



# Wakefield College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published January 2007	Provider reference 130549
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## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Wakefield College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Heather MacDonald
Address of college:	Margaret Street Wakefield West Yorkshire WF1 2DH
Telephone number:	01924 789 789
Fax number:	01924 789 340
Chair of governors:	Cath Orange
Unique reference number:	130549
Name of lead inspector:	Glad Capewell, HMI
Dates of inspection:	13 - 17 November 2006

## Background of the organisation

1. Wakefield College is a general further education (FE) college with three main sites: one in the city centre; another that is one and a half miles from the city centre; and the third, which is eight miles away in Castleford. The college makes provision, often in partnership with other organisations, at a number of community centres. The majority of the college's learners reside in the Wakefield district, although over 10% travel from Leeds and Kirklees.
2. The unemployment rate is 1.8%, which is slightly below the national rate (2.2%), although youth unemployment is high. The district is 54th out of the 345 most disadvantaged areas in the government's index of local deprivation: some 34% of the population lives in areas that are among the 10% most deprived in the country; around 60% of learners aged 16-18 come from disadvantaged areas. Levels of poor literacy and numeracy in the local population are above national averages.
3. Of the 18 secondary schools in the city, five have sixth forms and there is a sixth form college in Pontefract. Further afield there are general FE colleges in Barnsley, Dewsbury, Doncaster, Huddersfield, Leeds and Selby, and two sixth form colleges in Huddersfield. The proportion of learners aged 16 gaining five or more A\* - C grades in GCSE examinations was 56.5% in 2005 compared to the national average for maintained schools of 57.1%.
4. In 2004/05, the college enrolled 11,563 learners, of whom 75% were over 19 years of age. Around 8% of learners were of minority ethnic origin. In the local area the minority ethnic population is just over 2%.
5. Courses are offered in most sector subject categories. In 2004/05, around 30% of all learners were enrolled on courses at foundation and pre-foundation level, 28% at level 2 and 21% at level 3. The remainder comprised learners on higher education courses and those on other provision. The college has two Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), one in enterprise management, and one in computer technology (in partnership with Leeds College of Technology).

The college's mission is:

*to transform lives and build prosperity by attracting young people, adults and employers into learning, and by inspiring them all with excellent opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills.*

## 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](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 visit and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

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

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievements and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2

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

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

7. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates on long courses are rising steadily and are high at some levels. Learners enjoy their work, make good progress and develop their confidence and skills well. Attendance is good. Retention rates were low for some groups of learners in 2004/05. Key skills success rates are rising but remain low.
8. Teaching and learning are good. Planning of lessons is thorough and most learners are suitably challenged. Initial and ongoing assessments are effectively carried out. Resources to support learning are good. Staff are appropriately qualified. Improvements have been made to the arrangements for the teaching and assessment of key skills.
9. There is an outstanding range of programmes and partnerships to meet learners' and employers' needs. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. College programmes offer very good progression routes and the provision for learners aged 14-16 is also outstanding.
10. Support for learners is good with some outstanding features. The support for learners with specific learning needs is exceptional. Careers advice and guidance supports progression well. Significant improvements have been made to the tutorial system.
11. Leadership and management are good. A clear vision has been established for the college. The programme of staff development is excellent. Accommodation is maintained to a high standard. Equality and diversity is well promoted. Governors are supportive. Management information is timely and accurate. Quality assurance processes are good. Appropriate strategies are in place to improve retention, although it is too early to judge the full impact yet. The college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

12. The college's capacity to improve is good. The principal and senior managers have encouraged a culture of self-review. Self-assessment processes are well established and thorough. The college's updated 2004/05 self-assessment report is largely accurate in its evaluation of provision. Quality assurance arrangements are good. Appropriate actions have been implemented to secure improvements in many aspects of the college's work. Firm interventions by managers have proved successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning and learners' achievements. There are improving trends in long course success rates in line with those found nationally. A wide range

of carefully monitored strategies has been put in place to encourage learners to stay on their programme of study and this is proving successful in a number of areas. However, it is too early to assess the full impact of all the actions taken.

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

13. The college has made good progress on addressing areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. A strong focus has been given to improving the quality of teaching and learning; the proportion of good or better teaching has risen and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has declined. A wider range of opportunities now exist for both staff and students to access work experience. Enrichment provision has broadened considerably. Retention rates for learners aged 16-18 at level 2 have risen. Strategies continue to be developed to support adult learners on level 1 and level 2 courses. The accuracy and use of centrally held data supports effectively the monitoring of learners' achievements. The college is now in a strong financial position.

