



# Lewisham College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

Better  
education  
and care

## Inspection report

Audience  
Post-sixteen

Published  
June 2006

Provider reference  
130415

## Contents

---

Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	6
<hr/>	
Overall judgement	7
Main findings	10

## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Lewisham College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Ruth Silver CBE
Address of college:	Lewisham Way Campus, Lewisham Way, London SE4 1UT
Telephone number:	020 8692 0353
Fax number:	020 8694 9163
Chair of governors:	Douglas Hands
Unique reference number:	130415
Name of reporting inspector:	Ela Piotrowska, ALI
Dates of inspection:	24-28 April 2006

## Background of the organisation

1. Lewisham College is a large inner-city general further education college in the London borough of Lewisham. The college's core programme provides mainly vocational and skills for life courses including large provision for students with learning difficulties. Provision includes courses at community outreach centres, a Trade Union studies centre, a business development unit, a short course centre, an academy for young people, and a junior skills academy for learners aged 14-16 years. There is a growing work-based learning programme that currently includes some 100 apprentices, 800 'train to gain' learners and 80 learners on entry to employment programmes. The college operates in a competitive environment and there are four other general FE colleges, four sixth form colleges and many school sixth forms within the area.
2. The college operates from two sites, each with three buildings, in north Lewisham. Students are mainly drawn from local communities in Lewisham, Greenwich and Southwark, areas which are among the most economically and socially deprived in London. In 2005, the proportion of school-leavers in Lewisham who achieved five GCSEs at grade C and above was 49%, which is below the national average. Unemployment in the borough is 4.7% and most employment is in public sector services.
3. Since the previous inspection, the profile of the college's learners has changed significantly. In 2004/05, full-time students were younger and less well-qualified. 45% of full-time students were under 19 and 75% studied at level 2 or below compared with 44% in 2001/02. In 2004/05 there were 14,888 learners. Of these, 2,597 were aged 16-18 years. In 2004/05, 75% of full-time learners and 52% of all learners were from minority ethnic groups compared with 34% of the local population. The largest areas of provision were preparation for life and work, health, public services and care, ICT and construction and planning.
4. The college's mission is to 'push prosperity for all our communities by widening participation to learning opportunities that enrich personal, cultural and social development and which will enable participation in economic life'. The college holds a range of awards including Beacon status, CoVE status in hospitality and catering and in computing, kite marks including ISO9002, the Chartermark, Investors in People and Investors in 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over

the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
- achievements and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in work based learning and specifically Entry to Employment (E2E) and Train to Gain (to-date referred to as employer training pilots ETP)

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: grade 1
Achievements and standards	Good: grade 2
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. Lewisham is an outstanding college. It contributes significantly to the regeneration of east London and successfully encourages learners to develop positive attitudes to learning and employment. The college is an ambitious learning community which strives for excellence and to raise the profile and reputation of vocational education. The college works hard to realise a central belief that it must be 'more than a college offering more than a qualification' because many learners '...have less than they need and less than they had a right to expect in order to succeed'. Overall achievement and standards are good. Success rates have improved significantly and pass rates for all ages and levels are above national averages, often by significant amounts. Overall achievement rates for work-based learning are good.
7. Teaching and learning are good. Many teachers combine high levels of subject and vocational expertise to make learning relevant and stimulating. Teachers are encouraged to be adventurous, creative and to explore new approaches to motivate and enhance the experience of learners. The strong focus on improving teaching and learning has created a highly professional culture which values critical reflection and sharing of practice. A rigorous lesson observation system informs staff developmental needs. It accurately identifies the need to provide a stronger focus on individual learning and better challenge for more able learners. The use of e-learning has been well established across the college, though is yet to be fully exploited to support learning.
8. The approach to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. The college is an inclusive community. A high proportion of the provision is at level 2 or below and there is a strong focus on supporting the engagement and success of learners who have often been characterised by disaffection and underachievement.
9. The college is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of learners. The diverse curriculum provides a wide range of vocational qualifications and progression opportunities. Employer engagement and meeting local skills needs have a major influence on the curriculum and the college is skilful in aligning its provision to current learner and economic needs.
10. Learners receive outstanding guidance and support. The excellent range of learner support is clearly linked to raising participation and standards. Support to meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are generally good. However, the outcomes of additional learning support are not consistently used to inform teaching and learning.
11. Leadership and management are outstanding. The college has a strong strategic direction, closely aligned to local and national priorities. The focus on

