



The Henley College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published January 2007	Provider reference 130789
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Basic information about the college

Name of college: The Henley College

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Mr Tom Espley

Address of college: Deanfield Avenue, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire
RG9 1UH

Telephone number: 01491 579 988

Fax number: 01491 410 099

Chair of governors: Mr Nick Richardson

Unique reference number: 130789

Name of lead inspector: Samantha Morgan-Price, HMI

Dates of inspection: 27 November - 1 December 2006

Background of the organisation

1. The Henley College is a tertiary college located in Henley-on-Thames in South Oxfordshire. It is the sixth form provider for four partner schools: Chiltern Edge, Gillotts, Icknield and Langtree. The college draws its students from areas of relative affluence and very high employment. Approximately 50% of students are recruited from the Berkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) area.
2. The college mission is *Excellence in education and training*. The college aims to be recognised as the major sixth form centre for South Oxfordshire and adjacent areas of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. The Henley College is distinctive from other local sixth form providers in developing sports development and recreational programmes in the areas of rowing, rugby, skiing, tennis, netball and football.
3. There are 1,768 full-time and some 800 part-time students, who represent 14% of full-time equivalent (FTE) students. The majority of full-time students are aged 16-18 and study level 3 courses including GCE AS and A levels, the International Baccalaureate and a range of vocational courses. The majority of part-time students are aged over 19 years. Most work-based learners take qualifications in business administration, hairdressing, retail and care.

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; 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	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

5. This college is a good college. Learners' achievements overall are good. Success rates are at or above national averages at all levels with the exception of key skills and adults on level 1 and 2 programmes. Success rates in work-based learning have risen significantly and are now very good. Attendance is good.
6. Teaching is good. Learning in some lessons is less effective. The college has a well established internal lesson observation scheme which is used to identify staff development needs. In a few lessons, teachers do not engage learners' interest or develop their understanding of new concepts. The college has identified this, and has begun to remedy it. The arrangements for initial assessment and the subsequent provision of additional support are good. Assessment is thorough and effective.
7. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. There are effective arrangements to provide for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The range of courses available at level 3 is outstanding. The range of courses at levels 1 and 2 is adequate for the needs of the college's community. The extent to which the college meets the needs and interests of learners is good. The college has effective links with local schools. Progression rates to higher education (HE) and employment are high. The range of enrichment programmes available to learners is outstanding.
8. Learners receive good guidance and support. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. A comprehensive range of support services is available.
9. Leadership and management are good and have ensured continuous improvement in the college's performance. The principal provides clear leadership that prioritises students and their success. Governors play an active part in the college; however, the college has yet to provide them with relevant training. Curriculum management is good. Quality assurance arrangements are mostly effective.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

10. The capacity of the college to improve is good. Standards overall have risen. The post-inspection action plan guided improvements immediately after the last inspection. Since then, regular monitoring of the annual operational plan has ensured that progress is maintained. The self-assessment process is well established and in most curriculum areas the outcomes from action plans have led to improvement. Progress of these action plans is monitored regularly. The college's quality assurance processes include regular observations of teaching

and learning and are mostly effective. A generic staff development programme addresses weaknesses identified during lesson observations. The appointment of advanced teaching practitioners and work with similar colleges are also being used to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

11. The college's self-assessment report for 2004/05 was mainly accurate and identified correctly its main strengths and areas for improvement. Some strengths were understated. Weaknesses in governor training and aspects of the lesson observation process were not identified. Target setting is generally satisfactory. However, some targets for curriculum areas were set below levels achieved last year. Targets for the improvement in success rates have been met across the college as a whole.

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 the issues raised by inspection in 2002. Strengths have been maintained. Success rates at level 3 have improved over the last three years. Value-added scores are improving and recent data show that the college is adding more value than predicted based on achievement at GCSE. The achievement rate for apprenticeships has improved and now exceeds the benchmark for similar colleges. Success rates for adults on level 1 and 2 courses have improved, but remain below national averages. The college remains in a strong financial position. Course reviews and the self-assessment process are more rigorous and effective; the college has joined with similar colleges to conduct peer reviews to establish more rigour. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these arrangements. The college has made significant investment in a computerised management information system (MIS). Reports to managers are timely, accurate and used to plan provision, monitor achievement of objectives and track the progress of students. More teachers and students are making good use of the increased number of computers and interactive whiteboards.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- high success rates on level 3 courses
- clear leadership which focuses on learner achievement
- good progression to further study and employment
- highly effective personal and academic support for learners
- good participation in an outstanding range of enrichment activities
- good use of the comprehensive management information system.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates in key skills and for adults on level 1 and 2 programmes
- insufficient focus on learning in the planning and evaluation of lessons
- insufficient governor training.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

