



Waltham Forest College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

Published
July 2006

Provider reference
130456

Contents

Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	6
Curriculum areas	7
<hr/>	
Overall judgement	8
Main findings	11
Curriculum area inspections	15

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Waltham Forest College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Carol Gibson
Address of college:	Waltham Forest College, Forest Building, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 4JB
Telephone number:	020 8501 8000
Fax number:	020 8501 8001
Chair of governors:	David Pendle
Unique reference number:	130456
Name of lead inspector:	Nigel Flood, ALI
Dates of inspection:	22-26 May 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Waltham Forest College is a large general further education (GFE) college. The college's mission is, 'Waltham Forest College – working for our communities to realise potential through learning'.
2. The college is located in the London borough of Waltham Forest. It has one main site and three other sites. The college provides provision through off-site partnerships with local communities and on employers' premises. Just under 50% of learners are from Waltham Forest and most of the remainder are from the neighbouring London boroughs and Essex and Hertfordshire. Two sixth form colleges and three maintained schools with sixth forms also offer post-16 provision in the local area.
3. Waltham Forest's population is around 218,000. It has a ranking of 47 out of 354 for the highest levels of deprivation in England. Around 80% of learners are from areas of high deprivation. Some 35% of the local population are from minority ethnic groups. In 2004/05, 60% of the college's learners were from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils gaining five GCSE at A* - C in Waltham Forest is 49% compared to a national average of 57%.
4. In 2004/05, the college had 12,123 LSC funded learners. Of these, 81% were adult learners and the remainder were aged 16-18. Some 81% of adult learners were part-time and 43% of full-time learners were aged 16-18. Some 64% of learners were women. There were around 280 learners aged 14-16 at the beginning of May 2006. Around 16% of the college's learners were in franchised provision.
5. The college offers courses in all subject sectors. The highest number of learners are in preparation for life and work; health, public services and social care; ICT; engineering and manufacturing technology; business, administration and law; and retail and commercial enterprises. Of these subjects, preparation for life and work, ICT and business, administration and law have most of the off-site learners, particularly preparation for life and work.

Scope of the inspection

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

- achievements and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: health and social care and early years; engineering and manufacturing technologies; ICT; hospitality; preparation for life and work; and business, administration and law.

Summary of grades awarded

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

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, social care and early years	Good: grade 2
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Satisfactory: grade 3
Information and communication technology	Good: grade 2
Hospitality	Inadequate: grade 4
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: grade 3
Business, administration and law	Satisfactory: grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

7. Learners' achievements are satisfactory overall. Success rates have increased since the last inspection to around the national average. The standard of most learners' work ranges from satisfactory to good and they make satisfactory to good progress. Their technical and vocational skills are generally good and written work is mostly satisfactory.
8. Most teaching and learning is satisfactory. In some subjects it is good but in hospitality, theory teaching is unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of good teaching and learning approaches. In less successful lessons, teaching is insufficiently challenging for the more able learners. Learning support is good.
9. Social and educational inclusion is outstanding. The college's extensive and highly relevant range of courses meets the needs of learners, employers, local communities and those under-represented in education particularly strongly.
10. Support and guidance for learners are good. The college has a very wide range of support and guidance services. Access to careers advice from Connexions is good. Learners feel safe in the college. Most tutorials are satisfactory. Monitoring of attendance and punctuality across the college is variable.
11. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Subject management is mostly satisfactory or better but unsatisfactory in hospitality. Course reviews are rigorous and self-assessment is very thorough. Senior managers have a clear focus on raising standards.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

12. The college has a good capacity to improve. In the past two years, success rates have increased substantially. Most teaching and learning is improving, although not in hospitality. Support for learners is good and responsiveness and social and educational inclusiveness are outstanding. Robust course reviews monitor teaching and learning and learners' performance effectively. Managers make good use of accurate data to improve learners' performance. Strengthened senior management and quality assurance arrangements ensure a clearer focus on continuous improvement. Managers and staff are very aware of the need to raise standards. The revised and improved teaching observation programme is particularly rigorous. Comprehensive staff development and support from advanced practitioners help to improve most provision. Self-assessment is rigorous and quality assurance is thorough. The 2004/05 self-assessment report is well written and a significant improvement on the previous

year's report. It is accurate and identifies clearly the college's strengths and areas where improvements are necessary.

