



Stephenson College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

Published
February 2007

Provider reference
130747

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Basic information about the college

Name of college: Stephenson College

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Dr David Rathe

Address of college: Thornborough Road
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Chair of governors: Christine Crann

Unique reference number: 130747

Name of lead inspector: Paul Fletcher, ALI

Dates of inspection: 4-8 December 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Stephenson College is a large general further education (GFE) college situated in Coalville, in North West Leicestershire. Since August 2005, the college has occupied newly built premises on the edge of the town. From September 2007, on completion of the second new building, provision which the college currently delivers on an industrial estate and in nearby Ashby, will move to the main campus. The college has centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) status in construction and motor vehicle engineering. The college has two franchise partners based in Leicester that account for 12.5% of the college's total income. Its mission statement is: "excellence and innovation in learning".
2. The college has provision in 13 of the 15 sector subject areas. In 2004/05 of the 3,177 full-time equivalent (FTE) learners, 2,604 were aged 19 or over, representing 82% of FTEs; 573 learners were aged 16-18. In 2005/06, there were 12,176 learners, of whom 18% were aged 16-18. About two thirds of learners aged 16-18 are male whilst nearly two thirds of learners aged over 19 are female. About 7% of learners aged 16-18 are from minority ethnic backgrounds. For learners aged 19 and over, almost 20% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most learners come from Leicestershire and one quarter of adult learners comes from the city of Leicester. Two thirds of learners aged 16-18 take entry level and level 1 courses. Fewer than 10% take level 3 qualifications. The most popular sector subjects areas for learners aged 16-18 are construction, health, public services and care, and engineering. Learners aged 19 and over mainly take courses in health and care, preparation for life and work, construction and information and communication technology (ICT). Approximately 600 learners follow apprenticeships of whom one quarter take advanced apprenticeships. The college gained Train to Gain contracts for the East and West Midlands in August 2006.
3. In June 2006, the unemployment rate for the East Midlands was 2.4%, very close to the England average. According to the 2001 Census, 94.7% of residents in Leicestershire are from white backgrounds. The most significant minority ethnic group is Asian or Asian British which is 3.7%. Approximately 4% of the local population live in one of the 20% most deprived areas of the country. The proportion of school leavers in 2005 with five or more GCSEs in the county was 57.1%, the same as the England average.

Scope of the inspection

4. 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, public services and care; engineering and manufacturing technologies; construction, planning and the built environment; information and communication technology (ICT); preparation for life and work; and business administration and law.

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.

Curriculum areas

Health, public services and care	Good: grade 2
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Good: grade 2
Construction, planning and the built environment	Good: grade 2
Information and communication technology	Good: grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: grade 3
Business, administration and law	Good: grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

5. This is a good college. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates are at or above and, at some levels, significantly above, national averages for all learners except for learners aged 16-18 on level 3 courses. Success rates in work-based learning have improved significantly and are above the national average. The standard of learners' work is high. Attendance is good.
6. Teaching and learning are good. Since the last inspection, the college has improved the quality of its teaching and learning. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is very small. The planning of learning is good. Learners participate confidently and enjoy their lessons. The monitoring and assessment of learners' progress are highly effective. The college has recognised the need to improve the quality of teaching on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses.
7. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good, as is its response to the needs and interests of learners. The college has widened its provision to include more pre-entry courses, and vocational progression routes to level 3 courses and higher education are good. Links with schools, the community and employers are strong and productive and benefit learners.
8. Learners receive good guidance and support. Tutorial support and progress reviews are good and monitor learners' progress closely. Learners benefit from good wider support services. Careers advice and guidance are good.
9. Leadership and management are good. The principal and governors communicate a clear strategic direction. Managers and staff share a strong commitment to continuous quality improvement. Resources are very good and the accommodation is outstanding. The college's self-assessment report is comprehensive, thorough and accurately reflects the strengths and areas for improvement. The college provides a safe environment for all its learners.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

10. The college demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve. Leaders take responsibility for raising standards and rigorously manage performance. They motivate staff and learners to achieve challenging targets. Staff teams share a common purpose with a strong focus on improvement. The quality improvement strategy is very clear, inclusive and strongly evaluative. Quality improvement processes are robust and provide a sustainable basis for continuous improvement. Learners' performance is closely monitored. The quality of teaching and learning is continuously improved through particularly accurate and comprehensive lesson observations. Managers' actions have

secured significant improvement and high levels of achievement in most areas of the college.