Contributory grade:

Learners aged 19+

Satisfactory: grade 3

13. Learners make good progress and reach high standards on most courses. Standards attained by learners on GCE A level courses are particularly high. On the few courses that are underachieving, actions are put in place to bring about improvements. Learners enjoy their studies and behave very well. Learners generally produce work of a good standard. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop a wide range of skills, many of which help them to move on to independent living or employment. Inspectors agree with the college's self-assessment that the overall standards achieved by learners are good. Attendance at lessons is very good. The attendance rate for the last three years has been high and continues to improve.
14. Success rates have been improving steadily over the past three years and are now generally at or above national averages. Learners aged 16-18 achieve well on level 3 courses and success rates are high. High success rates for learners taking the International Baccalaureate have been maintained. For 2005/06, college data indicate that there has been significant improvement in success rates at levels 1 and 2, bringing them in line with national averages. Success rates on level 3 courses for adults are also above the national average. The success rates of adults on level 1 and 2 courses have improved significantly in 2006, but remain below national averages.
15. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 133 work-based learners undertaking apprenticeships. Achievement of the full advanced and apprenticeship framework has improved substantially in 2005/06 and is now good at 69%, which is well above the national average.
16. Learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are highly motivated and keen to learn. There is good development of their personal and learning skills. They become confident learners and make good progress. They are well prepared for progression to further study or employment. A high proportion of learners progress to the next level of study at the college. In 2005/06, progression to HE or employment for learners at the college was very high.
17. The organisation of key skills has improved since the last inspection but more remains to be done. Whilst communications is now integrated into learners' main qualifications, ICT is not. Success rates for most key skills remain low.

18. Learners make the most of all the college has to offer them. There is good participation in enrichment activities provided for the learners. The college is an effective learning community and learners contribute through charity work, social and sporting activities. An awards evening which is sponsored by local and national organisations is held annually to celebrate learner success.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

19. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some satisfactory aspects. The college has a well established observation of teaching and learning programme and the self-assessment report grades teaching and learning as good. Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements of observers. However, records of college observations show a small number of lessons which were judged satisfactory although they had significant weaknesses. Many lessons are well planned and challenge learners appropriately. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and motivate learners, inspiring them to further study. They know their learners well, and are welcoming and supportive. Much learning material and information is now held on the college computer network. It is new and developing, but is already valued by staff and learners and well used to support independent learning. Interactive white boards are used appropriately to record learner views and enliven discussion through the use of images and film clips.
20. Many teachers provide a variety of activities for learners which are fun and promote good independent learning skills. However, some learning is less effective. In a few lessons, teachers do not engage learners' interest or develop their understanding of new concepts. The college has identified this, and has begun to remedy it through staff development and support from advanced teaching practitioners.
21. At levels 1 and 2, learners benefit from using materials relevant to their interests which are created by their teachers to develop literacy and numeracy skills. The teaching of key skills is good in work-based learning, where it is fully integrated with learners' employment and technical certificates.
22. Assessment is good. Learning is thoroughly checked in most lessons. Teachers provide detailed and useful comments on written work which include identification of learners' strengths and challenging and realistic targets to guide them towards improved grades. Half-termly reviews do not consistently include specific targets for improvement and skill development.
23. Learners' need for additional support is assessed early, often before they start their course, and the college provides well qualified support teachers promptly. Teachers are well informed about available support, and are increasingly confident of their ability to identify and refer learners who may benefit from support. Learners' individual support programmes are carefully planned to develop independent learning skills. Teachers have clear guidance about strategies and resources to help learners in lessons. Lesson notes on the

college computer network particularly benefit learners who find extensive note-taking in lessons challenging. Level 1 learners benefit from increased concentration in lessons following a programme of mental and physical exercises at the start of each day. Parents, carers and employers receive regular and detailed reports on learners' progress.

24. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. It provides a good range of courses to meet the needs of the local community and businesses. The college recruits to a clear strategy of specialising in level 3 programmes, supplemented by appropriate provision at levels 1 and 2. Students with profound and multiple disabilities and learning difficulties are well supported on a number of well managed courses. Learning support across all programmes is good. Most students participate in the college's outstanding range of enrichment activities. The college has implemented its race equality policy, and has achieved most targets. Recruitment, achievement and progression data are analysed by ethnicity and gender. The college recruits around three times the proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups than exist in the area.
25. An outstanding range of provision exists for full-time students at level 3. Around 45 GCE A level courses are available, as well as 12 diploma programmes and a well established International Baccalaureate. Work-based learning options have been significantly increased. There is good liaison and consultation with local employers around vocational programme areas. However, engagement with employers outside these programme areas remains limited. Progression from level 3 to higher education is very good, at 98% of those applying. Overall progression from the college to employment or HE is currently 96%. There is good tracking of student destinations data, with only 2% unknown destinations in 2004/05. The college has an outstanding enrichment programme, and there is very good take-up, particularly amongst first year students. The college also has a well established sports development programme which provides training opportunities with a number of prestige sporting organisations.
26. Strong partnership links exist with a number of local schools, which have resulted in a good range of programmes for some 80 pupils aged 14-16. Progression to mainstream college courses from this provision is very high at around 70%. There is a good work-based learning offer meeting local employment needs. The college is a major partner in local plans to develop specialised diplomas for young people. Provision at level 2 meets local needs, and has a chiefly vocational bias. There are good progression routes from level 2 to 3 on a wide range of vocational programmes. There is a limited range of courses for adult part-time students.
27. The college provides good advice, guidance and support for students. Information at enquiry, interview and enrolment stages is good. Initial assessment is thorough, and students are allocated support early in their contact with the college. A broad range of support systems is effective and well understood by staff and students, and includes in-class learning support,

subject-specific support sessions, drop-in study support workshops and professional counselling services. A peer-mentoring and guidance system is in place and is valued by students. There is a weekly drop-in health and welfare facility provided in partnership with the local health trust.

28. Tutorial support is very good. The tutorial system is well managed and valued by students. Academic progress, punctuality, attendance and pastoral wellbeing are closely monitored through the tutorial system. There is good liaison between subject and personal tutors, and with parents. A tier of senior tutors and course co-ordinators provides good oversight and quality assurance of tutorial processes. However, in some tutorials, targets are not sufficiently demanding. Learners have good access to HE and careers advice and guidance. Good links exist between Connexions and HE advice staff in the college. Students have access to a well resourced and well used careers and HE library. Students on vocational programmes take part in two weeks of work placement, but such opportunities for other students are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

29. Leadership and management are good. The principal provides clear leadership that prioritises students and their success. New systems and procedures have been put in place to secure further improvements. Since the last inspection, the college has increased success rates on work-based learning provision, and the quality, timeliness and use of reports from the MIS. The college is clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. A number of links with similar colleges are being used to share good practice and raise standards. It is too early to judge the impact of these links. In addition, advanced teaching practitioners are being used to broaden the range of teaching and learning activities.
30. Governors play an active part in the college. They set the mission and direction of the college. They monitor the performance of the college at regular governor meetings. Governors work closely with the principal and senior managers to achieve the mission and secure improvements. All new governors receive an induction. However, there is insufficient training for governors.
31. The response of the college to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 has been good. Governors receive regular reports on progress against the action plans and on the performance of specific groups. Data provided for student success is analysed by gender and by minority ethnic group. Firm action has been taken to address the weaker performance of male students. The college makes a good response to statutory requirements in regards to child protection; procedures are well documented and shared. A designated senior manager and a governor have received appropriate training. All staff have received appropriate briefing. Equality and diversity is promoted actively in the college.

32. The college has invested in a new integrated management information system. Data is accurate and regular reports are received by managers. The reports and data are used effectively to monitor progress of the college and of students. Its use has contributed to improved attendance, retention and success rates.
33. Financial management is good. The college monitors its financial position regularly and governors receive financial reports at each meeting. The college has retained category A financial status for the last eight years. Staffing and other costs are controlled well. Resources are well deployed. Significant sums have been invested in making buildings accessible and providing increased information technology. The college provides good value for money.
34. Target setting is satisfactory. The governors have delegated senior managers to achieve rates at or above the upper quartile for sixth-form colleges. For some areas these targets are challenging. Targets set for some curriculum areas are below the rates achieved in the previous year.
35. The self-assessment process is thorough and comprehensive. Senior managers take a leading role in establishing rigour in the self-assessment judgements. Governors are linked with each area of the college and focus on interrogating the self-assessment report. The report is generally accurate. However, it did not identify some key weaknesses found by inspectors, including insufficient training for governors and the failure of the lesson observation process to focus sufficiently on promoting improvements in learning.