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

13. The college has made satisfactory progress in addressing the weaknesses identified by the last inspection. Progress was slow until 2004. Senior managers took action to remedy this issue. They strengthened management, quality assurance and the curriculum. Although standards have declined in hospitality, the proportion of good provision has increased since the last inspection. Overall, success rates at the last inspection were low and are now around the national average. Management information is significantly more effective. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. Robust course reviews monitor learners' progress closely and inform self-assessment. The college has maintained high standards of learner support. It has improved responsiveness and social and educational inclusion. However, strategies to improve attendance and punctuality have had a variable impact across the college.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- improving success rates
- high success rates for adults at level 3
- good provision in health, social care and early years, and ICT
- good additional learning support
- outstanding responsiveness to meeting the needs of individual learners, employers, local communities and those under-represented in education
- good personal support and a wide range of advice and guidance for learners
- clear direction set by senior managers to improve provision
- comprehensive staff development activities with a clear focus on raising standards
- rigorous self-assessment
- strong promotion of equality of opportunity.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates for learners aged 16-18 at level 3 and from black Caribbean heritage
- low key skills success rates
- unsatisfactory provision in hospitality
- insufficient opportunities for full-time learners to participate in work-related activities
- variations in the effectiveness of the strategies to resolve attendance and punctuality issues

- some drab and poor accommodation.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 14-16

Good: grade 2

14. Achievements and standards are satisfactory; a judgement recognised in the self-assessment report. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 at the last inspection were low and declining. Since then, success rates have increased, particularly over the past two years. At levels 2 and 3, the increase for long courses was significant. However, the level 3 success rate remains below the national average. Overall, success rates at levels 1 and 2 in 2004/05 were around the national average. Between 2003/04 and 2004/05, success rates for short courses increased significantly to around the national average. Success rates for learners aged 14-16 in 2004/05 were high.
15. At the last inspection, success rates for adult learners were low. At levels 2 and 3, they were declining. Since then, success rates for adults on long and short courses have increased, particularly at levels 1 and 3. The 2004/05 overall success rates for long courses were just below the average for level 1, around the average at level 2 and well above at level 3. Success rates for short courses have increased substantially, particularly between 2003/04 and 2004/05. However, these increases were only to around the national average.
16. Overall success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups between 2003/04 and 2004/05 have increased substantially to around the national average over the past two years. In 2004/05, success rates for Bangladeshi learners aged 16-18, black Caribbean learners and other black adult learners were lower than for other minority ethnic groups. In 2004/05, the success rates for women were slightly better than for men.
17. Key skills success rates are low. The self-assessment report recognises this as an area for improvement and the college has taken action to resolve the issue. In 2005/06, the results from key skill tests show a significant improvement in success rates, but only to 46%.
18. Most learners' work is satisfactory or better. They work purposefully, enjoy their studies and behave well. Learners make adequate to good progress in developing their subject skills. Learners on courses in health, social care and early years have good professional skills. In engineering and manufacturing, learners have good occupational competences but attendance rates are low. ICT learners have good technical ability. Hospitality learners have good food preparation and cooking skills. Food and drink service skills are adequate. In preparation for life and work, learners have good speaking and listening abilities. Business, administration and law learners have a good understanding

of management concepts but the punctuality of learners aged 16-18 is poor. The work done by learners aged 14-16 is of a high standard.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 14-16

Good: grade 2

19. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In health, social care and early years and ICT, teaching and learning are good. Theory teaching in hospitality is unsatisfactory. Teachers are increasingly using information learning technology (ILT) to improve learning. Its use in some subjects is weak. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of good approaches to meet the individual needs of learners. They set clear learning objectives. In health, social care and early years, teachers make effective use of group work to encourage learners to challenge and debate. Teachers develop occupational skills well in engineering and business courses. Teaching for learners aged 14-16 is good. In less successful lessons, teaching is insufficiently challenging for more able learners. In some lessons, learning activities are inappropriate, checks on learning are insufficient and teachers do not manage discussions effectively. In some instances, the links between key skills and subjects are weak.
20. The college provides good quality learning support in lessons and in well resourced learning centres. Initial assessment is effective. The number of learners receiving additional support has significantly increased since the last inspection. Managers effectively monitor the impact of additional learning support. Learners receiving support have similar success rates to those who do not. The self-assessment report recognises the need to improve communications between support and subject teachers.
21. Assessment is fair and accurate. Most teachers monitor learners' progress effectively and provide satisfactory written and oral feedback. The use of learning targets is mostly effective, although it is weak in parts of preparation for life and work and hospitality. The college regularly invites the parents and carers of younger learners to review their progress. Internal verification is effective.
22. The college's response to meeting the needs of individual learners, employers and local communities is outstanding. Collaboration and partnerships are particularly strong with local schools and colleges to promote and provide an appropriate range of education and training for the local area. The college has very good links with other agencies to improve the range of provision and to engage with difficult to contact learners. The college links very well with community and voluntary sector organisations to develop jointly a range of accredited courses. The college works flexibly and responsively with employers to meet their training needs.