11. The college's self-assessment process is good. The self-assessment report produced prior to the inspection was highly accurate, comprehensive and strongly evaluative with well constructed action plans to bring about improvements. The college had accurately identified most of its strengths and areas for improvements, many of which it was already remedying.

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

12. The college has made good progress to secure improvements since the last inspection. The quality of provision has improved significantly and success rates are high in most curriculum areas. Success rates in key skills have improved. The management and quality of work-based learning have improved significantly and are now good overall. Quality assurance has improved and is now thorough, comprehensive and contributes to quality improvement. Management information systems have improved and provide timely reports and accurate performance analysis. The arrangements for equal opportunities are now effective. Retention rates remain low at level 3 for the small number of learners aged 16-18. In ESOL, the progress of management actions to secure improvement is slow.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- strong and effective leadership
- highly successful quality improvement
- high success rates on most areas
- very good resources
- good teaching to develop high standards of workplace skills
- strong, responsive and productive links with employers and schools
- highly effective additional learning support to enable learners to succeed and progress.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the quality of provision in ESOL
- retention rates at level 3 for learners aged 16-18
- teaching and learning to meet the needs of more able learners
- learners' participation in enrichment opportunities.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

13. Success rates have continued to improve since the last inspection. Overall success rates for all learners on long courses remain above the rising national average in each of the three years to 2005/06.
14. For learners aged 16-18, success rates on level 1 courses have been significantly above the national average over the three year period. At level 3, they have risen by 14 percentage points in 2005/06 and are close to the national average for 2004/05. Retention rates on level 3 courses have improved but remain substantially below the national average for learners aged 16-18.
15. Success rates for learners aged 19 and over on level 3 courses have been consistently above the national averages since 2003/04. In 2005/06, at level 2, they improved from being at the national average in 2004/05 by 11 percentage points. However, at level 1, they fell 7 percentage points to just below the national average for 2004/05.
16. Success rates for national vocational qualifications (NVQs) have been consistently above national averages for learners aged 19 and over at all levels. Success rates on key skills have improved significantly from 42% in 2004/05 to 65% in 2005/06 and are now substantially above the low national average. Success rates on ESOL courses are low.
17. Success rates in work-based learning remain above the national average. For apprenticeships they have improved by almost 20 percentage points during the three year period to 62%, almost 10 percentage points above the national average for 2005/06. For advanced apprenticeships, success rates have improved by a similar percentage and are almost 10 percentage points above the national average for 2005/06. The college has good arrangements in place to track learners' timely success rates.
18. The standard of most learners' work is high. Learners display good practical skills in most areas. In care, learners demonstrate good professional practice. In engineering and construction, learners apply a high level of practical skill in workshops. In business, learners' ability to link theory to practice is good. The college promotes good awareness of health and safety. Learners' attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

19. Teaching and learning are good. At the last inspection, teaching in some curriculum areas was unsatisfactory. Since then, the college has improved the quality of teaching and learning. In most curriculum areas, inspectors identified good teaching as a key strength. The college's lesson observation system is

comprehensive and accurate. In lesson observations conducted jointly by college staff and inspectors, there was close agreement about the strengths and areas for improvement. The college observes all teaching and support staff at least twice each year including one observation which focuses specifically on teachers' industrial and vocational expertise. The areas for improvement identified through observations have included planning, the use of information and learning technology (ILT) and assessment. Managers take prompt action when teaching is less than satisfactory. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has reduced and is now very small. However, as the college has recognised, the quality of teaching and learning in ESOL requires improvement.

