



Macclesfield College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Inspection report

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| Audience Post sixteen | Published November 2006 | Provider reference 295741 |
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Basic information about the college

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Name of college: | Macclesfield College |
| Type of college: | General Further Education |
| Principal: | Wendy Wright |
| Address of college: | Park Lane Macclesfield Cheshire SK11 8LF |
| Telephone number: | 01625 410 000 |
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| Chair of governors: | Ian Standen |
| Unique reference number: | 130621 |
| Name of lead inspector: | David Lindsay ALI |
| Dates of inspection: | 25-29 September 2006 |

Background of the organisation

1. Macclesfield College is a medium-sized general further education college, which serves the boroughs of Macclesfield and Congleton in East Cheshire. The college draws smaller numbers of learners from the surrounding areas of Derbyshire and Stockport. The area is predominantly rural but bordered to the north by the Greater Manchester conurbation. The main college site is one mile from the town centre of Macclesfield. It also operates from 30 community locations. The college has CoVE status for aerospace engineering. Its mission is to “encourage and support learning and achievement by young people and adults, to enrich lives, promote social inclusion and provide skills required by the local and regional economies. It will do so by delivering the highest quality of education and training, designed to meet the needs and aspirations of individuals, industry and the communities it serves in an efficient and effective manner.”
2. There are four local high schools and one independent school in the Macclesfield area and five other schools in its main catchment area. Less than two per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups. The surrounding area is affluent with low levels of unemployment: 0.9% in Macclesfield and 1.0% in Congleton. However, the two boroughs include four areas identified by Cheshire County Council as suffering high Family Stress. Participation rates in these areas are significantly lower than the average for the wards in which they sit.
3. In 2004/05, including the Adult and Community Learning (ACL) contract from Cheshire County Council, there were 13,500 enrolments, of which 12,500 were part-time. Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded learners totalled 4,905 and included 634 full-time learners aged 16-18. The ACL contact accounted for 3,694 enrolments in 2005/06. The gender profile showed 65% of the learners were female. Eighty eight per cent of 16 year olds in Macclesfield are engaged in education or training. Over half stay at school. Ninety four per cent of learners aged 16-18 were classified as white as were 94 per cent of adults.
4. The college offers courses from entry level to higher education. The range of programmes has been extended significantly in recent years in order to meet local demand and to promote progression, offering courses from entry level or level 1 to at least level 3 in 12 of 15 subject sector areas of learning.

Scope of the inspection

5. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual

assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
- achievements and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Summary of grades awarded

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Effectiveness of provision | Outstanding: grade 1 |
| Capacity to improve | Outstanding: grade 1 |
| Achievements and standards | 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. Achievements and standards are good. Overall success rates have improved since the last inspection and are good. Success rates for learners of different age groups on long courses at different levels show some variation in upward trends. Attendance rates are high. Key skills pass rates, although now above those for similar colleges, remain low.
7. Teaching and learning are good. The college's arrangements for judging the quality of its teaching and learning have been strengthened and inspectors agreed with the college's judgements. Most lessons are well-planned and take account of individual learners' needs. Lessons include a good range of activities to interest and involve all learners. Teachers are well-qualified and most have relevant vocational experience which they use to enhance lessons. The use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning, although increasing, is not fully developed.
8. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. The very extensive range of programmes is well designed to meet the needs of learners, employers and the local community. Vulnerable and hard to reach learners are well provided for. Collaboration with partners to develop the new 14-19 learning zone and work with employers are excellent.
9. Guidance and support are outstanding. Comprehensive information, advice, guidance and all aspects of personal support are provided. Tutorials are used effectively to help learners progress.
10. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal provides exceptional leadership supported by experienced managers. Governance is outstanding. There is a sustained focus on improving standards. The accommodation strategy is very well managed. Quality assurance is highly effective and the self-assessment report process is rigorous.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

11. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. The principal, senior management team, managers and staff work cohesively together with excellent teamwork with the well being of all their learners at heart. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive. Quality assurance processes are robust. The quality of provision is now outstanding. Overall success rates are good and have improved steadily over the last three years, more quickly than

national rates. Staff have been consulted widely in planning the new college, they are enthusiastic and are working productively with school staff to plan the 14-19 curriculum due to start in September 2007.