23. Clear progression routes are available for learners at all levels. Most full-time learners study additional qualifications to improve employability and their chances to move to higher education. The college recognises opportunities for work experience are insufficient in a few subjects. The range of enrichment activities is extensive and learners make a positive contribution to the local community.
24. Educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The extensive and highly relevant range of courses meets the needs of individual learners, employers and local communities very well. The range of provision and the good support provided for learners has helped the college to widen participation successfully for those under-represented in education. The strategy has been particularly effective in encouraging the participation of learners aged 14-18 returning to learn and those from minority ethnic communities, areas of high deprivation and whose first language is not English.
25. Guidance and support for learners are good. The college has a very wide range of well co-ordinated support and guidance services. The range of presentation events, open days and taster sessions is good. Learners value highly the support they receive from staff. Support is sensitively provided and gives learners confidence to progress and achieve their goals. Induction is thorough. Access to careers advice from Connexions is good. Learners feel safe in the college and appreciate the security and the attention paid to using the identity cards.
26. Most tutorials are satisfactory. They provide learners with useful information on healthy living and the skills and attitudes needed to progress to employment, higher education and further training. For example, learners took part in a project on personal safety linked to a knife amnesty and supported by a talk from a local safety organisation. In tutorials for level 3 learners, tutors make good use of wider key skills to improve learners' opportunities to progress to higher education. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality across the college is inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

27. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The self-assessment report recognises that leadership and management are satisfactory and progress between the last inspection and 2004 was very slow. Senior managers reviewed the situation, and strengthened and implemented further actions to speed up improvements.
28. The principal and senior managers have set a clear direction to improve provision. Most success rates have increased significantly to around the national averages, particularly between 2003/04 and 2004/05. Most curriculum management is satisfactory or better but in hospitality, it is unsatisfactory. Quality assurance arrangements are thorough. Senior managers monitor closely the work of the college. Course review and self-assessment are rigorous and

make effective use of the college's accurate data. The teacher observation programme is significantly more effective than previously. A comprehensive staff development programme is improving teaching and learning. Advanced practitioners support teachers effectively. Senior managers have maintained the quality of learning support and improved the college's good responsiveness to the needs of learners, the local community and employers. Governors have a clear understanding of the performance of learners and the college's financial position.

29. Promotion of equality and diversity is strong. The college has a thorough equality and diversity policy which also covers race equality. The action plan meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendments) Act 2000. Governors have approved well-documented child protection procedures. A named manager is responsible for child protection. Staff and governors have undergone child protection training. The college is a safe environment for learners and staff. The college mostly complies with SENDA. It has made reasonable adjustments for access to its buildings but parts of the accommodation have poor access for those with mobility difficulties.
30. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Accommodation is adequate, but some parts of the college are drab, in a poor condition and the design and condition of a few areas restrict the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Staff are well qualified and experienced. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Curriculum area inspections

Health, social care and early years

Good: grade 2

Context

31. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses from entry to level 3 or NVQs, national certificates and diplomas, access provision and other vocational qualifications. Courses cover, health, nursing, social care and early years. Of the 2,410 learners, 2,181 are adults, 2,095 are part-time, 2,013 are women, 1,453 are from minority ethnic groups and 7 are aged 14-16.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates on most courses
- high standards of learners' work
- good teaching and learning
- good support
- wide range of courses
- effective leadership and management.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low success rates on some courses
- insufficient use of ICT in lessons.

Achievements and standards

32. Achievements and standards are good. Most success rates are high, including those for access to nursing, midwifery and health, GNVQ intermediate health and social care, NVQ level 2 care and early years and education, GNVQ foundation health and social care and NVQ level 3 care. Success rates are low for AVCE double award in health and social care, and the diploma in childcare and education. Learners' work is good. Assignments are well researched and presented. Learners develop good professional values and occupational skills. They analyse and evaluate information effectively, and make good links between theory and practice. Learners have good oral and written skills. Their attendance is good.