20. The planning of learning is good. Detailed schemes of work and lesson plans contribute to the productive use of learners' time. Lesson plans include the support needs of less able learners but they do not always consider sufficiently the needs of more able learners. Much teaching is lively, interesting and successful in motivating learners to make good progress. Learners often participate confidently and demonstrate their enjoyment of lessons. Teachers use questioning well to encourage learners to extend their understanding of a subject. In many lessons, teachers use interactive whiteboards imaginatively. Teaching promotes learners' workplace skills particularly effectively. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, learners develop and improve their knowledge and skills in personal presentation, professional skills and customer care.
21. The monitoring of learners' progress is highly effective. Detailed electronic assessment and learning plans ensure that learners at risk are promptly identified and supported. Learners are well aware of what they need to do to improve their work. The college acknowledges in its self-assessment report that target setting requires further improvement on a small number of courses.
22. Highly effective additional learning support enables many learners to complete their studies. Learners benefit from comprehensive and prompt initial screening and diagnostic assessment. The college has made significant improvements in the initial assessment of work-based learners. Good systems are in place to refer learners who require support that has not been identified at the start of their course. The provision of learning support assistants in each section is effective and responds to learners' needs promptly. For a small number of learners aged 14-16, additional support is insufficient.
23. The college's response to the needs and interests of learners is good. The college has consolidated its curriculum to provide coherent vocational pathways. The college offers a wide range of courses which provide good vocational progression routes in most curriculum areas from entry level to level 3, and to level 4 in many areas. A particularly good range of courses meets the national requirements for training in care and early years. Links with schools are particularly strong with over 1,400 pupils on taster courses and over 100 gaining a vocational qualification.

24. Learners' participation in enrichment activities is very low. The college provides a suitable range of enrichment opportunities which includes trips and vocationally specific activities.
25. The college is particularly responsive to employers' needs. It has established strong and productive partnerships with employers for the benefit of learners and to promote economic wellbeing. The number of employers working with the college on apprenticeships has increased by over a quarter in the last year. The college provides all the training needs for several large national companies.
26. Guidance and support are good. Learners receive high quality impartial information and advice to enable them to choose their courses. Induction is very comprehensive and enables learners to settle into their studies quickly.
27. Tutorial support is good. Since the last inspection, the coordination of tutorials has been strengthened by the appointment of a cross-college manager. The well planned tutorial programme promotes healthy lifestyles and raises learners' understanding of study skills, equality and diversity, and dealing with prejudice and bullying. Tutorials and progress reviews monitor learners' progress closely.
28. Support services are good. Learners benefit from a good range of support services including health and welfare, accommodation, counselling, childcare and finance. Careers advice and guidance are good, and individual learners are referred to the services of many specialist agencies as well as providing college-based job search, higher education events and speakers from business.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

29. Leadership and management are good. The principal and governors communicate a clear strategic direction. Managers and staff share a strong commitment to continuous improvement. The principal provides strong and creative leadership and engenders good teamwork. Communication is good. Since the last inspection, the college has acted decisively and successfully to improve performance and raise standards.
30. Governance is good. Governors contribute to the management of the college at a strategic level and focus well on learners' performance. The three year development plan analyses and sets targets which reflect national, regional and local priorities. Learners benefit from the very good collaboration between the college, schools employers and other partners.
31. Quality improvement is very strong. The management information system produces accurate and timely performance management reports which managers scrutinise thoroughly. The lesson observation system provides an accurate and thorough evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. Each section conducts a thorough annual quality review which includes lesson observations and analysis of course performance data. The quality assurance of franchised provision is good. The self-assessment process is comprehensive. It

is thorough and analyses trends to identify improvement priorities. Managers have recognised the need to improve provision in ESOL and have taken rigorous action. However, the rate of improvement in this area is too slow.