improving the experience of individual learners and teachers has transformed teaching and learning and created a highly professional learning environment. Governance is rigorous and positively contributes to college life. Curriculum management is generally very good. Equality of opportunity is at the centre of all aspects of college life. Financial management and value for money are very good.

#### Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

12. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. The college has invested considerably in developing a sustainable and modern learning environment. Performance is rigorously monitored with a strong focus on improving the experience of individual learners. Strategies to develop the capacity of staff are excellent. Quality improvement is very effective and development plans are used rigorously in order to raise standards.
13. The college is well prepared to respond effectively to a volatile external environment and has an excellent record in managing change. It is innovative and not afraid to take difficult decisions. It draws well on an extensive range of partnerships to inform the curriculum, and development is based on a thorough understanding of what it does best.
14. The college's summary self-assessment report for 2004/05 is accurate and identifies correctly the main strengths and areas for development. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and provides a very detailed overview of performance. However, there is a lack of coherence between some curriculum reports and the overall summary report. Some weaknesses were not stated in the curriculum reports even though development plans were addressing these. The college recognises the need to further improve the recording and monitoring of individual learner's progress, retention rates for some 16-18 year olds, achievement rates for work-based learners and the further embedding of skills for life within vocational areas. It also recognises the need to maintain and continue to improve learning and success for all.

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

15. The college has made outstanding progress in addressing areas for improvement identified during the last inspection in 2001. Improvements have taken place during a time of significant change in the college's learner profile. Learners are younger and less well qualified with low prior attainment. Pass rates have improved for all groups of learners. The quality of management information is exemplary and contributes significantly to the quality of management decisions. Teaching and learning have improved significantly, opportunities to share good practice are good and the college's internal inspection process is rigorous and contributes effectively to raising standards. Unsatisfactory teaching has been significantly reduced and provision in construction is now self-assessed as good. Work-based learning



has grown significantly since the last inspection with two new successful contracts. Learners' achievement of full frameworks has recently improved.

## Key strengths of the college

### *Strengths*

- very good pass rates for all ages and levels
- good teaching and learning
- inspirational leadership and highly effective management
- skilful strategic planning by senior managers and governors
- innovative and stimulating professionalisation of teaching and learning
- outstanding social and educational inclusion with equality and diversity permeating all aspects of college life
- performance culture aspiring to excellence
- wide range of provision closely aligned to local and national priorities
- effective partnership work and outstanding responsiveness to employer needs
- effective quality improvement and accurate self-assessment
- very good learning environments and management of resources.

## Areas for improvement

### *The college should address:*

- retention rates for some 16-18 learners
- achievement rates of apprentices in work-based provision
- take up and achievement of level 3 key skills
- better use of individual planning of learning to inform teaching and learning including challenging more able learners
- consistent use of assessment information and additional learning needs to inform vocational lessons
- further embedding of skills for life within vocational areas.