Quality of provision

33. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use a good range of approaches which challenge and meet the needs of a wide range of learners effectively. Learners work hard and enjoy learning. The use of group work is outstanding. Teachers use group work to develop learners' knowledge and understanding through high standard debate and discussion and to develop strong team working skills. Teachers make insufficient use of ILT in lessons; an area for

improvement recognised in the self-assessment report. Assessment is thorough, rigorous and fair.

34. Support for learners is good. Teachers regularly and effectively monitor learners' achievements and progress. They keep learners and their parents and carers well informed about progress. Teachers provide learners with good guidance on how to improve their work. Good initial and diagnostic assessments help staff plan effective support for learners. The college meets learners' support needs quickly. Effective communications and collaboration between teachers and support staff ensure support for learners in lessons is good.
35. A good range of health, social care and early years courses meets the needs of learners and employers very well. It is particularly good for learners with learning difficulties and for those under-represented in education, to gain appropriate qualifications for employment, professional training or higher education. Links are strong with local employers and higher education to broaden the range of progression routes and work placements.

Leadership and management

36. Leadership and management are good. Effective leadership has improved management. Quality assurance and self-assessment thoroughly monitor all aspects of provision. Quality improvement arrangements have increased success rates, raised standards of teaching and assessment and improved learners' punctuality and attendance. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. All teachers are qualified or working towards an appropriate teaching qualification. Managers support and encourage staff to develop their vocational, teaching and management skills. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. Managers and teachers promote strongly equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory behaviour.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

37. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in electrical, mechanical, manufacturing, motor cycle and motor vehicle engineering from entry level to level 4. Learners work towards NVQs, first and national diplomas and other vocational awards. Learners from local schools aged 14-16 study GCSE engineering. Of the 801 learners, 556 are part-time, 407 are adults, 509 are from minority ethnic groups, 128 learners are women and 213 are aged 14-16.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates on level 1 motor vehicle and GCSE engineering courses
- good teaching and learning in practical lessons
- high standard motor vehicle and motor cycle workshops.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low success rate on NVQ level 2 in performing engineering operations
- poor attendance
- no planned work experience for full-time learners.

Achievement and standards

38. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are high for level 1 motor vehicle and GCSE engineering courses. Most other success rates have increased over the past two years to around the national average. The success rate in 2004/05 for the NVQ level 2 in performing engineering operations was low and had declined from the previous year. Learners develop good occupational skills. Their written work is satisfactory. The college recognises that attendance rates are low. Teachers do not challenge learners sufficiently when they are late.

Quality of provision

39. Teaching and learning in practical classes are good. Teachers develop learners' practical skills well. They ensure learners are industrious in workshop activities and pay good attention to health and safety. Teaching of theory is satisfactory, but the use of ILT to support learning is insufficient. Most teachers use questioning effectively to check learning. Teachers provide fair and accurate assessment. They monitor learners' progress regularly and give appropriate guidance on how to improve work. Some lesson plans lack detail. With the exception of motor cycle courses, full-time learners do not undertake planned work placements to acquire relevant industrial experience.
40. A good range of courses meets the needs of learners and employers effectively. The college has increased the range of full-time courses, including entry level

and level 1 provision, to help learners take qualifications more suited to their needs. Good links with four local schools have helped to develop a very successful GCSE engineering course for learners aged 14-16. The college provides specialist courses in security alarms.

41. Support for learners is good. All learners receive an initial assessment to establish requirements for learning support. The college provides prompt support if the learners need help. Weekly tutorials include the recording of targets to improve achievement and attendance on learners' individual learning plans. The effectiveness of this process is variable. The college offers a wide range of enrichment activities but the numbers of engineering learners involved is low.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management of the school of engineering are satisfactory. The head of department has been in post a short time. Although informal communications between staff are good, regular team meetings are rare. Self-assessment and quality assurance are thorough but the systematic sharing of good practice is weak. The self-assessment report is accurate. The college provides learners with good quality well equipped motor vehicle and motor cycle workshops in modern specialist industrial units. Classrooms for theory teaching at the main site are drab and dreary. The promotion of equality of opportunities is good.