Key strengths of the college

#### *Strengths*

- good progress made by learners on many courses
- rising and some high success rates on long courses
- raised confidence, skills and aspirations of learners
- good teaching and learning
- strong engagement in partnerships to meet local needs
- good access to a wide range of courses and progression routes
- comprehensive, effective support for learners
- outstanding provision for learners aged 14 to 16
- outstanding educational and social inclusion
- good curriculum management
- clear vision and direction by leaders and governors
- excellent programme of staff training and development
- strong financial management.

Areas for improvement

#### *The college should address*

- low retention rates for some groups of learners
- low key skills success rates
- the small and declining proportion of unsatisfactory teaching
- the low proportion of positive destinations from entry to employment programmes.



## Main findings

### Achievements and standards

Good: Grade 2

14. Achievements and standards are good. In 2004/05, the college exceeded its improvement target for the overall long course success rate, and just exceeded the national average. The overall success rate at level 3 for learners aged over 19 was high, the achievement rate being 11% above the national average. The overall success rate at level 1 for learners aged 16-18 was also significantly above the national average, being particularly high on general national vocational (GNVQ) courses. The overall success rate on courses at level 4 is higher than the national average. Short course success rates are satisfactory. Learners aged 14-16 achieve well although retention rates are more varied.
15. Good progress is made by learners on general certificate of education (GCE) and vocational certificate of education (VCE) courses and the achievement of high grades on these courses increased substantially in 2005/06. Very good standards are achieved by learners on GNVQ courses, who make excellent progress and achieve high grades. Learners enjoy their lessons and make good progress with their learning; their aspirations, confidence and skill levels are raised. They also develop their workplace skills well through work placements and through a comprehensive workplace skills programme attended by all full-time learners. Learners work with due regard for health and safety. Attendance rates are generally above those found in similar colleges. Many learners progress to higher level courses or to higher education and employment.
16. Achievements in work-based learning improved significantly in 2005/06, and the overall framework success rate is now just above the national average. There are good outcomes on Train to Gain skills for life courses, where 93% achieved their qualification in 2005/06. Progress made by learners on national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses is satisfactory. Progression rates on entry to employment (E2E) programmes were low in 2005/6, although early results from this year show improvement. Following a poor performance in 2004/05, key skills success rates improved in 2005/06 to around the low national average and remain an area for improvement.
17. Retention rates were low on long courses at levels 1 and 2 for adults and on GCE AS courses in 2004/05. Although these were not all identified in the self-assessment report, the college is well aware of the issues and action has been taken. Data provided by the college indicate some improvements in 2005/06, although these data were incomplete at the time of the inspection. The college is taking appropriate action to address the low success and retention rates of some adult learners of minority ethnic heritage.

## Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

18. Teaching and learning are good. According to the college's self-assessment, the proportion of good or better teaching increased from 53% in 2004/05 to 68% in 2005/06, and the proportion of inadequate teaching declined from 11% to 4%. Through carrying out joint observations, inspectors were able to confirm the college's judgements on the quality of teaching and learning and on the strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agree that planning is thorough and in most lessons there is good attention paid to the different needs of learners through provision of a range of tasks well matched to the area of study. Learners work well together, are well motivated, attentive and acquire new skills and knowledge. Most are sufficiently challenged by their work. There is good development of their social and communications skills and they enjoy their studies. The college continues to promote the embedding of information and learning technology (ILT) as a teaching and learning tool. The college has appropriate plans in place to address the weaknesses in teaching and learning identified in the self-assessment report.
19. Resources are used effectively to support learning. Continuous professional development supports well the development of teachers' skills, particularly through the work of advanced practitioners. Some 95% of the college's directly employed teaching staff have a teaching qualification or are working towards one. For agency teaching staff working at the college, this proportion is 56%. The college has shown continued commitment to investing in learning resources, including for community-based classes, which are held in a variety of venues, to ensure equality of access.
20. There is a comprehensive initial assessment process which is effective in identifying learners' additional support needs. Guidance staff give good help to learners when they enter college. There are good links with local schools, including special schools, to help with the transition of learners with additional support needs. Skills checks for all new learners are carried out during the first week of term. Learners on life skills programmes have an extended period of initial assessment at the start of the year followed by a further opportunity for assessment at their residential.
21. Internal verification is thorough and staff are well trained to carry out this task. There is effective tracking of learners' progress. Milestones, or targets, are set for each learner and group. Their progress towards them is reviewed regularly. To address low levels of success on key skills courses the college has significantly improved the arrangements for this provision to meet more effectively individuals' literacy and numeracy needs. Communication with parents and carers is good and recently the college has improved the arrangements for communication between the college and the parents and carers of learners on apprenticeships.
22. Overall, the college has an outstanding range of provision to meet local needs. It has exceptionally effective partnerships and plays a leading role in regional

