



North West Kent College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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Contents

Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	5
Curriculum areas	5
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Overall judgement	6
Main findings	9
Curriculum area inspections	14

Basic information about the college

Name of college: North West Kent College

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Malcolm Bell

Address of college: Oakfield Lane, Dartford, Kent DA1 2JT

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Chair of governors: Brian Williams

Unique reference number: 130725

Name of lead inspector: Richard Beaumont, ALI

Dates of inspection: 27 November - 1 December 2006

Background of the organisation

1. North West Kent College is a large further education (FE) college situated in an area of considerable economic development. The college is based on three sites and has seen considerable growth over the past years. Major developments in the area include the Bluewater retail and leisure complex, the international railway passenger terminal at Ebbsfleet and the Crossways business and distribution park.
2. The college has a wide curriculum offer and mainly recruits from Dartford and Gravesend. Within the college catchment area there are six grammar and eleven non-selective schools, of which all but one offers sixth form provision. The college is very successful at increasing the range of courses to meet local demand and last year increased full-time provision by 15%. In 2005/06, the college enrolled 14,508 learners. Just over half of these are on long courses and 57% were aged 19+. Approximately 9% of all learners who attend the college are from minority ethnic groups.
3. A significant number of part-time learners attend specialist short courses offered in refrigeration, air conditioning and the mercantile industry. The college is the largest FE provider of work-based learning in the region. It is a Centre of Vocational Excellence in accounting and financial services. The college offers academic and vocational provision in 14 of the QCA sector/subject areas.
4. The college mission statement is: "To provide high quality education, learning and training which, through partnership working, offers young people and adults the opportunity to achieve their potential and contribute to the success of the community".

Scope of the inspection

5. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; 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, social care and early years; engineering; construction; information and communication technology (ICT); media and creative arts; literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); and work-based learning in engineering and construction.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievements and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: grade 3

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, social care and early years	Good: grade 2
Engineering	Good: grade 2
Construction	Good: grade 2
ICT	Satisfactory: grade 3
Media and creative arts	Satisfactory: grade 3
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Inadequate: grade 4

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

6. The college has consistently increased success rates over the past four years and is now above the national average. The college has a well developed strategy to introduce new provision to meet local need at all levels and overall, programmes at levels 1 and 2 attain high success rates. Learner achievement on 14-16 and work-based learning are particularly good. For all groups, retention is at or above the national average; however, 19+ learner achievement is not as good as for 16-18 year olds. The monitoring of literacy and numeracy programmes does not measure all key aspects of performance, and attendance monitoring for the whole college has recently been much improved. The standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory. Most learners enjoy their lessons and make good progress.
7. The quality of teaching and learning is generally satisfactory with wide variations across different subject areas and levels. The college's own assessment of its teaching and learning is too generous and the internal inspection process is not sufficiently reliable. This has been recognised as an area for development and the lesson observation process has recently been improved.
8. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. The college provides a wide range of provision at all levels and learners progress well. The response to 14-16 provision is very good. The college has good links with employers and has developed excellent provision to meet local skills priorities. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is good. Enrichment activities are satisfactory but take up is low.
9. Guidance and support for learners are good. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and full-time learners requiring additional literacy and numeracy, receive good support. Most tutorials are effectively planned. The use of individual learning plans to monitor and encourage learners' progress is generally satisfactory although there are wide variations across the college.
10. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has successfully managed considerable continuous growth. Partnership working is outstanding. Managers exercise high degrees of autonomy, and compliance across college is adequate. Management information is timely and accurate but not fully used to support performance improvement. Some teaching accommodation is unsuitable. Quality assurance is weak and there is insufficient evaluation of several core activities. The self-assessment process is thorough although the college over estimates the strength of some aspects of its work. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

11. The college demonstrates good capacity to improve. A key strength of the college has been to actively meet the range of needs of the local community through strong partnership working. Expansion of provision has not had a negative impact on achievement and standards have been improving at a faster rate than nationally. Work-based learning and 14-16 provision are particularly good.
12. Governance, staff development and financial management are all good and provide a strong foundation. The college has consistently maintained outstanding provision in two subject areas. Quality assurance is weak. However, self-assessment is thorough and the college recognises aspects of weakness in its provision and has implemented recent improvements, for example, the quality of teaching and learning.

