



# Leeds College of Building



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

Better  
education  
and care

## Inspection report

Audience  
Post-sixteen

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## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Leeds College of Building
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Ian Billyard
Address of college:	North Street, Leeds, LS2 7QT
Telephone number:	01132 226000
Fax number:	01132 226001
Chair of governors:	John Miller
Unique reference number:	130542
Name of lead inspector:	Heather Barnett, HMI
Dates of inspection:	9-13 October 2006

## Background of the organisation

1. Leeds College of Building is a medium sized general further education college that specialises in construction education and training. The college is the only specialist construction college in England. It is based on four main sites and also works from satellite sites with local schools and Leeds City Council. In 2005/06 there were 9,044 enrolments of which 4,635 were for learners aged 16-18 and 4,409 were for learners aged 19 or over. The number of learners at the college has risen over the last three years from 3,769 in 2002/03 to 4,287 in 2005/06. Most learners are white males. The highest proportion of learners come from the Leeds area, but the remainder come from a much broader catchment area. Many of the local learners come from inner city wards, which are amongst the 10% most deprived wards in the country.
2. Provision is offered from entry level to level 4, with the majority of learners on programmes at levels 1 and 2. The college holds a work-based learning contract for apprenticeships with West Yorkshire local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In addition there is sub-contracted education and training for Leeds City Council and a range of managing agencies, such as CITB Construction Skills, BEST and JTL.
3. The college offers provision for full-time and part-time learners in health and public services, engineering and manufacturing technologies, construction, planning and the built environment, preparing for life and work and business for life and work. The largest number of enrolments is in the construction, planning and built environment area. The college's provision for learners aged 14-16 has grown over the last few years and supported nearly 600 learners in 2005/06. The college has a successful centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in construction and is also a partner with two other colleges in a collaborative CoVE in building services.
4. The college's mission statement outlines its commitment to deliver a comprehensive range of high quality learning opportunities related to construction and the built environment.

## 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.

## Summary of grades awarded

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

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

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

*Contributory grades:*

*Learners aged 14-16*

*Outstanding: grade 1*

6. Leeds College of Building provides good quality education and support for its learners. Achievement and standards are good, with rising trends in success rates over a number of years. Pass rates for most courses are above national rates, although there are variations in performance across different areas. Success rates for level 1, where there are most learners, improved substantially from 2004/05 to 2005/06, as did achievement for those in work-based learning (WBL). However, retention rates declined from their previously high levels during 2005/06 and this has affected success rates adversely, particularly at levels 2 and 3. Success rates on key skills courses and for learners aged 14-16 are very high.
7. Teaching and learning are good with the majority of lessons well planned and having clear links between theory and practice. Teaching in practical workshop lessons is particularly good and there is a strong emphasis on successful skills development. Assessment is satisfactory or better in all areas. Procedures for initial assessment are robust and comprehensive. However, in some cases the quality of target setting for learners is weak. The college provides an outstanding range of provision which is highly responsive and constantly evolving. There are two highly successful CoVEs. Provision for learners aged 14-16 is outstanding. Support and guidance for learners are good. Targeted support for learners at risk of leaving their programme is very good. The tutorial programme is well planned for full-time learners but the entitlement for part-time learners is less clearly defined.
8. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. A wide range of courses provides very good opportunities for progression. Links with employers and local schools are exceptionally strong. Strategies to widen participation of under represented groups have been successful. A significant proportion of learners come from socially disadvantaged areas and these learners achieve well. The central promotion of enrichment activities is satisfactory and participation rates, although improving, are low. Aspects of equality of opportunity are insufficiently promoted throughout the college.
9. Leadership and management of the college are good. Managers have introduced a range of effective quality improvements and the senior management team has set a clear strategic direction for the college. Senior managers and governors have been outstanding in their leadership. They

have maintained high success rates and a strong financial position throughout a period of growth. However, the routine use of data to identify trends is not yet sufficiently developed.

## Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

10. The college demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve its provision for learners. Pass rates have continued to improve in nearly all areas and improvements in key skills, work-based learning and level 1 success rates have been outstanding. The college has successfully implemented an ambitious improvement strategy for all its learning environments and has extended the number of sites to increase the range of programmes it offers.
11. Inspectors found the college's annual self-assessment arrangements to be good. Managers have been highly successful in identifying organisational strengths and weaknesses and supporting quality improvement across all areas of learning and cross college support functions.

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

12. The college has made good progress in addressing many areas for improvement noted during the last inspection and the annual assessment visit. Achievement and success rates on most programmes have improved, particularly at level 1. Assessment and verification arrangements are now robust and consistent. Key skills teaching is now highly effective. The college's teacher observation scheme has been a major factor in the improvement in teaching and learning, particularly in theory sessions. Initial assessment arrangements are now systematic and effective.

## Key strengths of the college

### *Strengths*

- improving success rates
- good teaching in practical lessons
- high expectations and aspirations set for learners
- outstanding provision for learners aged 14-16
- highly effective employer engagement
- very good development of learners' key skills to promote economic well-being
- highly successful CoVEs
- strong pastoral support
- successful management of growth
- particularly effective leadership and governance
- good action taken to drive improvement.



## Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- declining retention rates
- target-setting for learners
- structure and promotion of enrichment
- inconsistency in divisional performance
- promotion of equal opportunities
- insufficient use of information for management at all levels.

## Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

*Contributory grades:*

*Learners aged 14-16*

*Outstanding: grade 1*

13. The college's self-assessment report identifies achievements and standards as good. Inspectors agree with this view.
14. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 and adult learners have improved markedly from 2002/03 to 2004/05. For adult learners, overall success, retention and pass rates place the college in the top 25% of colleges nationally. For learners aged 16-18, the overall success rate has improved considerably between 2002/03 and 2004/05. Pass rates on most courses are above national averages, although there are variations in success rates across different areas. College data for 2005/06 shows that overall pass rates are high. On level 1 provision, where there are most learners, pass rates have improved substantially between 2004/05 and 2005/06. However, retention rates have declined from their previous high levels and this has affected success rates adversely, particularly at levels 2 and 3. Learners make good progress on their courses, compared with their attainments on entry.
15. Key skills success rates have improved considerably between 2002/03 and 2004/05, and in 2004/05, were well above national rates. Pass rates and progression rates of learners aged 14-16 are very high. In 2005/06, pass rates were over 90% with the majority of learners aged 14-16 continuing in education post-16. The achievement of overall apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship frameworks has improved between 2002/03 and 2005/06, with a particular increase between 2004/05 and 2005/06, especially for advanced apprenticeships. College data for 2005/06 suggest that achievement rates for apprenticeships are now broadly in line with national rates and those for advanced apprenticeships are above national rates.
16. Learners benefit from a wide range of work opportunities to develop their workplace skills. They develop very good craft skills. The emphasis on health and safety on all programmes is strong. Learners develop excellent skills to achieve economic well being. They are well motivated, enjoy their studies and speak positively of their experiences at college. Attendance at lessons is high. The college sets high expectations for learners and celebrates achievement, especially the high levels of success at local, regional and national competitions.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