## Main findings

### Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

16. There has been a strong improvement in success rates since the last inspection, from 44% to 66% on long courses. College data for 2005 confirm that pass rates were above national averages for all ages and levels, often by significant amounts. However, retention of 16-18 year olds fell on both levels 1 and 3 courses, and on level 1 courses achievement of adults has fallen to around national average. Pass rates for key skill qualifications improved significantly in 2005 though the number of learners taking and achieving level 3 key skills was low.
17. The college has increased its range of level 1 courses, welcoming learners with low prior attainment. It has reduced the number of academic level 3 courses where success rates were lower or where student demand was falling. An increasing number of 14-16 learners study across a range of vocational areas and standards and pass rates are high on these courses. Progression rates to further education for 14-16 year olds are very good. Progression is also particularly good for ESOL learners into vocational programmes and to higher education, with over half of eligible learners progressing in 2005.
18. The overall achievement of work-based learners is good. Learners on employer training pilots achieve well and display good skills development. In 2004/05, 91% of learners achieved their target level 2 qualifications. Most learners on E2E courses are successful and progression rates are good. Achievement on apprenticeship schemes has been very poor for a number of years. Recent improvements to the programme include a significant increase in achievement of both NVQs and full frameworks programmes.
19. Black and minority ethnic learners achieve well, and success rates are significantly above national averages for most groups at levels 1 and 2. In 2004/05, the college provided additional support to over 1,000 learners. Success rates for these learners were much higher than for learners not requiring additional support and increased from 54% in 2003/04 to 71% in 2004/05. The college has implemented a number of effective strategies to improve learners' attendance rates and punctuality. Overall attendance rates have improved significantly and are now satisfactory in most areas.
20. Lewisham College sets challenging yet achievable targets for learners. They develop personal, practical and intellectual skills and standards of work are generally high. Learners display particularly high levels of application when inspired by practitioners such as dancers, artists and chefs, whilst others value the interpersonal skills and abilities to articulate ideas that they gain during lessons. Learners develop industry level professional skills to support employment and they value placements in a range of high quality settings.

The college's self-assessment report recognises the need to improve work placements on some programmes. The college celebrates the achievements of learners including achievement of external awards such as Advanced Apprentice of the Year. Learners enjoy their learning and comply with health and safety regulations.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

21. Teaching and learning have significantly improved since the last inspection and inspectors agree with the college's self-assessment that the quality of teaching and learning is good. The transformation of teaching and learning has been at the heart of raising achievement and standards of both learners and staff. The college has invested in an ambitious range of innovative approaches to develop a highly professional culture which values critical reflection, experimentation and sharing of practice. Weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been rigorously tackled in a firmly established climate of continuous improvement.
22. The college's internal inspection process provides a comprehensive and generally reliable assessment of teaching and learning. It indicates that some 73% of teaching and learning was good or better in 2004/05. When inspectors undertook joint lesson observations with college trained observers, there was agreement on the grading of lessons. The college's internal lesson observations do not include a sufficiently wide range of evidence about the quality of learning and sometimes there is an over emphasis on what the teacher is doing to promote learning rather than the impact of these activities on the learner. College observers provide sensitive and skilfully managed feedback following lesson observations. Written feedback on the lessons is evaluative, provides clear guidance on areas for improvement and often matches overall pedagogic priorities across the college. For example, it encourages teachers to integrate e-learning or focus on better questioning of learners to promote learning. Teachers' development needs inform a comprehensive professional development programme.
23. Learners value teachers' hard work, professionalism and enthusiasm for their success. Teachers create supportive and caring learning environments and effectively manage the increasingly challenging behaviour and complex needs of learners. In the best lessons teachers combine high levels of subject and vocational expertise and draw effectively on their experience as practitioners to make learning relevant and inspire learners to become ambitious. These lessons are thoroughly planned, encourage collaborative learning, mature attitudes to work, and take account of the individual needs of learners.
24. However, learners do not make sufficient progress in some lessons and the college's self-assessment report recognises that some teachers do not sufficiently challenge more able learners. Although assessment, including skills for life, and additional learning needs are well identified, some teachers fail to take account of these in planning lessons and individual learning plans do not

sufficiently inform teaching and learning. The use of individual learning plans in work based learning is poor. Assessment of train to gain candidates is carefully planned, frequent and flexible.