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

13. The college has taken good steps to improve since the last inspection. It has extended and reinforced many of its key strengths. Some key weaknesses have improved, for example, tutorial provision, retention and success rates. However, some key weaknesses remain, although the college has taken a number of recent positive actions to improve. Of the six curriculum areas inspected, three areas have improved since the last inspection and are now good. One curriculum area that was judged to be very weak at the last inspection is now satisfactory.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- very effective partnership arrangements and community links
- responsiveness to employer needs
- success rates
- management of continuous growth
- broadening and responsive curriculum with good learner progression
- 14-16 and work-based learning provision
- good guidance and support for learners.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the proportion of good or better teaching and learning
- use of data to analyse and improve course performance
- quality assurance arrangements

- monitoring of student progress
- management and consistency of skills for life provision
- standards of some accommodation.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

14. Overall achievements and standards are good but more variable within and across curriculum areas. Over the past four years, success rates have steadily improved and are now above national averages. The college has been very successful in widening provision to meet new and emerging local demand. Success rates for these courses are high at levels 1 and 2.
15. The college's most successful provision for 16-18 year olds following full-time courses is at level 1. Levels 2 and 3 have improved and are at the national average. Although success rates for 16-18 year olds on AS level courses are improving, they are below the national average and learners following many of these do not make sufficient progress relative to their qualifications on enrolment. The college is aware of this and has action plans in place for improvement. Adult success rates are better at level 3, and at levels 1 and 2 they are at the national average.
16. For the past three years, retention has been consistently above national averages. Adult retention at levels 1 and 2 is well above the national average and at level 3 is just below. Retention for 16-18 year olds is well above the national average at level 2 and at the national average for levels 1 and 3. Pass rates for 16-18 year olds and level 3 adults are above the national average. For adults at levels 1 and 2, pass rates are slightly below the national average.
17. Success rates for IT franchise provision and the college's substantial specialist short course provision are good. Work-based learning success rates have much improved over a three year period and are good. Overall work-based learning success rates are 70%. The majority of these learners are in engineering and construction with success rates of 76% and 69% respectively. Success rates for 14-16 year old learners are particularly good and a recently introduced Entry to Employment (E2E) programme has success rates that are outstanding.
18. The standard of learners' work is generally satisfactory with good standards in health, care and early years and construction. Learners make good progress and develop improved social skills in engineering, media and creative arts, construction, and health, care and early years. Engineering students' enjoyment of their college work is outstanding.
19. The college monitors literacy and numeracy success from the learner being entered onto the key skill test or portfolios being submitted and not from the learner starting the programme. The college was unable to supply inspectors with the necessary data to make an appropriate judgement on literacy and numeracy key skill success rates.

20. Until very recently, the monitoring of student attendance has been insufficiently robust. Average attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was 82% which is similar to the college's 'all year' calculations for 2005/06. Attendance was particularly low for learners on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 14-16

Good: grade 2

21. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The college's overall assessment of teaching and learning is too generous. The college's internal inspection process is not sufficiently reliable. It indicates that some 70% of teaching and learning was good or better in recent college observations. This analysis does not match inspection findings which indicate that a high proportion of teaching is only satisfactory with wide variations in the overall quality across different areas and for learners at different levels.
22. The college's internal lesson observations do not include a sufficiently wide range of evidence about the quality of learning and attainment. There is an over emphasis on the teacher's performance. The quality of observations varies across the college. Written feedback is insufficiently evaluative and does not consistently provide clear guidance on areas for improvement. Quality assurance of the observation process is not sufficiently focused on raising the quality of the learning experience. The college has recognised these weaknesses. A more rigorous system for the observation of teaching and learning has been recently introduced. Improvements include new staff appointments, more rigorous targeting of weak performance and a comprehensive professional development programme.
23. Lessons are generally well planned and teachers create supportive learning environments. High levels of subject and vocational expertise are demonstrated by teachers in engineering, construction, health, care and early years and media and creative arts. In the best lessons, teachers make clear links between theory and practice and help learners to apply their new skills in a variety of professional work settings. Learners are productive, develop confidence, talk authoritatively about their work and enjoy lessons. The teaching and learning of 14-16 year old learners is good. Learners work safely in lessons.
24. However, some teachers use a narrow range of teaching methods and do not sufficiently encourage active learning. In some lessons, there is an over dependence on the teacher and insufficient opportunities to develop critical thinking and oral skills. Accommodation significantly limits learning in some courses and there is insufficient use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support learning.