Information and communication technology

Good: grade 2

Context

43. Full-time and part-time ICT users and practitioners courses are available from entry to level 4. Learners can work towards a range of awards including computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), national diploma, AVCEs, GNVQ, NVQs, other vocational qualifications and specialist commercial awards. Some 1,109 learners are studying ICT. Of these, 856 are adult learners, 878 are part-time, 644 are women, 311 are from minority ethnic groups and 2 are aged 14-16.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- good use of key skills to aid learner development
- wide range of additional courses to meet learners' needs.

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low GNVQ success rates.

Achievements and standards

44. Achievements and standards are good. Most success rates are high, including the majority of CLAIT and access courses. Between 2003/04 and 2004/05, most success rates increased significantly. However, GNVQ success rates increased only slightly between 2003/04 and 2004/05 and remained low. Learners on the new AVCE course produce good work and progress very well. Many learners face significant challenges. Nearly 40% of learners speak English as a second language. Many have literacy and numeracy difficulties. They perform well to reach course standards. Learners have good technical skills and attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

45. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers create a good learning environment and have high expectations of learners to progress and succeed. Teachers plan lessons carefully to ensure learning is relevant to the needs of industry and learners' age and background. Particularly well planned, are exercises on databases and web design. Teachers make very good use of the internet to support learning. They are very effective at ensuring learners are attentive in lessons. Teachers monitor and support the few unmotivated learners well. They encourage them to attend, behave and work.
46. The college provides full-time learners with a wide range of additional courses to make their work more relevant to employers' needs and improve their

chances of progressing to higher education. Part-time courses are effective in providing community-based learners with opportunities to understand the basics of IT and gain entry and level 1 qualifications. The college offers a limited but increasing range of commercial courses for employers.

47. The effective tutorial system supports learners well. Tutorials neatly incorporate good use of wider key skills to help learners develop further, particularly working with others and planning individual learning. Tutors link key skills to ICT topics in a pertinent and interesting way. Learners have a positive view of the relevance of key skills. Arrangements to identify additional learning needs are effective. Learners receive strong additional individual support in lessons and have access to a wide range of good support facilities.

Leadership and management

48. Curriculum leadership and management are good. Effective initiatives have resolved the many unsatisfactory elements of provision which are identified in the self-assessment report. Managers monitor provision closely and take swift action to resolve any issues. Self-assessment is thorough and rigorous. Observations of teaching are accurate and help improve the quality of teaching. Communications are good. Managers support staff well. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Staff have good experience and teaching qualifications. The standard of resources is satisfactory.

Hospitality

Inadequate: grade 4

Context

49. The college offers NVQs and other vocational qualifications at levels 1 and 2 for full-time learners and from level 1 to level 3 for part-time learners. Short courses include the national licensee's and food hygiene certificates. Of the 579 learners, 527 are part-time, 527 are adults, 306 are from minority ethnic groups and 289 are women.

STRENGTHS

- good promotion of healthy eating
- good range of resources to develop occupational skills.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low success rates on some courses
- poor teaching of theory
- inadequate development of learning plans
- ineffective subject management.

Achievement and standards

50. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Success rates in 2004/05 on NVQ levels 1 and 2 food and drink service full-time courses, and the national certificate in hospitality supervision, were low. Retention rates for the NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking part-time learners in 2004-05 were also low. Most other success rates in 2004/05 were similar to the national average. Learners' work is good for the diploma in professional cookery and the meat and poultry NVQ courses. Learners' practical work in food service is satisfactory. Learners enjoy the practical work in food preparation and are enthusiastic about the skills they are learning.

Quality of provision

51. Teaching and learning in theory lessons is inadequate. Teachers use unsatisfactory teaching and learning approaches. Lesson planning is unsatisfactory. The introduction to lessons is poor and teachers do not identify learning outcomes adequately. They do not check learners' knowledge and understanding to assess if learning has taken place. In practical lessons, teaching and learning are mostly satisfactory and occasionally good. Individual learning plans are unsatisfactory. Teachers and learners have a poor understanding of the plans and they are not used effectively to plan and monitor learner progress. The use of learning targets is poor. The range of hospitality provision is narrow.

52. Teachers provide learners with good personal support and guidance and the college has a wide range of learner services, including good additional learning support. Promotion of healthy eating is particularly good. Learners develop a good understanding of the need for healthy eating for both themselves and customers. Teachers clearly identify alternatives to fats and how to reduce sugar levels.

Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management are inadequate. The self-assessment report clearly identifies leadership and management as unsatisfactory. Standards in hospitality have declined since the last inspection. Monitoring of provision and the setting and understanding of success rate targets are inadequate. The college has started to resolve these issues. Observations of teaching are more rigorous. Use of data is more thorough. The college has developed clear action plans to resolve issues. At the time of the inspection, it was too early for inspectors to assess the effectiveness of these actions. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and dishes learners produce in lessons reflect the food of local communities. The self-assessment report is thorough and highly self-critical, identifying most areas for improvement. The range of resources to develop occupational skills is particularly good, including regular investment in a range of high standard equipment and upgrading of accommodation.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

54. The college provides full-time and part-time courses in ESOL, language support, literacy, numeracy and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Just over half of provision is ESOL. Most learners take externally accredited qualifications. A third of provision is franchised. Courses take place at college sites and community venues. Of the 4,863 learners, 3,360 are adults, 2,811 are part-time, 3,010 are from minority ethnic groups, 2,869 are women and 113 are aged 14-16.

STRENGTHS

- good progression to vocational courses at levels 1 and 2
- good development of speaking and listening skills
- strong vocational element of preparation for life and work courses.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficient challenge for more advanced learners
- unsystematic approach to the teaching of spelling and vocabulary
- insufficiently precise learning targets.

Achievement and standards

55. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall success rates have increased significantly for non-accredited and accredited courses between 2003/04 and 2004/05 to around the national average. However, some success rates for literacy, numeracy and franchised ESOL courses were low in 2004/05. Learners make good progress to mainstream courses. Most learners move to vocational programmes at levels 1 and 2. Learners have good speaking and listening skills. Attendance has improved over the last three years but remains low on a few courses.

Quality of provision

56. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers develop learners' speaking and listening skills very well. Teachers work effectively with learners with challenging behaviour or learning difficulties to develop constructive ways of speaking. ESOL teachers are particularly skilled at teaching correct pronunciation and intonation using group work and practice. Work for advanced learners is insufficiently demanding. Teachers do not provide these learners with additional work to extend their skills. Approaches to teaching vocabulary and spelling are not systematic. ESOL teachers do not ensure learners record new vocabulary in an organised and efficient way. Not all literacy teachers provide structured spelling programmes or practise spelling regularly. Assessment of learners' work is accurate.

57. The college provides a very good range of courses. Learning programmes have a strong vocational element. This helps attract learners to preparation for life and work provision and helps them progress effectively to more job related provision and employment. Vocational ESOL courses provide opportunities to achieve both vocational and language qualifications and to move to levels 1 and 2 vocational courses. Courses for those with learning difficulties include substantial work experience. Well designed courses for younger learners re-entering learning include computer game design and magazine editing.
58. Support for learners is good. Support workers provide effective assistance for learners in lessons. ESOL tutorials are well attended and effective. Tutorials for other programmes are less effective. Learning targets are too general to measure progress and help learners with what they need to do to improve. Some teachers do not record the results from initial assessments. Some teachers and learners do not use or complete individual learning plans.

Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers' support for staff and communications is effective. Managers thoroughly implement strategies for improving teaching and attendance. Course reviews and self-assessment are thorough and accurate. Promotion of equality of opportunity through teaching and learning is good. Resources are adequate. Most teachers are qualified although too few have specialist literacy or numeracy teaching qualifications. Staff development arrangements are comprehensive.

Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

60. The college offers full- and part-time courses from level 1 to 4 including provision for accounts, administration, business, law, management and professional studies. Learners can work towards a range of qualifications including AVCE, GNVQ, NVQ and other vocational awards. Of the 863 learners studying business, law and administration, 603 are adults, 526 are part-time, 571 are from minority ethnic groups and 481 are women.

STRENGTHS

- good acquisition of management concepts and language
- good oral and written work in lessons
- good support for learners moving to higher education.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- poor attendance and punctuality of learners aged 16-18
- insufficient work experience on full-time programmes
- unsatisfactory planning of some lessons.

Achievement and standards

61. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are similar to the national averages and increased between 2003/04 and 2004/05. Success rates for GNVQ business foundation, access to business and NVQ at level 4 in management in 2004/05 were high. The success rate for NVQ at level 1 in accountancy in 2004/05 was low. Learners understand particularly well the concepts of management and can use the language of business very effectively. Most learners' written work is satisfactory to good. Attendance rates on some adult courses are very high but are low for learners aged 16-18 on full-time courses. Poor punctuality disrupts lessons for learners aged 16-18.