25. Well resourced, professional learning environments encourage learners to value learning. The strong focus on e-learning, including a wide range of interactive online resources, permeates learning environments across the college. Although some teachers are using these resources to support teaching, the use of interactive resources to support learning is not yet fully established across the college.
26. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The curriculum is diverse and the wide range of qualifications provides excellent progression opportunities, including progression opportunities to level 4 courses. The college is alert to local and national priorities and careful changes to the curriculum reflect an increasingly strong focus on the vocational curriculum. The approach to social and educational inclusion is excellent. More than 70% of the provision is at level 2 or below. Strong partnerships help the college to provide successful courses for a wide range of otherwise excluded or vulnerable groups. Learners, including those with special educational needs, have good opportunities to gain qualifications, including skills for life qualifications. The college's professional development centre provides skills for life teacher training, which contributes to increasing regional capacity for this priority area.
27. The college provides very good provision for 14-16 year olds and works closely with schools to help pupils to choose appropriate courses. Some 500 young people participate weekly in college courses and the well resourced junior skills academy raises learners' aspirations.
28. The college's responsiveness to the needs of employers is outstanding. Employer engagement and meeting local skills needs have a major influence on the curriculum. The college has fostered very successful long-term relationships with a significant number of prestigious companies. Employers praise the excellent communication they enjoy with the college. The college's business development unit, short course centre and Trade Union Studies centre have been very successful in delivering on-site training to employees working in construction, business and hospitality industries, care settings and the prison service. Improvements in work-based learning have increased the college's response to employers' needs.
29. Very good enrichment activities are widespread across the college and well used by learners. They enhance learners' self-esteem, confidence and employability skills.
30. The strong emphasis on valuing individual learners is reflected in outstanding advice, guidance and support. The wide range of learner services is very well promoted and used extensively by learners, both to help them make well

informed choices about courses and to support them during their life at college. Childcare provision is very good.

31. Strong links exist between learner support teams and curriculum staff. Learners receive outstanding personal support in many curriculum areas. Data is well used to evaluate support strategies. Staff value the significant role of support services in managing an increasingly challenging learner population. Peer mentors and 'study buddies' support learners who are at risk of dropping out of their programmes.
32. Welfare services are very good. Learners have access to an extensive range of workshops and drop-in sessions on sexual health, safety and security and drug misuse. The college monitors disciplinary incidents very closely and takes immediate action to rectify problems. Learners comment that they feel safe in the college.
33. Induction arrangements are thorough and a wide range of activities provide an exciting start to learners' programmes. Learners' individual literacy, numeracy and language needs are diagnosed and additional learning support is very good. A clear tutorial policy is in place, but not all learners have sufficiently meaningful targets to ensure effective and useful tutorials.

#### Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

34. Leadership and management are outstanding. The college has been highly successful in addressing weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Success rates have increased significantly and the quality of learners' experience is much improved. The college has consistently met or exceeded its targets whilst responding to significant changes in its student intake. The principal and the senior management team have managed these changes skilfully.
35. The principal's charismatic leadership and passion for educational inclusion have inspired both staff and learners to give of their best. Strategic leadership provides very clear direction and is based on a strong ethos of promoting regeneration and success. Strategic planning is consultative and staff and governors have an excellent understanding of how planned changes will bring long term benefits to learners and staff. Governance is outstanding. Governors make a positive contribution to the college which makes very good use of their wide range of skills, expertise and connections. Governors monitor the college and their own effectiveness rigorously and look for ways to continuously improve.
36. The college enjoys an extensive range of productive partnerships which contribute to improvements for learners, the community and employers. Partnerships contribute significantly to widening participation and help the college to raise the reputation of vocational education.

37. Business planning processes are highly developed. Provision is annually reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the college's high expectations, provides high quality learning for learners and meets local needs. The organisation and quality of management information is exemplary and contributes significantly to the quality of management decisions.
38. Quality improvement processes are mature and very effective. Managers at all levels are clear about what the college does well and where further improvement is necessary. The process for observing teaching and learning has had a significant impact on the quality of the learners' experience. Course reviews are thorough, involve all staff and result in well focussed development plans. The college's summary self-assessment accurately identifies the key areas for improvement. However, some weaknesses have not been stated in the self-assessment report, even though staff and managers are taking action to address them.
39. Curriculum management is generally very good. In work based learning it has been strengthened and practice is still developing. Managers at all levels have established a climate of trust, mutual respect and support. Managers and staff explore new ways to raise standards. There is a strong culture of sharing good practice. Staff value the appraisal process and make good use of the extensive range of staff development opportunities. Newly qualified teachers receive very good support.
40. Equality of opportunity is the lifeblood of the college. The college is highly successful in engaging young people and adults whose experience of education is often characterised by disaffection and underachievement. Cultural diversity is widely celebrated. The college fully complies with statutory requirements in relation to equality, disability and race relations and all areas of college activity promote equality and diversity. Data relating to the performance of different groups of learners is monitored assiduously. Provision and support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding. The staff profile broadly reflects that of the student body and the local community. The college works hard to increase the number of staff from black or minority ethnic backgrounds to progress into management positions. There are very effective procedures for child protection to ensure the safety, well being and progress of young people.
41. The college provides very good value for money. Financial management is excellent and resources are deployed efficiently. Staff are well qualified and a high proportion of teachers have specialist qualifications in skills for life. The college provides a welcoming, safe and purposeful working environment. Significant investment has been made in creating state of the art facilities in beauty, catering and construction.