25. Some teachers do not use a sufficient range of strategies to challenge the more able learners and to take sufficient account of those who struggle. Insufficient integration of skills for life and key skills in some areas limits opportunities for learners to practice essential skills in relevant vocational environments. In some lessons, learners' attention and behaviour are poor.
26. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory. Assessment is regular and learners generally receive informative written and oral feedback on their work. The outcomes of initial assessment are not used consistently to inform lesson planning. In many cases, individual learning plans are not used effectively to monitor and evaluate progress. In some curriculum areas, targets are insufficiently challenging and often too general.
27. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is good. The college responds well to increased demand for new provision to meet the needs and interests of learners. It provides a wide range of provision, with good progression opportunities from pre-entry to level 4. Learners progress well across the levels. The college has developed some excellent courses with employers to support regional skill priorities. The Learning Shop in Bluewater provides highly flexible learning opportunities for employers and adults on part-time courses.
28. The college's responsive 14-16 provision is effectively delivered through partnerships with 10 schools and comprises 219 learners on level 1 and level 2 courses.
29. Enrichment activities are satisfactory and in some areas good, but take up is low. Learners welcome opportunities for subject specific visiting speakers and trips abroad, and speak highly of them. However, learners lack recreational facilities such as a common room.
30. The college's advice, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners receive a comprehensive advice and guidance service. Learners are well inducted with an attractive and helpful student handbook. Learners benefit from a range of specialist welfare and pastoral services, including college nurseries and counselling facilities.
31. Most full-time learners who are assessed for their literacy and numeracy skills receive good additional support. However, take up of individual support in learning centres is low. Support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, particularly for learners with dyslexia and hearing impairments.
32. In most subjects, parents are kept well informed of learner progress. Employers of work-based learners receive insufficient information on course content to help them understand job training requirements. Most group tutorials and one-to-one interviews are effectively delivered. In a few weaker group sessions, learning is not well structured and learners are not involved enough in

discussing and understanding the issues. Learners value the quality of course-related support from their vocational tutors.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 14-16

Good: grade 2

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

33. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the college has successfully managed considerable growth in its accommodation, curriculum and student population. Overall success rates have increased steadily to above national averages. Strategic planning and direction are sharply focused. The principal and senior leadership team have extended the many close working relationships the college enjoys with a diverse range of partners in the local community, including schools and employers. Leadership and management of 14-16 and work-based learning provision are good. This collaborative work is characterised by strategic flexibility and creative responsiveness. It is outstanding in its enterprise and impact, and enables the college to play a key part in the regeneration of the Thames Gateway region.
34. Communications are effective throughout the college and middle and senior managers' roles are clear to all. The college allows middle managers to exercise a high degree of autonomy. Staff value this independence and most exercise the responsibility effectively. Management information is timely and accurate but is not yet used by all as an essential instrument with which to improve performance. The lesson observation programme has recently been much improved although it over estimates teaching and learning performance and is not currently moderated to accurate standards.
35. Compliance with policies and procedures across the college are adequate. However, quality assurance is weak. There is insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of several core activities such as the use of individual learning plans, the provision of learning support, actions to improve attendance, the overall provision of key skills and the Skills for Life strategy. Consequently, the experiences of learners are too uneven and the college does not know enough about the relative strengths or weaknesses of these activities. Self-assessment processes are thorough but the college over estimates the quality of some of its work.
36. Teachers are well supported and benefit from extensive and well targeted opportunities for development. Most are either qualified as teachers or undertaking qualifications. Their appraisals are variable, both in rigour and regularity. Resources are satisfactory. The college complies with child protection, race equality and disability discrimination legislation and satisfactorily provides a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults. Action plans for promoting race equality are in the early stages of

implementation. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily. Reasonable actions are being taken to redress the restricted physical access to parts of the Dartford campus.