32. Learners benefit from the outstanding accommodation and the excellent resources. The new building is impressive and is the result of thoughtful planning which celebrates learning and places vocational practical areas at the heart of the college. The college manages its finances very well. It has clear and realistic plans to return to its previous financial health category once the final building phase is completed. The college provides very good value for money.
33. Staff are well qualified with current industrial experience. The college has strengthened the level of skills in many curriculum areas through the recent recruitment of many teachers and supervisors from industry. The proportion of teaching staff with teaching qualifications falls below the college's own target. However, all new staff work towards level 4 teaching qualifications with good support. The good mentoring system supports staff induction. Staff value highly the many training and development opportunities which the college identifies through appraisal and lesson observation and links to both strategic priorities and individual needs.
34. The college provides an inclusive and safe environment. Equal opportunity policies and procedures have improved since the last inspection and now promote equality and diversity effectively. The ethnic and gender profile of the staff matches that of the learners. The college actively encourages suitably qualified women to apply for teaching posts in curriculum areas that are traditionally male dominated. The college meets the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Discrimination Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and Race Relations (Amendment) Act. Arrangements for carrying out and centrally recording Criminal Record Bureau checks are satisfactory.

Curriculum area inspections

Health, public services and care

Good: grade 2

Context

35. The college offers full-time courses to 136 learners mostly aged 16-18 in care from levels 2 to 4, in public services at levels 2 and 3 and in early years from levels 1 to 3. Approximately 3,400 learners, mostly aged 19 and over, take part-time courses, including NVQs from levels 2 to 4 and many short courses. About 160 learners follow apprenticeships. Over 50 school pupils aged 14-16 attend care courses.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- good teaching to motivate and engage learners
- highly effective employer engagement
- good pastoral and learning support
- successful curriculum management to promote quality improvement and raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient target setting to develop skills
- insufficient enrichment activities.

Achievements and standards

36. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates are high and significantly above the national average on most courses, including apprenticeships. Retention rates are low on the BTEC National Diploma in public services. Learners' work is of a high standard. Portfolios of evidence contain good examples of professional practice and demonstrate good development of practical care skills. Learners' attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of provision

37. Teaching and learning are good. Learners display high levels of motivation and interest. In the better lessons, planning is thorough and links objectives clearly to assessment outcomes. Teachers use a variety of techniques and check learning thoroughly. Learners enjoy using ILT in lessons. In an anatomy lesson, learners used the interactive whiteboard enthusiastically to identify and confirm bones in the human skeleton. In a counselling lesson, learners demonstrated through much confident group discussion a good understanding of values and ethics and how they relate to professional practice. In a few lessons the pace is slow, and activities lack structure and do not extend learning. Target setting to

develop learners' skills is insufficient. Action plans do not contain specific individual improvement targets that learners and tutors have identified through tutorials.

38. Learning resources are good. The intranet contains many relevant materials to support and extend learning. Learners benefit from high quality work placements that provide many opportunities to experience activities appropriate to their learning. Learners receive regular and detailed feedback from work placement staff on their performance. All staff possess appropriate qualifications with relevant vocational experience.
39. The range of courses is good, providing clear progression and contributing to the national training targets for the care sector. Learners aged 16-18 have insufficient enrichment activities to enhance their personal and social development.
40. Pastoral and learning support are good. Tutors monitor attendance closely. Learners benefit from good additional support to develop their literacy, numeracy and language skills. Learners aged 19 and over in outreach centres value the advice and guidance telephone service that college staff provide.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are good. Successful curriculum management has promoted quality improvement and raised standards. A strong commitment to continuous improvement has resulted in significantly improved success rates. Annual course reviews are rigorous and identify improvement targets well. Communication between staff at all levels is good and staff share best practice well. The college provides flexible and responsive training opportunities to meet local needs through highly effective partnerships with employers. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. All staff contribute to the thorough, evaluative and accurate self-assessment report.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Good: grade 2

Context

42. The college offers courses in mechanical and electrical engineering, welding and fabrication and automotive studies from pre-entry to level 3 to almost 600 learners, of whom 268 are aged 16-18 and 329 aged 19 and over. Of these, 131 attend full-time courses and 466 attend part-time courses. Seventy seven learners follow apprenticeships, including 39 on the advanced apprenticeship. Just under 90 pupils aged 14-16 from five local schools attend the college for two days weekly to take an engineering qualification. The college is a CoVE for motor vehicle studies.

