initial diagnostic tests to identify additional learning support needs. Support is provided promptly. Learners receive support in their studio and they say that this is very helpful. Take-up of literacy support is very high, but is lower for numeracy. The college has not yet analysed the impact of support on learners' achievement. Learners speak highly of the very good one-to-one dyslexia support, which helps build their confidence and writing skills.
29. The individual learning plans for those receiving support are comprehensive and set clear targets for improvement which assist in a close monitoring of progress. In some course tutorial action plans, targets for improvement are not always sufficiently precise or measurable. Careers education and guidance are effective. Progression rates to higher education or employment are good.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

30. Leadership and management are good. The principal provides strong open leadership, communicates a clear educational vision for the college and is supported well by a team of senior managers and course leaders. Managers have implemented successful strategies to improve student retention and attendance which have resulted in a marked improvement in success rates since the previous inspection. Strategic planning is good. The college has maintained a broad range of specialist provision. Partnerships with the local council and other community organisations are outstanding and meet local needs well. Appropriate decisions have been taken to relinquish courses to other local colleges where they are supported by a similar curriculum area.

The curriculum for adults has been planned well to provide a suitable range of programmes.

31. Curriculum management is good. Staff work effectively in teams and have a determined and continuous focus on quality improvement. Quality assurance procedures are comprehensive. However, some aspects of quality improvement are underdeveloped. For example, pass rates are closely monitored but there is insufficient analysis of the achievement of high grades to be sure that learners reach their potential. The college has recently revised the observation of teaching and learning system and now includes an element of external scrutiny. Senior managers have not analysed the observation records sufficiently yet to identify overall themes and share good practice formally.
32. Course leaders review performance regularly using management information reports. Annual course reviews are part of the self-assessment process. Managers use learners' feedback well to improve provision. Self-assessment is thorough and the report sufficiently evaluative. Inspectors agreed broadly with the judgements in the report.
33. Resources are good and IT equipment has been upgraded. The college is completing an impressive new building. Staff are well qualified and many have recent industrial experience. Staff development is good and includes a wide range of professional updating and management development training. Administrative and technical support for provision is good.
34. The college's response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Education Act (safeguarding children) 2002 and the Children Act 2004 are satisfactory. The college monitors and reports the performance of its learners appropriately. Targets have been set but actions to show how these will be achieved have yet to be defined. Staff have received training on child protection and procedures are well documented. The college has made considerable changes to accommodation to improve access and facilities, responding well to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002. Adjustments to the main entrances have yet to be made to provide good access for learners with restricted mobility.
35. Governors scrutinise the work of the college effectively, receiving regular and accurate reports and presentations from key managers. The college benefits from governors' contribution and business expertise; for example, in raising sponsorship. Clerking arrangements are methodical and thorough.
36. The college has financial status Category A. Resources are deployed effectively with sound course planning. Retention and attendance are good and are much improved since the last inspection. Achievement and standards are good. 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, 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	82	62	61	1	713	60	51	9
	03/04	102	64	62	2	792	60	49	10
	04/05	56	57			400	64		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	0	0			0	0		
	03/04	0	0			0	0		
	04/05	0	0			0	0		
NVQs	02/03	0	0			0	0		
	03/04	0	0			0	0		
	04/05	0	0			0	0		
Other	02/03	82	62	61	1	713	60	50	10
	03/04	102	64	61	3	792	60	49	11
	04/05	56	57			400	64		

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	79	73	58	15	102	67	55	12
	03/04	83	55	62	-7	74	57	54	2
	04/05	81	73			195	74		
GCSEs	02/03	18	67			3	100		
	03/04	40	50			0	0		
	04/05	31	52			1	0		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	36	78	72	5	0	0		
	03/04	27	81	71	11	7	71		
	04/05	26	85			9	100		
NVQs	02/03	8	75	36	39	2	100	45	
	03/04	8	0	41		0	0		
	04/05	4	75			0	0		
Other	02/03	17	71	62	8	97	65	57	8
	03/04	8	50	64	-14	67	55	56	-1
	04/05	20	90			185	74		

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	733	74	63	11	508	35	45	-9
	03/04	695	77	65	12	285	66	48	18
	04/05	699	78			398	69		
A/A2 Levels	02/03	128	80	79	-1	5	60		
	03/04	121	89	78	11	16	75		
	04/05	100	83			26	77		
AS Levels	02/03	236	72	63	9	12	33		
	03/04	199	70	71	-1	28	64		
	04/05	221	78			12	92		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	137	66	60	6	32	34	50	-16
	03/04	98	61	45	16	5	0		
	04/05	93	65			1	0		
NVQs	02/03	0	0			0	0		
	03/04	0	0			0	0		
	04/05	0	0			0	0		
Other	02/03	232	78	69	9	459	35	46	-10
	03/04	277	82	66	15	236	67	50	17
	04/05	285	80			359	68		