Quality of provision

62. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers use a good range of learning activities. In these lessons, teachers develop learners' oral and written skills particularly well, both in groups and individually. Learners in these lessons are very enthusiastic. Teachers maintain the pace of lessons effectively, using deadlines for group activities to simulate business pressures. Teachers use ILT resources effectively. In some other lessons, unsatisfactory planning leads to lessons being less effective. Teachers do not plan their work so all learners are involved in learning or link learning support to the needs of the learners. Some handouts are difficult to understand, with mistakes in spelling and grammar. No work experience is available to full-time learners.

63. The range of courses to meet the needs of learners and employers is good. The college provides good additional courses for level 3 learners to improve their chances when applying for higher education, including programmes on improving their own learning and electronic business.
64. Support for most learners is good. Arrangements for advice, guidance and tutorial support are effective. Inspectors agreed with the strength in the self-assessment report that there is good support available for level 3 learners applying for higher education. The college makes good use of business course taster activities at local universities and support tutors provide useful advice on applying for higher education.

Leadership and management

65. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have a clear focus on improving provision and raising standards. Regular meetings take place to review courses and the progress of learners. Lesson observations are now more rigorous. However, review arrangements missed some weaker practice and the sharing of good practice is variable. Self-assessment is rigorous and is an accurate assessment of standards. Promotion of equality of opportunity is effective. Resources are mostly adequate but some classrooms are not suitable for the type of lesson taking place.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2004, 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	835	55%	55%	0%	1,175	44%	54%	-10%
	03/04	722	56%	59%	-3%	1,042	48%	58%	-5%
	04/05	623	61%			1,222	55%		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	61	56%	56%	0%	8	50%	47%	3%
	03/04	114	44%	62%	-18%	8	75%	55%	20%
	04/05	79	56%			10	80%		
NVQs	02/03	79	52%	58%	-6%	40	43%	66%	-23%
	03/04	68	53%	60%	-7%	29	48%	69%	-21%
	04/05	70	51%			54	59%		
Other	02/03	695	56%	55%	1%	1,127	44%	54%	-10%
	03/04	590	59%	59%	0%	1,005	48%	58%	-10%
	04/05	474	63%			1,158	55%		

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2004, 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	719	40%	51%	-11%	1,594	51%	50%	1%
	03/04	559	39%	55%	-16%	1,822	53%	54%	-1%
	04/05	566	57%			1,275	57%		
GCSEs	02/03	57	56%	58%	-2%	52	73%	54%	19%
	03/04	54	61%	64%	-3%	37	59%	58%	1%
	04/05	63	71%			27	74%		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	264	43%	53%	-10%	21	48%	50%	-2%
	03/04	128	44%	57%	-13%	10	40%	57%	-17%
	04/05	94	57%			16	63%		
NVQs	02/03	119	39%	41%	-2%	691	48%	53%	-5%
	03/04	95	33%	50%	-17%	598	49%	55%	-6%
	04/05	116	45%			561	56%		
Other	02/03	279	35%	48%	13%	830	51%	48%	3%
	03/04	282	34%	51%	17%	1,177	55%	52%	3%
	04/05	293	58%			671	57%		

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2004, 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	555	35%	58%	-23%	1,020	51%	49%	2%
	03/04	416	44%	60%	-16%	1,116	53%	52%	1%
	04/05	370	51%			954	61%		
A/A2 Levels	02/03	46	52%	79%	-27%	13	39%	65%	-26%
	03/04	28	68%	83%	-15%	17	76%	68%	8%
	04/05	31	77%			15	73%		
AS Levels	02/03	33	15%	57%	42%	20	35%	47%	-12%
	03/04	-	-	59%		-	-	49%	
	04/05	4	50%			1	0		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	292	42%	47%	-5%	72	50%	45%	5%
	03/04	182	51%	50%	1%	33	33%	43%	-10%
	04/05	146	51%			34	44%		
NVQs	02/03	77	19%	47%	-38%	250	40%	45%	-5%
	03/04	36	28%	47%	-29%	279	39%	47%	-8%
	04/05	16	44%			369	61%		
Other	02/03	107	27%	48%	-29%	665	56%	50%	6%
	03/04	170	35%	49%	-14%	787	59%	52%	7%
	04/05	173	47%			535	61%		