regeneration. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding and it has resulted in many innovative projects to attract under-represented groups. Relationships with business and community partners are open and responsive. The Services to Business directorate provides customised learning for more than 1,000 employers in many sectors. A comprehensive 14-16 curriculum, negotiated through increasingly strong school partnerships, has been short-listed for a national award. Early college transfer successfully motivates young people at risk of disengagement and the college hosts alternative education for school-age pregnant girls. The college is Wakefield's lead partner for E2E. The college recognises it cannot effectively analyse the impact of work with employers and has received funds to develop this.

23. Learners have good access to a wide range of courses and progression routes from entry to level 4. Higher education provision at the college is expanding and university partnerships are well established. Well respected CoVEs in management and ICT are innovative and successful. All full-time and some part-time learners can enrich their experience through stimulating activities, although a few learners reported not being able to access the 'time-out' element due to timetable clashes. In 2004/05, there were over 1,600 work placements, 100 of these abroad. Many learners attend cultural visits or are involved in charity events. Young people are well supported in making a good contribution to college and community life.
24. Support for learners is good and has some outstanding features. Learners with particular needs are exceptionally well supported by a wide range of specialist skills and equipment. Good liaison with schools ensures timely arrangements for disabled young people enabling them to participate fully in mainstream classes. Support is given across all course types. For example, 60 level 3 students have discrete sessions to help improve their grades. Enhanced coordination with Connexions and the youth service has improved the flexibility of guidance and support. Easily accessible counsellors show significant impact on improving retention rates. Attendance is improving following the mentor appointments.
25. The college's approach to supporting young people in being healthy is excellent. Well-embedded agency partnerships promote healthy lifestyles and social responsibility. Learners have good access to financial support. There is no crèche but childcare support is available, though insufficiently well promoted. A pilot adult grant encourages new learners to attempt a qualification. 'Aimhigher' activity has doubled this year. Careers advisors offer good guidance in person and through printed material, although the intranet is underdeveloped in this respect. Many improvements to the tutorial system are enhancing full-time learners' experience. Intensive tutor training has developed tutors' skills. Learners' progress and the quality of tutorials are now rigorously monitored. An organised and coherent tutorial curriculum contains general and specialist content. Learners set the agenda for regular individual

reviews and are consulted about tutorial content. This work is still too new to evaluate its full impact. However, there are early signs of success.

## Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

26. Leadership and management are good. The principal, senior managers and governors provide a clear vision for the college. Through strong partnerships the college plays a key role in the regeneration of the district. The college is committed to raising the aspirations of learners. There are improving trends in many learners' success rates although overall, success rates for both learners aged 16-18 and adults in 2004/05, were broadly in line with national averages. An open, self-critical culture has been fostered.
27. Overall, quality assurance is good. The process is well understood by staff and clearly linked to the college's priorities. Specific actions taken to improve achievements, for example, in work-based learning and to raise the quality of teaching and learning have been implemented. Success rates in work-based learning have risen from a low level to the national average. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching reduced. A range of strategies is in place to improve retention, particularly for adults at levels 1 and 2. There are indications that these are beginning to take effect although it is too early to judge the full impact yet.
28. Staff are fully involved in self-assessment. Course reviews and programme area self-assessments are detailed and evaluative. Quality improvement plans clearly identify actions to improve and progress against these is monitored throughout the year. The accuracy of the self-assessment report is good and it is used effectively as a tool to drive forward many areas for improvement.
29. Curriculum management is good. There is good support to enable managers at all levels to develop their skills. There is an excellent programme of staff training and development. A comprehensive web-based appraisal system effectively links individual training needs to the college's priorities.
30. Equality and diversity is well promoted. The appointment of an advanced practitioner for equality and diversity is further raising the awareness and helping to disseminate best practice. Access for those with restricted mobility is good. The college is compliant with the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Disability Discrimination Act (2001) and Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults. Governors and staff have received appropriate training on their responsibilities for child protection. Learners feel safe in college.
31. Governors are highly committed and supportive of the college's work. They are aware of their duties, provide a broad range of expertise and are supported well by clerking arrangements. There is currently a vacancy for a

student governor. Management information is much improved and provides accurate and timely data on achievements. Financial management is strong. Accommodation and specialist resources are maintained to a high standard and utilised well. The college provides good value for money.

