



Barnsley College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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Basic information about the college

Name of college: Barnsley College

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Ms Paula Whittle

Address of college: PO Box 266, Church St, Barnsley, S70 2AX

Telephone number: 01226 216216

Fax number: 01226 298514

Chair of governors: Pauline Acklam

Unique reference number: 130524

Name of lead inspector: Colin Evans, HMI

Dates of inspection: 29 January to 2 February 2007

Background of the organisation

1. Barnsley College is a large tertiary college serving Barnsley Metropolitan Borough and surrounding areas. The borough, population of 230,000, comprises both rural and urban industrial areas including the main town of Barnsley and smaller towns and former mining villages. Barnsley experiences serious economic challenges as a legacy of the demise of the mining industry. The borough is one of the most deprived areas in England and is part of the South Yorkshire Objective One area. The unemployment rate is close to the national average. The proportion of people in low skilled employment is 30%, 10% higher than for Great Britain. About 1% of the population and 3% of college learners are from a minority ethnic background.
2. The college offers programmes in all 15 subject categories funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In 2005/06 the college enrolled 3,358 full-time and 3,976 part-time learners. Approximately 90% of full-time and 10% of part-time learners are aged 16 to 18. About 420 learners are enrolled on apprenticeship programmes. The college employs 620 staff. The annual budget for 2005/06 was £21 million. The college estate comprises 6 main sites, including a working farm.
3. The borough maintains twelve 11 to 16 secondary schools, one 11 to 18 school, a recently created academy and one special school. In 2006 the proportion of Year 11 school leavers who obtained a grade A* to C in five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects, including mathematics and English was low at 31%. The proportion of students aged 16 who stayed on in full-time education was also low at only 63%.
4. The college's mission is to put learners first and provide an excellent, inclusive, stimulating and responsive learning environment that fulfils the potential of all. It aims to meet the needs of individuals, businesses, and the community of Barnsley and surrounding areas. The college is a partner in two centres of vocational excellence (CoVE), in construction and in manufacturing, and an associate partner in two more, in health and social care, and in hospitality.

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; 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
- specialist provision in: science and mathematics; land-based provision; construction; hairdressing and beauty therapy; visual and performing arts; English and humanities.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Science and mathematics	Good: grade 2
Land-based provision	Satisfactory : grade 3
Construction	Good : grade 2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good : grade 2
Visual and performing arts	Good : grade 2
English and humanities	Satisfactory : grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

6. Achievements and the standards of learners' work are satisfactory. Success rates are satisfactory. General certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) success rates are high. On these programmes learners make good progress. On GCE advanced supplementary (AS) programmes success rates are close to the average for similar colleges and learners make satisfactory progress. Apprenticeship success rates are improving and are currently similar to the national average, but learners make slow progress. Key skills success rates are low but improving. Learners produce work of a good standard.
7. Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are well planned. Learners receive good support in practical lessons. A few lessons do not take account of the needs of the lower attaining. Learners' progress is monitored satisfactorily but some learning targets, particularly for work-based learners, are insufficiently specific to be useful. Key skills provision has improved.
8. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. Programmes are well suited to learners' needs. Many learners have disadvantaged backgrounds. The college recruits a higher proportion of learners from black and minority ethnic groups than in the area and their success rates are at least as good as for all learners. The promotion of equality and diversity is patchy. Buildings are accessible to learners with mobility difficulties.
9. Learners receive good guidance and support. Pre-entry recruitment and selection procedures are rigorous. Learners deemed at risk of leaving early are identified quickly and intensive support provided. Additional learning support is carefully tailored to individual needs.
10. Leadership and governance are strong and effective. Management is good. Communications are effective. There are productive links with external organisations. Accurate and timely management information is provided to staff. Curriculum management is generally good. Most self-assessment reports are accurate. Target setting at course and department levels is insufficiently effective.

Capacity to improve

Good : grade 2

11. The college's capacity to improve is good. Data is accurate and timely. The self-assessment report is accurate and the quality improvement plan is detailed. Its implementation is carefully monitored. The lesson observation system yields a realistic view of the quality of teaching in most areas. The professional development programme is wide-ranging and appropriate. New management

appointments have strengthened the capacity to improve teaching. Managers have a good track record in effecting improvement.