37. Governors bring considerable expertise and energy to their roles as critical friends of the college. The college currently represents satisfactory value for money. Financial management is good and provides a strong platform for the college's measured ambitions for the future.

Curriculum area inspections

Health, social care and early years

Good: grade 2

Context

38. The college offers a range of full- and part-time courses in health and social care and early years from entry to level 4. 323 learners, mostly aged 16-18, are following full-time courses and 183 are following part-time courses. 230 learners follow full-time courses in childcare, of whom 101 are on the level 3 diploma in childcare, and 70 learners are following part-time courses in childcare. In health and social care, 93 learners are following full-time courses and 113 are following part-time courses. In addition, the college offers short courses in first aid as a complementary course for full-time learners and these recruit high numbers.

STRENGTHS

- good success rates on the majority of courses
- high progression rates to more advanced courses or related employment
- effective development of learners' vocational skills
- wide range of well subscribed enrichment activities.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- consistently low success rates on the national diploma in health studies
- slow progress of some learners on full-time courses.

Achievements and standards

39. Learners' achievements are good. In 2005/06, success rates were well above the national average on most full-time and part-time courses. However, success rates are consistently low on the national diploma in health studies. Success rates declined slightly on the diploma in childcare and education to just above the national average. This decline was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report and there is no action plan for improvement of either course in the self-assessment report.
40. Progression rates are high from full-time courses to more advanced courses or to employment. The standard of learners' work is good. In all classrooms, there are well presented displays of good quality work.

Quality of provision

41. Teaching and learning are good in most lessons. The best lessons are well planned and have clear learning outcomes that are achieved through an effective sequence of varied activities that successfully engage the learners and enable them to check their learning. However, in many lessons, individuals'

different learning needs are not always addressed and some learners on full-time courses make slow progress. The whole class approach gives learners limited opportunities to engage in practical activities pitched at their level of attainment.

42. Learners develop high standards of vocational practice. Learners' understanding of the principles that underpin high professional standards in care settings are good. Work placement co-ordinators ensure that learners experience a range of appropriate care settings. Good links with employers contribute to well structured supervision.
43. The needs of learners are well met. Learners participate in a wide range of enrichment activities, including first aid courses, visits related to career progression, trips abroad, visiting speakers from care organisations and involvement in activities such as health promotions and charity events.
44. Learners are well supported by teachers and tutors. Those with additional learning support needs receive specialist in-class and individual support.

Leadership and management

45. Leadership and management are good. Effective communications and good team work promote a coherent approach to course planning and the sharing of resources. New and part-time teachers are well supported. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate but not fully comprehensive. It recognises that key skills need to be fully embedded in courses and the need to raise student awareness of the individual learning plan. However, it does not fully acknowledge or address the issue of underperforming courses.

Engineering

Good: grade 2

Context

46. The college offers full- and part-time courses from entry level to level 4 in engineering and motor vehicle engineering. At the time of the inspection, there were 271 16-18 year olds and 141 adult learners on full- and part-time courses. There were 53 apprentices and 23 advanced apprentices on motor vehicle and engineering work-based learning programmes. There were also 81 pupils from local schools taking part in engineering courses.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates on level 3 programmes
- very good work-based learning in motor vehicle engineering
- good partnerships to enhance the provision
- good support for learners' additional learning needs
- good leadership of the curriculum.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- declining and low pass rates on many level 2 programmes
- some dull and uninspiring teaching
- some inappropriate accommodation.

Achievements and standards

47. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are good on level 3 programmes and have increased over the previous three years to be significantly above national averages. Work-based learning achievements are good for apprentices and very good for advanced apprentices. Learners work competently and diligently; portfolios and student practical skills are well developed. Many work-based learners work in prestigious vehicle franchises and produce work that meets high industry standards. The success rates on most level 2 programmes are low and in many cases declining. The college has recognised this and is adjusting the provision to replace poorly performing programmes.