*Contributory grades:*

*Learners aged 14 to 16*

*Outstanding: grade 1*

17. Inspectors agree with the college's own judgement that teaching and learning are good. The self-assessment report accurately identifies most of the key strengths and areas for improvement within teaching and learning. Teachers plan most lessons well and make clear links between theory and practice. They teach practical workshop lessons particularly well and develop learners' vocational, team working and problem-solving skills successfully. Teachers have extensive industrial experience and knowledge which greatly contribute to learners' practical understanding of the construction industry. Where teaching is less effective, teachers give insufficient attention to the differing abilities of learners and how they may best be engaged or challenged and involved in their learning. A rapidly expanding virtual learning environment (VLE) supports all aspects of teaching and learning effectively. Several teachers use the resource successfully to create high quality, interactive learning materials. Many learners also regularly access the VLE to revise or catch up with their work. The use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons has increased, although some teachers use this technology more creatively than others.
18. Teachers assess learners' work regularly and learners receive good verbal feedback. The quality of written feedback on workbooks and portfolios however, is more variable. Examples of very good assessment practice exist in plumbing. Procedures for monitoring internal verification have improved considerably. A clear standardised approach is in place across the college. Procedures for initial assessment are robust and comprehensive. A range of phased screening before and early in the course identifies clearly learners who may require additional support. Those identified as needing extra help receive support swiftly. Individual learning plans (ILPs) are in place for all learners. In some cases, the quality of target setting within ILPs and in work-based learning (WBL), is weak. This makes it difficult to measure learners' progress against their qualifications clearly or to use targets effectively to meet learners' potential.
19. The college provides an outstanding range of provision which is highly responsive to national and regional initiatives. The curriculum is constantly evolving to match the needs and demands of employers and individual learners. There is a multitude of modes of delivery to provide flexibility to programme attendance. In addition, the college has recently introduced a number of successful distance learning courses. Learners can progress from entry level to higher education. The college engages and works in partnership with over 1,000 employers effectively. Many partnerships exist in addition to this; for example, links with Job Centre Plus and Youth Build. The double CoVE status in construction and building services has been instrumental in

providing high quality resources, improving teaching and learning and maintaining the college's high reputation within the construction industry. Strategies to widen participation of those under represented in construction are successful. Through focused marketing, the proportion of learners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and of female learners has increased considerably over the last three years.

20. The college has made significant improvements to the organisation and delivery of key skills across the college. All key skills are now integrated effectively within vocational subjects and learners appreciate the relevance to their future employability. The number of learners entered for key skills qualifications is high and rising. Overall, enrichment for learners is good. Within each division, the opportunities for team building activities, national and international trips and participation and success in competitions, are generally good. The development and promotion of central enrichment activities however, is satisfactory and participation rates, although improving, are low. The college has also expanded the range of accredited short courses. Excellent links exist with a large number of local schools. Management of the college's provision for learners aged 14-16 is particularly strong with virtually all pupils working towards accredited qualifications.
21. Guidance and support for learners are good. The student services section provides a wide range of guidance and counselling services. The college gives a high priority to learners' health and safety and learners feel safe and well supported at college. The college works well with the Connexions service to provide good careers advice. Staff training on dealing with challenging behaviour is particularly good and effectively supports learners to improve. Targeted support for learners identified as being at risk of leaving their programme is very good. However, measures to assess the impact and effectiveness of interventions for learners at risk are sometimes unclear.
22. Additional learning support is well managed and learning support tutors are well qualified. Tutors measure the progress learners make compared with their starting point effectively. In basic skills literacy and numeracy courses, retention rates are very high. However, success rates, whilst improving, are below national averages.
23. The tutorial programme is well planned for full-time learners, but part-time learners' entitlement is less clearly defined. The college places a strong emphasis on improving and monitoring learners' attendance and on developing their employability skills. Learners have regular progress reviews, but tutors do not set them meaningful targets. In addition, insufficient attention is placed on the promotion of equality and diversity issues during progress reviews.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