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 areas for improvement. The unsatisfactory or weak provision is now satisfactory. Success rates have improved significantly. Initial assessment and the additional support provided are now good. Key skills provision and work-based learning are improving, though still areas for development, as are the rigour of learners' reviews and target setting at course level. Leadership and management have improved from satisfactory to good.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- high success rates and achievements on GCE A level courses
- the wide range of programmes which provide good progression opportunities
- the provision of effective additional learning support to those who need it
- good communication and consultation channels within and across the departments
- timely and accurate management information reports to managers, course leaders and teachers
- strong and effective leadership and governance.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- success rates overall, including those for work-based learning, which are close to national averages
- key skills success rates
- the rigour of individual progress reviews
- the effectiveness of target setting at course and department level
- the inconsistency of the implementation of policies to promote equality and diversity.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

13. Achievements and the standard of learners' work overall, are satisfactory, a judgement which accords with the college's self-assessment. The success rate for learners aged 16-18 on long courses is rising at the same rate and is close to the national average. The rates for courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 were close to the national averages in 2006.
14. The success rate on GCE A level courses has improved. In 2005/06 it was high. The GCE AS rate is close to the rate for similar colleges. The apprenticeship success rate for 2005/06 was broadly similar to the national rate, but many learners make slow progress. Success in achieving key skills qualifications is low but early results show improvement in 2006/07.
15. Learners who complete GCE A level programmes make good progress compared with their levels of attainment at GCSE. On GCE AS programmes they make satisfactory progress. Many of these learners have low levels of attainment at entry to their programme, particularly so in mathematics and English. Learners aged 14-16 who take externally accredited courses achieve good success.
16. The long course success rate for adult learners is rising at a rate which is similar to and consistently close to the national average. Success rates at levels 1 and 2 place the college in the middle 50% of colleges at each level, but below the average. The level 3 success rate is consistently close to the national average. Success rates on short courses are low.
17. Attendance rates are satisfactory. Learners produce work of a good standard in most of the curriculum areas inspected. Learners achieve good success in external competitions. For example, a brickwork learner represented Great Britain in the Skill Build final in Helsinki 2005 and a media learner won a silver medal in the UK Skills competition. In 2006 the football team was runner up in the national colleges' cup and the netball team was a semi-finalist.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

18. The quality of provision is good overall and satisfactory in work-based learning. Teaching and learning are good. The college, in its self-assessment report for

2005/06, was less positive about the quality of teaching, assessing it as satisfactory. In four of the curriculum areas inspected, teaching and learning were judged good and in two it was satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned. Learners receive good support in practical lessons. A few lessons do not take account of the needs of the lower attaining.

19. The college has strengthened the management of key skills, provided better support for key skills teachers and is providing clear management information to enable the closer tracking of learners' progress. The teaching observed was of satisfactory quality. It was appropriately planned and teachers gave learners close support.
20. Learners' progress is monitored satisfactorily. Individual learning plans are usually updated appropriately and tutorial reviews completed adequately. The learning targets set during progress reviews are often insufficiently specific to be useful.
21. Communications are good in work-based learning and managers have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the provision. The range of provision is wide. Most subject areas have assessors who carry out assessments and learner reviews in the workplace. Review meetings are attended by appropriate staff. However, learning targets are often not useful, their implementation poorly monitored and action plans lack sufficient detail. The college is the lead partner in the local Entry to Employment consortium. The progression rate is much improved. Data provided by the colleges shows that the rate is now high and is well above the national average. The college is responsive to the needs of local employers and has a strong commitment to employer engagement. The Train to Gain programme, mainly operating in care and manufacturing, has high success rates.
22. Programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and employers well, a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. The provision includes a wide range of options which reflects the needs of the local area. The range of GCE AS and A level subjects is extensive. The pastoral programme pays appropriate attention to the themes contained within "Every Child Matters". Equality and diversity issues are not promoted sufficiently during work-based learners' progress reviews.
23. A wide range of partnerships is maintained and the college is proactive in adult education and community work. It is a key partner in the development of 14-19 education in Barnsley. Five hundred 14 -16 pupils, drawn from nearly all the secondary schools and the special school, attended the college in 2005/06. Programmes are specifically aimed at transition to the college and progression and success rates are good.
24. Take-up, by learners, of the cross-college enrichment programme is variable. The college lacks reliable systems to record participation. Opportunities for

some learners to undertake work placement are limited. The college celebrates learners' success well, for example through inclusive award ceremonies.