Strengths

- high success rates on motor vehicle and mechanical engineering courses
- good teaching and learning to develop vocational skills
- very good learning resources
- very good recording and monitoring of learners' progress
- particularly good leadership and management to improve the quality of provision.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient attention to raising work-based learners' awareness of equal opportunities during progress reviews.

Achievements and standards

43. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates for motor vehicle and mechanical engineering courses are high and have been consistently above the national average in each of the three years to 2006. Overall success rates for apprenticeships are satisfactory. Success rates for key skills have improved significantly from very low in 2004/05 to 50% in 2005/06. The standard of learners' work in practical and theory lessons is high. Learners develop good practical skills and demonstrate high levels of technical competency.

Quality of provision

44. Teaching and learning are good and develop learners' vocational skills well. Most learners enjoy their lessons. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and manage their teaching well. They make theory lessons interesting and challenge and stretch learners. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to demonstrate difficult concepts and introduce new subjects. Links between theory, practical and industrial applications are clear. Learners work well at their own pace with minimum supervision on the complex repair and maintenance of vehicles and the production and testing of welding joints. Assessment and internal verification are good.

45. Learning resources are very good. Learners in motor vehicle studies have benefited from the new resources that the CoVE has secured. Motor vehicle resources are particularly good with modern vehicles and equipment, and high quality service and repair areas.
46. The range of provision is good. Managers respond well to the needs of employers and the local community.
47. Support for learners is good. The recording and monitoring of learners' progress is particularly effective. Tutors make very good use of electronic and manual systems to monitor progress. Tutors and learners identify clearly achievements against targets and establish clear and timely goals. Progress reviews do not raise or challenge work-based learners' awareness of equal opportunities sufficiently.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management are particularly good and have improved the quality of the provision. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. Successful continuous improvement plans have increased recruitment to courses, raised the quality of teaching and work-based learning and improved success rates significantly on most courses. Operational management of the CoVE is good. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the report is mostly accurate.

Construction, planning and the built environment

Good: grade 2

Context

49. The college offers courses from pre-entry to level 3 in all construction areas to 151 learners aged 16-18 years and 1,216 learners aged 19 and over. Work-based learning includes 428 learners taking apprenticeships, Train to Gain courses, and programme-led pathways. Almost 80 school pupils aged 14-16 follow construction courses. The college is the lead partner in a construction CoVE.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- good teaching and learning to develop practical skills
- highly effective monitoring of progress
- particularly productive links with employers
- very good resources to support learning
- significant quality improvement through effective management.

Areas for improvement

- insufficiently precise targets for a minority of learners.

Achievements and standards

50. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates on most courses are high and are above the national average. Overall success rates for apprenticeships have been significantly above the national average since 2004/05 and were 23 percentage points above in 2005/06. The standard of learners' practical and theory work is high. Most learners make good progress. Learners' progression to the next level course and from the apprenticeship to the advanced apprenticeship is high.

Quality of provision

51. Teaching and learning are good. Learners enjoy their lessons and develop good practical skills. Schemes of work and lesson plans contain clear and detailed references to key skills which relate closely to construction. Teachers respond well to individual learners' needs. In the best lessons, the teaching makes good use of question and answer to develop and establish understanding. In these lessons, teachers use ILT effectively to maintain a good pace. Regular change of activity takes place to hold learners' interest. Learning support assistants provide good support in theory lessons. Initial assessment is good. The college identifies learners' needs promptly and provides very effective support. Work-based assessment is satisfactory.