## Learners' achievements

Table 1

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	02/03**	742	57	56	1	1,475	53	55	-2
	03/04	626	69	60	9	1,253	55	59	-4
	04/05	731	69	64	5	1,524	61	62	-1
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	102	83	60	23	*			
	03/04	127	81	65	16	*			
	04/05	137	87	68	19	*			
NVQs	02/03**	42	71	56	15	*			
	03/04	41	59	61	-2	*			
	04/05	83	53	67	-14	*			
Other	02/03**	598	51	56	-5	1,470	52	55	-3
	03/04	458	66	60	6	1,248	55	59	-4
	04/05	511	66	64	2	1,519	61	61	0

\* under 15 learners

\*\* data for 02/03 supplied by the college

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*	1,391	54	52	2	973	61	49	12
	03/04	1,322	59	56	3	1,351	55	54	1
	04/05	1,443	62	61	1	1,258	57	60	-3
GCSEs	02/03	381	50	57	-7	220	65	55	10
	03/04	350	55	61	-6	198	66	59	7
	04/05	396	62	64	-2	162	69	62	7
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	199	71	59	12	**			
	03/04	172	79	63	16	**			
	04/05	119	87	67	20	19	63	70	-7
NVQs	02/03*	183	62	42	20	198	64	48	16
	03/04	256	62	52	10	379	58	54	4
	04/05	209	67	57	10	368	60	60	0
Other	02/03*	628	49	51	-2	547	59	48	11
	03/04	544	54	54	0	761	50	53	-3
	04/05	719	57	60	-3	709	53	59	-6

\*data for 02/03 supplied by the college

\*\*under 15 learners

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*	1814	74	62	12	807	65	51	14
	03/04	1,683	71	64	7	1,001	63	54	9
	04/05	1,590	68	68	0	1,009	63	57	6
A/A2 Levels	02/03	354	88	82	6	47	72	63	9
	03/04	321	87	84	3	46	83	66	17
	04/05	276	86	86	0	39	82	69	13
AS Levels	02/03	706	64	61	3	111	51	48	3
	03/04	632	66	63	3	74	69	50	19
	04/05	617	60	66	-6	95	66	52	14
GNVQs and precursors	02/03*	657	77	52	25	93	84	45	39
	03/04	284	80	52	28	47	83	44	39
	04/05	214	81	60	21	20	85	53	32
NVQs	02/03*	28	46	50	-4	96	64	44	20
	03/04	37	57	54	3	213	55	47	8
	04/05	44	64	62	2	252	51	54	-3
Other	02/03*	69	81	55	26	460	63	53	10
	03/04	409	63	56	7	621	62	56	6
	04/05	439	64	60	4	603	66	58	8

\* 02/03 data provided by the college

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2003/04 to 2005/06

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate % +	National rate % **	College NVQ rate % +	National rate % **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	89	39	32	52	47
	Advanced	21	6	31	52	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	69	25	39	56	50
	Advanced	18	0	34	17	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	98	57	53	61	58
	Advanced	27	33	44	52	53

\* 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

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

+ College success rates provided 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	90	6	16	18	24
	Advanced	49	0	19	22	30
2004/05	Apprenticeship	108	8	22	26	29
	Advanced	31	0	21	29	31
2005/06+	Apprenticeship	87	53	32	57	36
	Advanced	19	26	26	42	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'
- + College success rates provided by the college for 2005-06

### 1. Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college 2003/04 to 2005/06

Year	Number of starts in year	Achieved Objectives *	Progression **	Still in learning
2003/04	309	11	27	118
2004/05	225	35	99	61
2005/06	257	70	93	67

- \* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme
- \*\* Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period

### Outcomes for Employer Training Pilots and National Employer Training Programmes managed by the college 2003 to 2005.

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Still in learning
2002/03	N/A		
2003/04	5	5	0
2004/05	55	31	24

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