Quality of provision

48. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In some lessons, there is good use of interactive white boards incorporating internet resources, video and diagram development. However, in some classes, these resources are used inappropriately and there is over use of presentations with little engagement of learners. These sessions become dull and uninspiring and do not provide opportunities for learners to explore and develop the basic principles of engineering. Learners waste too much time copying notes from the presentations. For national diploma learners, good compact disc resources have

been developed containing course handbooks, schemes of work, lecture notes, internet links and software guides. Internal verification is thorough and assignments are vocationally relevant. Individual learning needs are assessed at the commencement of the programmes and they are effectively incorporated in many lesson plans. Learners speak highly of the support provided and for many it is a key driver for them remaining in learning. Learners find staff very approachable and supportive.

49. Monitoring of learners' progress is generally good. Target setting for full-time learners is not fully developed to include all aspects of learner progress and usually relates specifically to assignment deadlines. However, targets for work-based learners are more detailed and learners generally progress well. Work-based learning in motor vehicle engineering is very good. College staff visit placements regularly offering very good support and provide assessment on demand. Their progress is well managed and monitored. Learners are clear about their progress and what further work is required. Key skills are very well integrated into off-the-job training.
50. There is a broad curriculum offer with good progression opportunities. The college works very well with local schools and a variety of partners to provide entry level engineering courses for 14-16 year old learners at a purpose built centre. The centre is staffed by the college and is used by a wide range of schools. Employer engagement is good and employers contribute effectively to the development of the engineering curriculum. The college is responsive to and quickly meets employer needs. Support for learners is good.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are good. Management is clearly focused and has a positive approach to continued improvement; however, internal teaching and learning observations are over graded. The staff profile represents a greater diversity of positive role models and encourages more female learners.
52. There is an effective system for monitoring most student groups' progress displayed on staff room walls. This allows for clear and quick comparison and action planning for further improvements. Some of the teaching accommodation at the Gravesend site is cramped and untidy and does not portray a positive image. In some rooms, lighting levels are too low.

Construction

Good: grade 2

Context

53. Construction offers a range of full- and part-time craft and service courses from foundation to advanced level. These include trowel and wood occupations, painting and decorating, plumbing, electrical installation and refrigeration and air conditioning.
54. There are 438 learners on level 1 courses, 1,176 at level 2 and 150 at level 3. Of these, 48% are adults. There are 216 work-based learning apprentices and 135 learners aged 14-16 from partner schools.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates in mechanical engineering services
- very high success rate in first diploma
- high framework achievements for apprentices
- outstanding provision for learners aged 14-16
- good development of learners' practical skills
- broad curriculum with effective progression opportunities
- effective development of specialist resources.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low and declining pass rates in intermediate construction award
- inappropriate accommodation in plumbing and brickwork
- insufficiently rigorous target setting in work-based progress reviews.

Achievements and standards

55. Learners' achievements are good. Level 3 plumbing, air conditioning and ventilation and electrical installation success rates have improved to significantly above national averages in 2006. A two year first diploma for learners aged 14-16 was introduced in 2004 and has achieved a high success rate with many learners achieving high grades. Framework achievement rates for all modern apprentices have improved consistently and are good for apprentices and satisfactory for advance apprentices. Success rates for the intermediate construction award have declined over 3 years and are low. Punctuality and attendance are good.

Quality of provision

56. The quality of training is good. Most learners demonstrate a particularly good understanding of their work and develop good practical hand skills. For example, first year learners in wood occupations were confident in the use of both powered and hand tools to produce complex timber joints and plumbing learners were able to bend and joint copper pipe in a challenging work piece to

tight tolerances. However, plumbing workshops are cramped and learners have limited access to sufficient assessment areas. The brick work shop is dimly lit and uninspiring. Standard health and safety signs were not in place in many workshops.