52. Very good resources support learning. Learners benefit from modern industrial equipment and training workshops. The college, in conjunction with a national awarding body, has developed learning materials to support the teaching of sustainable technologies, including rain water harvesting and solar domestic hot water systems. Experienced workshop supervisors support practical workshops well.
53. The range of provision is good. Learners benefit from particularly productive links with employers. Extensive links through the CoVE have resulted in courses being delivered specifically to meet employer needs. The range of courses provides clear progression routes.
54. Support is good. The monitoring of learners' progress is highly effective. Careful monitoring takes place electronically at unit and module level to review learners' progress in the technical certificate, key skills and NVQ units. For a minority of learners, targets are insufficiently precise. Action plans contain unrealistic achievement dates. The college has recently revised its tutorial procedures to improve target setting. Work-based learning progress reviews are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management are good. Effective management has significantly improved the quality of provision through extensive performance monitoring of learners and staff. Success rates on the most significant courses have improved substantially to above national averages. All staff possess appropriate qualifications. Continuous professional development links closely to business needs. Internal verification is satisfactory. Regular standardisation meetings take place across all subjects. The self-assessment process is accurate and comprehensive.

Information and communication technology

Good: grade 2

Context

56. About 840 learners, mostly aged 19 and over, attend part-time courses, through flexible learning workshops, which offer progression from entry level to level 2 and include the City and Guilds (CGLI) start IT, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), and the European computer driving licence (ECDL). Sixty five learners aged 16-18 and two aged 19 and over, study on three full-time courses at levels 2 and 3. Six learners aged 19 and over take a course to encourage more women to work in information technology. About two thirds of learners are male.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- high progression to further and higher education
- good teaching and learning for full-time learners
- good support for learning
- highly effective management to improve the quality of provision.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient target setting on part-time courses.

Achievements and standards

57. Achievements and standards are good. Since the last inspection, success rates have remained high. Success rates for new CLAIT have been consistently 10 to 20 percentage points above the national average and success rates on the CGLI start IT course have remained at 95% or above. Success rates for 2005/06 on the BTEC First and National Diploma were above the national average. Full-time learners' portfolios contain clearly organised and well presented work of a high standard. Part-time learners display good IT skills and work independently. Progression to further and higher education for full-time learners is high. Many progress to the next level and to higher education courses at the college. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of provision

58. Teaching and learning are good on full-time courses. In the better lessons, the teaching is interactive, engages learners well and includes frequent changes of activity. Learners participate well in discussions and enjoy learning. Teachers use effective questioning to check learning and understanding. Learners benefit from comprehensive high quality study materials on the well established intranet to support their learning. Teaching and learning on part-time courses are satisfactory. Learners develop confidence in using software and file

management tools. However, the teaching relies heavily on standardised worksheets and does not respond to the needs of all learners.

59. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory. Target setting and the recording of progress are insufficient on the part-time courses. Action plans do not contain sufficient targets which are specific, measurable and timely.
60. The range of courses is satisfactory. The college has introduced more relevant vocational full-time courses. Links with employers are satisfactory.
61. Support for learning is good. Comprehensive assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills identifies additional learning support needs that the college responds to promptly. Learners receive valuable individual support in workshops to build portfolios. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good in tutorials. Subjects include living in a diverse society and dealing with prejudice.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are good. Highly effective management has improved the provision. Success rates, that are higher than the national average, have continued to improve on most courses. The quality of teaching has improved. Learners' attendance has improved significantly. Managers and staff have successfully piloted and introduced innovative teaching methods. Teachers benefit from good continuous professional development. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the report reflects the provision accurately.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

63. The college offers part-time courses to learners mostly aged 19 and over in literacy, numeracy and ESOL from entry level to level 2 at the college and in outreach centres. Almost 170 learners take adult literacy and numeracy courses and about 150 learners attend ESOL courses. Twenty seven full-time learners are on the foundation skills for work course.