*Learners aged 14-16*

*Outstanding: grade 1*

24. Leadership and management are good and some aspects are outstanding. Leadership itself is outstanding. The college has introduced a range of effective quality improvements since the last inspection. Self-assessment is rigorous, inclusive and generally accurate and is a key factor in quality improvement. While the actions taken to improve level 1, key skills and work-based learning success rates have been particularly effective, strategies to improve retention rates during 2005/06 were not. During this period, the college experienced a decline in retention rates across programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3.
25. Since the last inspection the college has introduced a new management structure that has improved communications at all levels. The senior management team sets a clear strategic direction for the college. It drives this direction through a range of demanding performance targets for all courses and cross college services. Senior managers have been outstanding in their leadership throughout a period of growth that has seen high pass and success rates and the maintenance of a very strong financial position. However, the college has not sufficiently developed its routine use of data to identify declining trends in retention, value for money indicators and the variable performance between programmes. This has impacted on the effectiveness of the management of development plans.
26. The college has been very effective in managing an extensive redevelopment of its premises and resources and in securing new accommodation. Throughout this period, the college has significantly increased its learner numbers and expanded its range of vocational programmes to include electrical installation and highly successful provision for learners aged 14-16. It now provides good training, learning and assessment facilities across four sites and good value for money. The college has successfully recruited a large number of new teachers, many of whom have come directly from industry. New and existing staff are well supported and trained, and effectively mentored during their probationary period.
27. Governors provide very strong leadership and direction. They are highly active in supporting the curriculum areas. They challenge poor performance and give advice on strategic matters. They bring a wide range of skills and expertise to benefit the college and provide particularly strong oversight of quality improvement and audit decisions.
28. The college has a strong commitment to equality and diversity, and provides a safe and inclusive environment for all learners. Governors, managers and staff have been trained in the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment Act 2000), part IV of the Disability Discrimination Act, the Special Education Needs

and Disability Act and child protection. The college response is fully compliant with these acts and is transparent within all its policies and practices.

## Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	02/03	999	50	56	-6	367	46	55	-9
	03/04	986	79	60	19	470	66	59	7
	04/05	1117	63	64	-1	731	73	62	11
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	269	67	60	7	22	59	47	12
	03/04	265	85	65	20	21	81	52	29
	04/05	272	82	68	14	15	67	58	9
NVQs	02/03	221	57	56	1	199	30	56	-26
	03/04	303	60	61	-1	202	44	62	-18
	04/05	226	76	67	9	115	51	67	-16
Other	02/03	509	38	56	-18	146	65	55	10
	03/04	418	89	60	29	247	83	59	24
	04/05	619	50	64	-14	601	77	61	16

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	02/03	266	38	52	-14	282	44	49	-5
	03/04	743	29	56	-27	781	47	54	-7
	04/05	448	73	61	12	1001	69	60	9
GCSEs	02/03	0	0	0		0	0	0	
	03/04	0	0	0		0	0	0	
	04/05	0	0	0		0	0	0	
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	10	70	59	11	0	0	0	
	03/04	7	86	63	23	0	0	0	
	04/05	0	0	0		0	0	0	
NVQs	02/03	161	40	42	-2	118	45	48	-3
	03/04	182	60	52	8	332	52	54	-2
	04/05	256	64	57	7	609	52	60	-8
Other	02/03	95	32	51	-19	164	44	48	-4
	03/04	554	19	54	-35	449	44	53	-9
	04/05	192	84	60	24	392	96	59	37

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	02/03	147	66	62	4	185	70	51	19
	03/04	179	63	64	-1	595	91	54	37
	04/05	124	73	68	5	428	89	57	32
A/A2 Levels	02/03	0	0	0		0	0	0	
	03/04	0	0	0		0	0	0	
	04/05	0	0	0		0	0	0	
AS Levels	02/03	0	0	0		0	0	0	
	03/04	0	0	0		0	0	0	
	04/05	0	0	0		0	0	0	
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	76	57	50	7	60	58	45	13
	03/04	67	19	52	-33	26	4	44	-40
	04/05	0	0	0	0	0	0		
NVQs	02/03	70	76	50	26	51	71	44	27
	03/04	35	91	54	37	62	74	47	27
	04/05	55	87	62	25	98	86	54	32
Other	02/03	1	100	55	45	74	80	53	27
	03/04	77	88	56	32	507	98	56	42
	04/05	69	62	60	2	330	90	58	32

Table 4

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

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	86	13	25	40	42
	Advanced	73	19	26	49	51
2004/05	Apprenticeship	99	29	39	54	52
	Advanced	67	37	40	43	55

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'



b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	84	4	9	21	17
	Advanced	81	16	17	42	36
2004/05	Apprenticeship	101	16	13	34	20
	Advanced	67	25	17	30	33

\* The number of learners who planned to complete their learning programme in the given year

\*\* College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'