57. Apprentices develop particularly good skills in the workplace. Learners aged 14-16 attend a new vocational centre that provides very good resources for construction training. Teaching and learning at the centre are of a very good standard and learners are highly motivated.
58. The needs of learners are well met through a broad curriculum that has been effectively developed to provide good progression routes for learners from entry level to level 3. Progression from the first diploma to full-time provision is very high at 86% for 2006. Many learners progress from full-time courses to apprenticeships.
59. Support for learners is generally satisfactory; however, targets set in progress reviews for apprentices are not sufficiently clear, detailed or measurable.

Leadership and management

60. Leadership and management are satisfactory, although management of work-based learning is good. Staff are effectively monitored and clear on their performance. Management actively develops new provision and good specialist resources to meet increased local demand. Painting, decorating and wood occupations working areas are of a high quality.
61. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory and learners with physical disabilities have been effectively supported. The department employs a number of female staff in teaching and learning support roles; however, the number of female learners is low. The review process for apprentices does not sufficiently capture or develop learners' understanding of equal opportunities.
62. The self-assessment report reflects many of the judgements made at inspection. However, action plans are not sufficiently detailed to effectively monitor performance improvement.

Information and communications technology

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

63. The college provides a range of full- and part-time courses, from foundation to level 4. Full-time courses include BTEC introductory diploma for IT at work, BTEC first diploma for systems support technicians and GCE A2 and AS levels in ICT and computing. Part-time courses include web development, technical support, software applications and programming. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,101 learners of whom 265 were full-time. The provision for 476 learners is franchised to local providers.

STRENGTHS

- consistently good success rates on GCE A2 ICT and the short certificate in IT
- good management of franchised courses.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- declining success rates on some courses
- insufficient learning in too many lessons.

Achievements and standards

64. Overall, success rates have consistently improved and are now above the national average. Two courses that have performed consistently well with high success rates are the GCE A2 in ICT at 93% and the certificate in IT at 80%. However, success rates on some courses have declined over recent years. For example, the BTEC national diploma for IT practitioners has fallen from 69% to 57%, the certificate for IT practitioners from 72% to 52% and the GCE AS ICT from 74% to 64%.
65. Learners' attendance is good. Overall, the standard of learners' work, development of skills and progress on programme are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Of the lessons observed by inspectors, the majority were satisfactory or better. In the better lessons, teaching was well planned and managed. Teachers used a range of teaching methods to ensure all learners were actively involved. However, some lessons were graded inadequate. All of these lessons were delivered in 'open' accommodation that was inappropriate for the method of teaching used. Learners were distracted by interruptions from persons not involved in the lesson and noise from other classes taking place in the same area. White boards and data projector screens in these lessons are often too low for all learners to see and many learners in these sessions did not make sufficient progress and became disengaged. This

issue was raised in the previous inspection and has been commented upon in internal teaching observations.

67. Teaching resources are generally satisfactory and the college's recently installed Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is being used in a very imaginative and innovative way by one teacher to improve and broaden the learners' skills and knowledge. Assessment practice is satisfactory. The range of ICT courses offered by the college is satisfactory. Support for learners is satisfactory. However, there are some good examples of well planned and effective group and individual tutorials. Learners identified with additional learning needs receive appropriate support.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The management of franchised provision is good. The college has effective links between the college and its franchise partners to ensure implementation of college procedures and learner entitlement. For example, learners receive an effective induction and initial assessment of their IT, numeracy and literacy skills with the offer of additional help with numeracy and literacy where appropriate. These learners have good understanding of the facilities and services offered by the college.
69. Staff are appropriately qualified and clearly understand improvement measures. The self-assessment report recognises many of the strengths and areas for development identified by inspectors, although not the insufficient learning in some lessons.
70. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Equality and diversity topics are included in tutorials; however, no actions have been taken by the school to target under represented groups.

Media and creative art

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

71. The School of Media and Creative Arts is based at the Dartford campus. There is a wide range of courses available, including introductory diploma in art, design and media, first diplomas in media and in art and design and a range of national diplomas and GCE A and AS levels in film studies, media, photography and art and design.
72. Of the 599 full-time learners, most are 16-18 years of age, 15.8% are of minority ethnic origin and 11.6 % have a learning difficulty and/or a disability.