12. The self-assessment report and its update are accurate and identify the strengths and most areas for development. The update judges that five curriculum areas have improved to be good or outstanding since the previous inspection. A minority of curriculum reports do not consolidate the judgement for leadership and management well enough and some action plans do not identify priorities sufficiently clearly.

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

13. The college has taken outstanding steps to improve. The key areas for improvement have been addressed successfully with energy and purpose. The principal and senior managers have focussed on improvements at all levels since the previous inspection. Retention rates which were low on some courses have improved significantly overall to above the national average in 2004-05. The college has made appropriate investment in ILT and training and has made progress in its use in teaching and learning. Overall recruitment has improved considerably to meet and exceed targets. The work-based assessment on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes is now well established. Poor accommodation is being replaced by a purpose built campus and sixth form college as part of the 14-19 'learning zone'. The college has been very responsive to local and national needs and those of employers.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- good and improving overall success rates
- high attendance
- good teaching and learning
- excellent collaboration with partners to establish the innovative 14-19 developments
- excellent employer engagement
- wide range of inclusive provision to meet the needs of learners
- outstanding guidance and support
- outstanding leadership and management
- well-established quality improvement systems
- outstanding governance
- very well managed accommodation strategy.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the consistency of success rates and their improvement
- the achievement of key skills.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

14. Achievements and standards are good. In 2005, overall success, retention and pass rates were above the national average for similar colleges by four, three and two percentage points respectively. College data for 2006 indicate that success rates have improved further and are good at eight points above the national rate. There has been a general trend upwards in success rates, always at or above the national averages since 2003, although they fell slightly in 2004. Success rates for all long courses improved steadily from around national averages to above in 2005. College data for 2006 shows they are now nearly nine points above the 2004/05 national average. For 16-18 year olds in 2005 success and pass rates were above, and retention at, the national average. For adults in 2005, success and retention rates were above the national average but pass rates were at the national average.
15. Success rates at different levels on long courses have varied for 16-18 year olds. At level 1 success rates fell below the national average in 2005. College data for 2006 shows a significant rise to well above the most recent average. At level 2 success rates improved well in 2005 and are now comparatively high. Level 3 success rates, although improved in 2006 and now above the national average, remained around the national averages in 2004 and 2005.
16. For adult learners on long courses at level 1, success rates have improved slowly for the past four years, remaining well above the national average. Level 2 success rates have improved significantly over the last four years from below national averages to well above. At level 3, success rates are good and have improved from 2003 to 2005, although they fell slightly in 2006 according to college data. Pass rates improved but retention rates declined sharply in 2006.
17. Success rates on short courses are high and have improved since 2003/04. The college value added system indicates that most learners are making good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
18. Learners on adult and community courses perform well. Fourteen to sixteen year old learners on the increased flexibility programme do well. Females do better than males at all levels and types of courses. Success rates for those with a learning difficulty and/or disability have improved significantly since 2002/03.
19. At GCSE the proportion of those passing has improved and is now good. Overall success rates for NVQ are good and improved steadily to 2005 but fell in 2006. Overall, GNVQ success rates have improved steadily from 2003 and are particularly high at levels one and three.

20. Attendance for 2005-06 is high at around 90%, and has improved significantly from the last inspection. Progression to HE is good overall as is progression between college courses. A good proportion of learners participating in the increased flexibility programme, move onto college courses.
21. Most learners produce work of a good standard. Learners develop good work related skills, are well motivated and enjoy their courses. Achievement of key skills, although still low, has improved considerably and is now above national averages.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

22. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Since the last inspection considerable investment and development have taken place. The college's arrangements for judging the quality of its teaching and learning have been strengthened. The college's self-assessment report is now accurate. Overall, inspectors agreed with the judgements on the quality of teaching and learning made by college observers. However, the feedback given to teachers to improve their teaching is not always sufficiently detailed. Advanced practitioners provide effective training and mentoring for teachers needing help. Support for new teachers is very effective. The impact of actions taken to raise standards of teaching are followed up through subsequent observations and the appraisal process.
23. Most lessons are well-planned and take account of individual learners' needs. The quality of lessons for those in the 14-16 age group is good. Lessons include a good range of activities to interest and involve all learners. Effective use is made of group work. Learners participate well and their learning is usually carefully checked. Teachers have a good awareness of their learners' abilities and backgrounds; they are well-qualified and most have relevant vocational experience which they use to enhance lessons. Learning resources are good in specialist areas, including engineering and art and design. In most of the other areas teachers make good use of the poorer accommodation pending the opening of the new college. The resources for ILT are good. Whilst being increasingly used by teachers during lessons, ILT is not always used to its full potential. Most teachers give good attention to the promotion of equality of opportunity. Appropriate risk assessment is made in practical lessons.
24. The outcomes of initial and diagnostic assessments, carried out during induction, are used effectively to set targets for individuals' learning and to identify those in need of additional support. Progress against these targets is monitored effectively during regular tutorials. The provision of additional learning support is well managed and learners speak very positively about the benefits of the help they receive. The impact of this support on learners' progress is monitored by both learning support and course tutors. According

- to the college's own measures of value added, learners make good progress based upon their levels of prior attainment.
25. Assessment, internal verification and standards moderation are well organised and there is good guidance and support for teachers in how to implement college guidelines. Arrangements for teaching, managing and assessing key skills have been strengthened.
 26. The college communicates well with parents on the progress of learners aged 16-18. Employer engagement is excellent; employers speak positively about the information they receive on the progress of their employees.
 27. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. The college provides a very extensive range of courses to meet the needs of the local community, including vocational courses at all levels and some specialist courses. Provision is inclusive and well developed and is planned to develop further in the new learning zone project. There is a good focus on widening participation and meeting a range of initiatives including the 14-19 and national skills agenda. Excellent collaboration with a wide range of partners takes place, particularly with local schools, and is successful in addressing gender stereotyping on courses such as engineering and social care programmes. A large number of 14-16 year olds attend a well-structured increased flexibility programme.
 28. Effective strategies are in place to engage vulnerable groups. A 'Getting Connected' programme targets those not in education, employment or training and learners at risk. Adult and community learning courses specifically target identified groups.
 29. The college engages very effectively with employers who access a broad range of successful training. Courses are specifically tailored to meet the needs of learners many of whom have variable work patterns.
 30. An improved enrichment programme provides activities in curriculum, tutorial and extra-curricula activities.
 31. Support and guidance are outstanding. A wide range of personal, welfare, financial and counselling support is available. Learners with mobility difficulties receive unobtrusive and sensitively managed support. All full-time learners undergo initial assessment and diagnostic screening. A central interview team manages initial learner interviews and is effective at ensuring learners select appropriate courses. A comprehensive 2-week induction includes activities designed to settle learners into the college and their courses. Connexions staff attend daily and learners can text the counsellor to arrange meetings. Effective school liaison processes provide very good pre-entry advice and guidance.

32. The tutorial system is well structured and managed, particularly for full time learners. Tutorials include topics on health. A good system for the observation of tutorials, feedback and action planning focuses on improving performance. A detailed action and development plan exists to develop the process further. Tutors have access to good resources to help them. Managers provide good support to tutors, particularly in dealing with challenging learners. Effective use is made of the Connexions service.
33. Statistical analysis of the impact of additional learning support is not well developed. Managers are not able to monitor year on year comparisons of its effectiveness.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

34. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal, ably supported by an experienced senior management team, provides exceptional leadership and a clear educational vision. The strategic direction is clearly understood and supported by staff. There is a sustained focus to drive up already good standards. The quality of provision is now outstanding. Since the previous inspection overall success rates have improved to above national averages. College data for 2006 indicates continued improvement. The college has addressed all the key areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
35. The college's highly regarded collaboration with partners to establish the new Macclesfield and East Cheshire 14-19 'learning zone' and the new campus build is excellent. The governors have played an important role in these innovative developments. Close monitoring of college performance and the achievement of challenging targets has been maintained.
36. Quality assurance processes of course review are well established, systematic and are highly effective in improving provision over time. Through detailed termly reviews of provision the principal and curriculum staff assess the rate of progress against curriculum action plans. Staff use a wide range of on-line MIS reports well. The self-assessment report and its update are accurate and identify the strengths and areas for development of the college. Five curriculum areas are judged to have improved since the previous inspection. A few curriculum reports do not consolidate sufficiently judgements for leadership and management. Curriculum level action plans have clear measures to assess progress; the college plans to improve the sharpness of some course level action planning and to prioritise action plans. There is a very good focus and achievement of exacting customer service standards in responding to enquiries and external communications.
37. The college complies fully with requirements for safeguarding children. The college's approach to inclusion is outstanding. The college meets fully with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 200 and the Special

Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002. The equality and diversity plan is monitored robustly with all targets met or exceeded; training for staff and governors includes the latest legislative requirements. Access for learners with mobility disabilities has been maintained and reasonable adjustments made during the new build.

38. The accommodation strategy is very well managed; high quality temporary accommodation and IT resources have been installed. Current learners are not disadvantaged whilst waiting for the new build. The new resources for the CoVE, the 'European Centre for Aerospace Training', are excellent.
39. High standards of operational management exist at all levels. The college has implemented training and development for existing and aspiring managers. Further development of managers' leadership qualities is planned. The principal also provides a monthly training session. Adult and community education courses are well managed and offer inclusive provision. The college is excellent at meeting the needs of employers.
40. Although some class sizes are small, attendance figures are high. Staff are well qualified and efficiently deployed. Financial management is sound. The college provides excellent value for money.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

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

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 16-18 | | | | 19+ | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------|
| | | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff |
| 1 Long | 02/03 | 304 | 69 | 56 | 13 | 966 | 67 | 55 | 12 |
| | 03/04 | 426 | 73 | 60 | 13 | 968 | 68 | 59 | 9 |
| | 04/05 | 345 | 61 | 64 | -3 | 1199 | 69 | 62 | 7 |
| GNVQs and precursors | 02/03 | 10 | 60.0 | 59.7 | 0.3 | 45 | 35.6 | 47.3 | -11.8 |
| | 03/04 | 11 | 63.6 | 65.1 | -1.5 | 24 | 62.5 | 52.3 | 10.2 |
| | 04/05 | 15 | 86.7 | 67.9 | 18.8 | 1 | 100.0 | 58.1 | 41.9 |
| NVQs | 02/03 | 73 | 74.0 | 55.6 | 18.4 | 34 | 76.5 | 56.3 | 20.2 |
| | 03/04 | 72 | 80.6 | 61.0 | 19.5 | 36 | 25.0 | 62.3 | -37.3 |
| | 04/05 | 83 | 66.3 | 67.2 | -0.9 | 27 | 77.8 | 66.9 | 10.8 |
| Other | 02/03 | 221 | 67.9 | 55.9 | 12.0 | 887 | 68.0 | 54.9 | 13.1 |
| | 03/04 | 343 | 71.4 | 60.0 | 11.5 | 908 | 69.6 | 59.0 | 10.6 |
| | 04/05 | 247 | 58.7 | 63.6 | -4.9 | 1171 | 69.0 | 61.4 | 7.6 |

Table 2

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

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 16-18 | | | | 19+ | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|
| | | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff |
| 2 Long | 02/03 | 466 | 55 | 52 | 3 | 1322 | 47 | 49 | -2 |
| | 03/04 | 523 | 56 | 56 | 0 | 1189 | 52 | 54 | -2 |
| | 04/05 | 465 | 70 | 61 | 11 | 813 | 66 | 60 | 6 |
| GCSEs | 02/03 | 88 | 78.4 | 57.1 | 21.3 | 51 | 72.5 | 55.3 | 17.3 |
| | 03/04 | 108 | 60.2 | 61.3 | -1.1 | 71 | 73.2 | 58.8 | 14.5 |
| | 04/05 | 72 | 66.7 | 64.1 | 2.6 | 106 | 69.8 | 62.3 | 7.5 |
| GNVQs and precursors | 02/03 | 58 | 75.9 | 58.5 | 17.3 | 3 | 50.0 | 52.8 | -2.8 |
| | 03/04 | 58 | 65.5 | 63.0 | 2.5 | 3 | 66.7 | 56.6 | 10.1 |
| | 04/05 | 22 | 77.3 | 66.8 | 10.5 | | | | |
| NVQs | 02/03 | 114 | 60.5 | 41.9 | 18.6 | 182 | 65.4 | 48.2 | 17.2 |
| | 03/04 | 117 | 60.7 | 51.9 | 8.8 | 170 | 67.1 | 53.5 | 13.6 |
| | 04/05 | 194 | 73.2 | 57.0 | 16.2 | 196 | 82.7 | 59.6 | 23.0 |
| Other | 02/03 | 206 | 36.4 | 50.5 | -14.1 | 1086 | 42.1 | 48.4 | -6.3 |
| | 03/04 | 240 | 49.2 | 54.1 | -4.9 | 945 | 47.4 | 52.7 | -5.3 |
| | 04/05 | 177 | 68.4 | 60.1 | 8.3 | 511 | 59.3 | 58.8 | 0.5 |