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	429	44.3	51.6	-7.3	152	14.5	49.2	-34.7
	03/04	383	54.0	56.3	-2.3	170	44.1	53.6	-9.5
	04/05	351	57.8	60.9	-3.1	166	47.6	59.5	-11.9
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	0				34	70.6	47.3	23.3
	03/04	0				0			
	04/05	0				0			
NVQs	02/03	0				0			
	03/04	0				0			
	04/05	1	0.0	67.2	-67.2	0			
Other	02/03	53	50.9	55.9	-5.0	135	45.9	54.9	-9.0
	03/04	119	32.8	60.0	-27.2	127	30.7	59.0	-28.3
	04/05	143	40.6	63.6	-23.0	385	40.8	61.4	-20.6

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	53	50.9	56.1	-5.2	169	50.9	54.9	-4.0
	03/04	119	32.8	60.3	-27.5	127	30.7	59.1	-28.4
	04/05	144	40.3	64.2	-23.9	385	40.8	61.6	-20.8
GCSEs	02/03	174	56.9	57.1	-0.2	12	50.0	55.3	-5.3
	03/04	151	64.9	61.3	3.6	14	28.6	58.8	-30.2
	04/05	170	64.7	64.1	0.6	9	55.6	62.3	-6.7
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	58	63.8	58.5	5.3	2	100.0	52.8	47.2
	03/04	46	54.3	63.0	-8.7	1	0.0	56.6	-56.6
	04/05	44	61.4	66.8	-5.4	2	50.0	70.4	-20.4
NVQs	02/03	20	50.0	41.9	8.1	7	42.9	48.2	-5.3
	03/04	20	60.0	51.9	8.1	8	12.5	53.5	-41.0
	04/05	23	26.1	57.0	-30.9	9	66.7	59.6	7.1
Other	02/03	177	24.9	50.5	-25.6	131	8.4	48.4	-40.0
	03/04	146	41.8	54.1	-12.3	147	47.6	52.7	-5.1
	04/05	114	52.6	60.1	-7.5	146	45.9	58.8	-12.9

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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	02/03	3851	79.3	61.6	17.7	140	33.6	50.7	-17.1
	03/04	3812	75.8	64.1	11.7	202	55.0	53.5	1.5
	04/05	3807	78.1	67.5	10.6	109	62.4	57.3	5.1
A/A2 Levels	02/03	1189	83.9	81.8	2.1	27	44.4	63.0	-18.6
	03/04	981	88.7	83.8	4.9	37	70.3	65.5	4.8
	04/05	1097	91.8	85.6	6.2	41	80.5	69.1	11.4
AS Levels	02/03	2045	68.9	61.1	7.8	37	37.8	48.2	-10.4
	03/04	2140	71.1	62.9	8.2	55	60.0	49.6	10.4
	04/05	1920	76.6	65.5	11.1	34	61.8	52.2	9.6
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	548	42.9	49.8	-6.9	12	8.3	44.9	-36.6
	03/04	205	46.8	52.4	-5.6	10	30.0	43.5	-13.5
	04/05	190	44.2	60.2	-16.0	2	0.0	52.9	-52.9
NVQs	02/03					9	11.1	44.1	-33.0
	03/04	2	100.0	53.7	46.3	35	25.7	47.0	-21.3
	04/05					15	33.3	53.9	-20.6
Other	02/03	69	92.8	55.4	37.4	55	34.5	52.6	-18.1
	03/04	484	82.2	56.3	25.9	65	61.5	55.7	5.8
	04/05	600	68.7	60.0	8.7	17	52.9	58.3	-5.4

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	35	54	32	68	47
	Advanced	37	38	31		
2004/05	Apprenticeship	42	60	39	56	50
	Advanced	29	34	34		
2005/06	Apprenticeship	88	67	53	72	57
	Advanced	22	77	44		

* 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'