## 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 No - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate *	Diff	Starts No - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate *	Diff
Long 1	02/03	1,914	76	55	21	3,384	63	54	9
	03/04	1,908	72	59	13	2,879	71	58	13
	04/05	1,885	69			2,759	64		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	59	61	56	5	56	73	47	26
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	43	74	62	12	53	77	55	22
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	26	69			15	87		
NVQs	02/03	79	57	58	-1	58	78	66	12
	03/04	145	52	60	-8	106	67	69	-2
	04/05	105	61			94	76		
Other	02/03	1,776	78	55	23	3,270	62	54	8
	03/04	1,720	74	59	15	2,720	71	58	13
	04/05	1,754	70			2,650	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 No - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate *	Diff	Starts No - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate *	Diff
Long 2	02/03	895	58	51	7	1,355	62	50	12
	03/04	1,082	64	55	9	1,755	66	54	12
	04/05	1,211	64			1,615	71		
GCSEs	02/03	238	62	58	4	253	57	54	3
GCSEs	03/04	190	63	64	-1	268	56	58	-2
GCSEs	04/05	151	64			211	61		3
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	127	59	53	6	78	60	50	10
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	98	56	57	-1	38	55	57	-2
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	88	66			10	40		
NVQs	02/03	167	50	41	9	306	68	53	15
NVQs	03/04	162	59	50	9	439	76	55	21
NVQs	04/05	163	63			475	79		
Other	02/03	363	60	48	12	718	62	48	14
Other	03/04	632	67	51	16	1010	64	52	12
Other	04/05	809	63			919	69		

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 No - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate *	Diff	Starts No - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate *	Diff
Long 3	02/03	1,030	58	58	0	1,213	61	49	12
	03/04	949	56	60	-4	1,351	54	52	2
	04/05	816	58			1,209	62		
AVA2 levels	02/03	171	79	79	0	93	72	65	7
AVA2 levels	03/04	172	77	83	-6	96	64	68	-4
AVA2 levels	04/05	92	79			39	74		
AS Levels	02/03	442	56	57	-1	128	66	47	19
AS Levels	03/04	364	49	59	-10	137	55	49	6
AS Levels	04/05	253	47			116	49		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	297	53	47	6	340	61	45	16
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	133	68	50	18	153	54	43	11
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	100	68			94	80		
NVQs	02/03	21	38	47	-9	97	39	45	-6
NVQs	03/04	31	35	47	-12	196	41	47	-6
NVQs	04/05	20	60			124	56		
Other	02/03	99	46	48	-2	555	62	50	12
Other	03/04	249	50	49	1	769	56	52	4
Other	04/05	351	58			836	61		

Table 4

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

Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	9	0%	32%	56%	47%
	Advanced	9	11%	31%	89%	48%
2004/05	Apprenticeship	31	6%	38%	13%	50%
	Advanced	8	13%	34%	25%	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'



### Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college 2003 to 2005

Year	Number of starts in year	Achieved Objectives *	Progression **	Still in learning
2003/04	13	12	7	0
2004/05	29	26	27	0
2005/06	85	65	66	0

\* 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 to 2005

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Still in learning
2003/04	597	497	0
2004/05	629	572	0

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