Table 3

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

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 16-18 | | | | 19+ | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------|
| | | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff |
| 3 Long | 02/03 | 411 | 61 | 62 | -1 | 605 | 60 | 51 | 9 |
| | 03/04 | 349 | 68 | 64 | 4 | 593 | 61 | 53 | 8 |
| | 04/05 | 221 | 68 | 67 | 1 | 717 | 66 | 57 | 9 |
| A/A2 Levels | 02/03 | 32 | 68.8 | 81.8 | -13 | 34 | 73.5 | 63.0 | 10.5 |
| | 03/04 | 4 | 75.0 | 83.8 | -8.8 | 16 | 87.5 | 65.5 | 22 |
| | 04/05 | | | | | 10 | 50.0 | 69.1 | -19.1 |
| AS Levels** | 02/03 | 52 | 46.2 | 61.1 | -14.9 | 63 | 52.4 | 48.2 | 4.2 |
| | 03/04 | 58 | 56.9 | 62.9 | -6 | 61 | 39.3 | 49.6 | -10.2 |
| | 04/05 | 48 | 39.6 | 65.5 | -25.9 | 47 | 51.1 | 52.2 | -1.1 |
| GNVQs and precursors | 02/03 | 260 | 56.9 | 49.8 | 7.1 | 48 | 70.8 | 44.9 | 25.9 |
| | 03/04 | 125 | 78.4 | 52.4 | 26.0 | 19 | 63.2 | 43.5 | 19.7 |
| | 04/05 | 95 | 84.2 | 60.2 | 24.0 | 12 | 91.7 | 52.9 | 38.8 |
| NVQs | 02/03 | 13 | 46.2 | 50.2 | -4.0 | 64 | 65.6 | 44.1 | 21.6 |
| | 03/04 | 23 | 52.2 | 53.7 | -1.5 | 96 | 74.0 | 47.0 | 27.0 |
| | 04/05 | 9 | 44.4 | 62.4 | -17.9 | 169 | 71.6 | 53.9 | 17.7 |
| Other | 02/03 | 54 | 61.1 | 55.4 | 5.7 | 396 | 58.3 | 52.6 | 5.7 |
| | 03/04 | 139 | 64.7 | 56.3 | 8.4 | 401 | 59.4 | 55.7 | 3.7 |
| | 04/05 | 117 | 68.4 | 60.0 | 8.4 | 479 | 64.9 | 58.3 | 6.6 |

** data supplied by the college

Table 4

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

a) Overall success rate

| End Year | Apprenticeship Programme | Number of Learners * | College Framework rate ** | National rate ** | College NVQ rate ** | National rate ** |
|----------|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 2003/04 | Apprenticeship | n/a | | | | |
| | Advanced | n/a | | | | |
| 2004/05 | Apprenticeship | 4 | 33 | 39 | 100 | 50 |
| | Advanced | 4 | 100 | 34 | 100 | 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

** data supplied by the college

b) Timely success rate

| End Year | Apprenticeship Programme | Number of Learners * | College Framework rate ** | National rate ** | College NVQ rate ** | National rate ** |
|----------|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 2003/04 | Apprenticeship | n/a | | | | |
| | Advanced | n/a | | | | |
| 2004/05 | Apprenticeship | 4 | 33 | 22 | 100 | 29 |
| | Advanced | 4 | 100 | 21 | 100 | 31 |

* The number of learners who planned to complete their learning programme in the given year
 ** data supplied by the college