STRENGTHS

- good teaching that encourages independent learning & creativity
- good progression through a wide range of courses
- good course management.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low success rate in first diploma in media and AS fine art
- some unsuitable accommodation.

Achievements and standards

73. Overall achievement is now satisfactory. In the past year, many courses have seen significant improvements in success rates. However, the first diploma in media and GCE AS fine art have poor success and retention. Learners develop good skills and practical work is often imaginative and original. Written work is well researched and presented. Many learners are articulate in describing their inspiration and aims confidently. In the introductory programme, learners were able to describe and demonstrate the influence of specific artists on their three-dimensional work. Attendance is good.

Quality of provision

74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. All lessons are carefully planned and some include opportunities to gain key skills. In the better classes, teachers encourage learners to experiment and develop their creative work independently. Weaker classes tend to be teacher led with little opportunity for student contributions.
75. Assessment and monitoring of student progress are generally good. Learners understand the criteria applied and value the written feed back, some of which is very clear. Identification of and provision for additional learning needs are satisfactory.

76. The curriculum offer is good. There is a broad range of provision that gives flexible progression opportunities from levels 1 to 3 and into two level 4 courses. Progression is good and whilst many learners enter higher education, a substantial number of learners from photography, media and graphic design go directly into employment.
77. Support for learners is good and learners appreciate the support they receive through excellent relationships with their tutors and the many college-based services available.

Leadership and management

78. Course management is good. Thorough quality assurance measures have resulted in recent improvements in retention and success rates. Management anticipates curriculum developments and accommodation needs effectively. Media resources are good. However, some art rooms are small and shabby. Noise between media teaching bays can interfere with learning and in photography, the rooms are over heated and the ceilings are too low.
79. Staff are well qualified and those without teaching qualifications are working towards them. There is a good range of staff development opportunities identified through lesson observation and appraisal. Communication in the school of art is good, though largely informal. Aspects of health and safety are constantly re-enforced and diversity is celebrated in course content and exhibitions.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Inadequate: grade 4

Context

80. The college provides key skills for all full-time learners and literacy and numeracy support for those on vocational programmes. There is also a full-time ESOL programme with 76 learners. Across the college, there are around 1,500 16-18 year olds taking key skills in application of number and communications at levels 1 and 2. 299 learners are currently receiving literacy or numeracy support in groups. 134 learners are receiving one-to-one support. Literacy and numeracy classes are provided for 42 E2E and 17 learners aged 14-16 excluded from school.

STRENGTHS

- good key skills practice in some areas
- effective individual support for literacy, numeracy and dyslexia.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- too much unsatisfactory teaching and learning
- unsatisfactory accommodation
- weak quality assurance.

Achievements and standards

81. The college does not measure success from when learners start the programme but when they are entered for tests or submit portfolios. Inspectors were unable to appropriately judge achievements and standards for literacy, numeracy and ESOL. However, there are good pass rates on key skills communication and application of number. In 2005/06, there were 1,900 passes in literacy, communication, numeracy and application of number at levels 1 and 2. The standard of work is good in key skills portfolios. Attendance and punctuality are poor and there is unsatisfactory behaviour in a minority of classes.

Quality of provision

82. Too much teaching is unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, the learning content is vocationally relevant. For example, percentage and fractional calculations are taught through a project to refurbish an office. Skills for Life links tutors' work effectively with some vocational areas to develop the key skills provision. In weaker lessons, teachers do not plan carefully for the individual needs of learners. There is too much whole group teaching that does not recognise individual learner needs. Teachers use a narrow range of teaching methods and do not make enough use of ILT. This weakness was identified in the previous inspection. Some activities do not adequately develop learners' skills.