Strengths

- high success rates on national tests in literacy and numeracy
- good teaching on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- effective target setting and monitoring of learners' progress on the skills for work course.

Areas for improvement

- poor development of skills for ESOL learners
- insufficient opportunities for work placements on the skills for work course
- slow progress to improve ESOL provision.

Achievements and standards

64. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on national tests in literacy and numeracy are high. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities demonstrate greater confidence, develop and apply good practical skills and make good progress in lessons. Success rates on ESOL courses are low. The standard of learners' written and oral work is low on ESOL courses. Attendance is low on some courses.

Quality of provision

65. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. In all lessons, the teaching integrates literacy and numeracy skills well and develops effectively learners' spoken and written vocabulary. Effective initial assessment leads to the setting of clear and comprehensive individual targets. Additional support workers provide valuable help to less able students. Target setting and the monitoring of learners' progress on the skills for work course are good. Teaching on literacy and numeracy courses is satisfactory. On courses for learners in work, teaching is very effective and relates well to learners' needs.

66. The development of skills for ESOL learners is poor. Whole class teaching to mixed ability groups at entry level provides insufficient challenge for more advanced learners. Lesson content does not relate to learners' lives or employment. Learners do not develop fully their speaking skills.
67. The range of courses is satisfactory. The college provides courses in literacy, numeracy and ESOL in many locations and at times convenient to learners. Literacy and numeracy courses respond well to the needs of learners in the community and to employers. Work placement opportunities for skills for work learners are insufficient. The college has not developed a network of employers. Current participation for learners on work placements is low.
68. Support for learners is good on the skills for work course. It is effective and meets the needs of learners well. Support for learners on ESOL courses is satisfactory. Initial assessment is good for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The quality of initial assessment for ESOL and literacy and numeracy learners is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Effective continuous improvement action plans have improved the provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Regular teamwork and good communication enable teachers and support workers to share good practice. Progress to improve the ESOL provision is slow. The college has made insufficient progress in raising the quality of the inadequate aspects of teaching that it identified through lesson observations. Success rates remain low. Many staff are currently undertaking the level 4 specialist qualification in ESOL. The self-assessment report is mainly accurate and identified most of the areas for improvement.

Business, administration and law

Good: grade 2

Context

70. The college offers full-time and part-time courses from levels 2 to 4. Of the 50 full-time learners, most are aged 16-18 and follow courses including the BTEC First and National Diploma in business and administration courses. Almost 140 part-time learners, mostly aged 19 and over, follow administration, accounting and personnel courses. Twenty two learners are taking an apprenticeship in administration.

Strengths

- high success rates on NVQ levels 2 and 3 accounting courses
- good use of high quality learning materials to promote learning
- particularly effective individual learning support
- successful management and teamwork to improve the quality of provision.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient attention to meeting individual learners' needs in lessons.

Achievements and standards

71. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates have been high on the NVQ levels 2 and 3 accounting courses since 2004/05. Success rates have improved significantly and are now around the national average on full-time courses. The overall standard of learners' work is good. They develop and apply good understanding of business practice and theories in lessons. However, the development of critical evaluation skills is insufficient on higher level courses. Apprentices make good progress in all aspects of their apprenticeship. Full-time learners' attendance is good but the attendance of part-time learners is low on a few courses.

Quality of provision

72. Teaching and learning on business and professional programmes are good. The open plan learning environment and high quality electronic learning materials on the intranet promote and extend learning well. Teachers plan lessons well with many purposeful activities to interest and motivate learners. Learners enjoyed using interactive web-based exercises that enabled them to apply theory to practice well during a lesson on organisational function. Learners display high levels of motivation and interest as they work productively through business activities. The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good.

73. Individual learning support is particularly effective in lessons and encourages learners to participate. In most lessons, the teaching develops learners'

numeracy, literacy and language skills effectively. Planning in some lessons does not recognise the different needs and abilities of learners. Noise from adjacent classrooms occasionally distracts learners. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress are good.