83. The college responds satisfactorily to local need with provision for literacy and numeracy for unemployed 16-18 year olds and 14-16 year olds. There is substantial growth in the numbers of learners taking key skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2. Learners with greater needs in literacy and numeracy receive effective specialist tuition for alternative qualifications at level 1. ESOL provision has grown rapidly.
84. Support and guidance are good. Specialist learning support in literacy, numeracy and dyslexia are effective. However, too few learners take up the support offered, particularly at the Gravesend campus. The college has no strategies for addressing this. There is insufficient support available for teachers in classes for learners with behavioural difficulties. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All full-time learners have an online assessment. However, the results of this are not used in individual learning plans to set targets which learners can achieve. Few part-time learners receive initial assessment.

Leadership and management

85. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Much accommodation is cramped, over heated and poorly ventilated. The layout of rooms is often not conducive to effective group work or good classroom management. Access to ILT is limited in some rooms. These accommodation issues are identified in the self-assessment report. Learners with the greatest behavioural support needs are inappropriately timetabled for long periods. Staff do not have sufficient training in behaviour management. There is insufficient promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum. Quality assurance is weak. The quality of key skills provision is uneven across the college. Data is not used to monitor the quality of the programme. Lesson observations are not sufficiently rigorous. The self-assessment report accurately identifies most areas for improvement but overstates the strengths of the provision.

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	1020	63	60	3	289	55	59	-4
	04/05	1108	68	64	4	514	59	62	-3
	05/06	1254	71	-	-	580	65	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	52	58	65	-7	5	80	52	28
	04/05	72	58	68	-10	4	75	58	17
	05/06	n/a	-	-	-	n/a	-	-	-
NVQs	03/04	105	78	61	17	9	78	62	16
	04/05	147	65	67	-2	4	50	67	-17
	05/06	184	72	-	-	14	86	-	-
Other	03/04	863	62	60	2	275	54	59	-5
	04/05	889	69	64	5	506	59	61	-2
	05/06	1069	71	-	-	566	65	-	-

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	1403	55	56	-1	987	49	54	-5
	04/05	1566	63	61	2	940	58	60	-2
	05/06	1738	65	-	-	1149	60	-	-
GCSEs	03/04	147	55	61	-6	130	71	59	12
	04/05	142	61	64	-3	149	74	62	12
	05/06	119	71	-	-	139	78	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	84	57	63	-6	4	100	57	43
	04/05	72	61	67	-6	8	75	70	5
	05/06	14	71	-	-	1	100	-	-
NVQs	03/04	317	51	52	-1	394	44	54	-10
	04/05	305	70	57	13	302	54	60	-6
	05/06	291	61	-	-	232	51	-	-
Other	03/04	855	56	54	2	459	45	53	-8
	04/05	1047	61	60	1	481	56	59	-3
	05/06	1314	66	-	-	777	59	-	-

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	1272	60	64	-4	778	50	54	-4
	04/05	1462	63	68	-5	662	62	57	5
	05/06	1689	67	-	-	765	65	-	-
A/A2 Levels	03/04	106	82	84	-2	14	86	66	20
	04/05	107	83	86	-3	5	80	69	11
	05/06	117	89	-	-	6	100	-	-
AS Levels	03/04	310	59	63	-4	31	29	50	-21
	04/05	416	49	66	-17	36	42	52	-10
	05/06	314	57	-	-	11	73	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	95	43	52	-9	28	25	44	-19
	04/05	67	69	60	9	19	32	53	-21
	05/06	32	66	-	-	14	21	-	-
NVQs	03/04	29	59	54	5	300	45	47	-2
	04/05	50	62	62	0	172	62	54	8
	05/06	70	74	-	-	198	57	-	-
Other	03/04	732	59	56	3	405	56	56	0
	04/05	822	67	60	7	430	65	58	7
	05/06	1159	67	-	-	536	69	-	-

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2005 to 2006

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2004/05	Apprenticeship	123	41	39	60	50
	Advanced	56	39	34	43	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	195	66	53	70	58
	Advanced	56	48	44	54	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'

b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2004/05	Apprenticeship	151	15	22	25	29
	Advanced	58	33	21	36	31
2005/06	Apprenticeship	168	26	32	31	36
	Advanced	59	36	26	41	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'

1. Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college for 2006

Year	Number of starts in year	Achieved Objectives *	Progression **	Still in learning
2005/06	71	94	94	0

* 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