74. The range of business and professional courses provides good progression opportunities for learners. Links with schools are productive with joint teaching on the BTEC First Diploma course. Learners benefit from high quality work placements and good commercial links to enhance their professional skills and knowledge. Learners have few enrichment activities to pursue their interests or learn new skills.
75. Support and guidance are good. Learners receive appropriate advice before they enrol. Tutorials include comprehensive careers education and guidance for higher education. Good personal support helps learners complete their course and includes access to specialist support services such as counselling and financial help. Parents receive good information on learners' progress. Work-based learning progress reviews do not raise learners' understanding of equality of opportunity sufficiently.

Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management are good. Successful management and teamwork have improved the quality of provision. Success rates have improved on full-time business courses and continue to improve on most professional courses. The observation of lessons provides an accurate assessment of teaching and learning. Teachers regularly share good practice and learning resources. They possess appropriate qualifications and participate in effective staff development. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, 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	03/04	291	66	60	6	431	60	59	1
	04/05	523	81	64	17	567	66	62	4
	05/06	219	78	-	-	483	59	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04								
	04/05								
	05/06								
NVQs	03/04	23	96	61	35	7	71	62	9
	04/05	42	69	67	2	13	100	67	33
	05/06	26	92	-	-	9	89	-	-
Other	03/04	268	63	60	3	423	60	59	1
	04/05	481	82	64	18	554	65	61	4
	05/06	193	76	-	-	474	59	-	-

Data for 2005/06 from college sources

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, 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	03/04	467	62	56	6	1283	57	54	3
	04/05	274	62	61	1	1038	60	60	0
	05/06	324	65	-	-	938	71	-	-
GCSEs	03/04	39	62	61	1	59	54	59	-5
	04/05	21	81	64	17	53	49	62	-13
	05/06	9	78	-	-	9	67	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	18	56	63	-7	1	0	57	-57
	04/05					4	100	70	30
	05/06	1	0						
NVQs	03/04	178	64	52	12	652	60	54	6
	04/05	64	48	57	-9	483	66	60	6
	05/06	73	60	-	-	628	71	-	-
Other	03/04	232	61	54	7	571	54	53	1
	04/05	188	65	60	5	498	55	59	-4
	05/06	241	66	-	-	301	71	-	-

Data for 2005/06 from college sources

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, 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	03/04	386	59	64	-5	704	62	54	8
	04/05	132	51	68	-17	889	67	57	10
	05/06	200	65	-	-	607	74	-	-
A/A2 Levels	03/04	18	72	84	-12	17	77	66	11
	04/05	5	80	86	-6	12	83	69	14
	05/06					2	100	-	-
AS Levels	03/04	48	38	63	-25	48	42	50	-8
	04/05	5	80	66	14	32	56	52	4
	05/06	1	100	66		13	69	52	17
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	127	52	52	0	11	46	44	2
	04/05	38	32	60	-28	5	80	53	27
	05/06								
NVQs	03/04	18	50	54	-4	402	61	47	14
	04/05	26	42	62	-20	611	68	54	14
	05/06	22	59	-	-	328	75	-	-
Other	03/04	175	70	56	14	226	67	56	11
	04/05	58	62	60	2	229	67	58	9
	05/06	177	66	-	-	264	72	-	-

Data for 2005/06 from college sources

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	168	43	32	63	47
	Advanced	84	38	31	62	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	272	42	39	54	50
	Advanced	57	37	34	60	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	361	62	53	65	58
***	Advanced	84	52	44	60	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

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

*** Data for 2005/06 from LSC Provider Gateway WBL success rate report period 12

b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	158	15	16	25	24
	Advanced	71	17	19	34	30
2004/05	Apprenticeship	302	11	21	14	29
	Advanced	59	23	21	31	31
2005/06	Apprenticeship	337	26	32	30	36
***	Advanced	80	30	26	38	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'

*** Data for 2005/06 from LSC Provider Gateway WBL success rate report period 12