25. The self-assessment report correctly identifies that guidance and support for learners are good. Information, advice and guidance help ensure that learners are recruited to the right courses. The number of early leavers is reducing and in-year retention is improving. Prospective full-time learners undergo rigorous pre-entry recruitment and selection procedures. Arrangements for support are planned in advance and commence promptly. Learners deemed at risk of leaving early are identified quickly and intensive support is provided.
26. Additional learning support is good and take-up has improved significantly. The support is carefully tailored to individual needs. Learners value the support provided and the success rate for these learners is high. The wide range of specialist equipment is used well to support learners. Learners have access to a wide range of college support services, including counselling, drugs support and road and night safety guidance.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

27. Leadership and management are good. The college is well led and governance is good, judgements which accord with self-assessment. Good progress has been made in eliminating weaknesses identified at the last inspection. New management appointments are helping to improve teaching. The clerk is experienced and governors have appropriate expertise that they apply in carrying out their duties. The principal and governors have reviewed the mission and strategic aims which now focus more clearly on learners and their achievements. College policies and procedures have been revised to support the new mission. Communications are good. They keep staff well informed and generate a corporate ethos and staff support for college strategies.
28. Not all of the revised procedures are sufficiently embedded. The effectiveness of target setting is inconsistent. While there is good practice in many areas, targets to improve success rates, for example, are sometimes undemanding. Quality improvement targets are sometimes too vague to enable their implementation to be monitored effectively.
29. The college has productive links with employers. There are good collaborative links with local schools and the local authority. The college participates effectively in initiatives to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training.
30. The management information returned to the LSC is accurate and timely. Managers and teachers are provided with clear and useful reports which support their work well. Managers' ability to track learners' attendance and take follow up action on absence is having a positive impact on retention.

31. The equal opportunities policy is comprehensive and takes account of recent legislation. Black and minority ethnic learners achieve success rates which are at least as good as the college average. The promotion of equality and diversity is patchy. In some areas such as health and care they are well promoted but in others they are promoted insufficiently. The statutory requirements of the amended Race Relations Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Special Education Needs and Disability act (SENDA) are met. Recently appointed staff have not received SENDA training, but there are plans to deliver this.
32. Effective measures are in place to ensure that the safety and security of learners are safeguarded. Good child protection procedures help ensure the well being and progress of young people. There is good collaboration with appropriate agencies to ensure the welfare and progress of looked after children and those on the child protection register. All appropriate staff have undergone criminal records bureau checks as have the governors.
33. The self-assessment process is rigorous and the report is accurate. The implementation of the quality improvement plan is monitored by governors. Quality systems are understood by staff. The internal lesson observation system is rigorous and is helping to improve teaching.
34. Curriculum management is generally good. Good team working is aided by regular team meetings and good communications. Curriculum self-assessment reports are generally accurate. Staff are well qualified. The professional development programme is wide-ranging and draws appropriately from appraisal and the outcomes of self-assessment. Accommodation and specialist equipment and facilities have been improved and are of a good standard. Most classrooms are equipped with good information and learning technology facilities and provide a good learning environment. All areas used by students are accessible to wheelchair users.
35. Senior managers carefully monitor expenditure and income and secure efficiency savings where possible. Clear financial reports are provided to governors and senior managers. There has been insufficient training for budget holders on the financial regulations and budget management. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Curriculum area inspections

Science and mathematics

Good : grade 2

Context

36. GCSE courses are offered in mathematics, science, and human physiology and health, with most enrolments in mathematics. GCE AS and A levels are offered in a broad range of sciences and mathematics. Around 530 learners were enrolled in 2006-07. Most learners study full-time and are aged 16 to 18 years. Part-time learners are mostly adult.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates on GCE A levels
- high retention rates on all level 3 courses
- good quality teaching and learning
- good individual and group support for full-time learners
- excellent and well managed resources.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low higher grade success rates on GCSE mathematics
- low success rates on GCE AS courses, particularly mathematics
- the insufficient progress made by GCE AS level learners.

Achievements and standards

37. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. GCE A level success rates are high. On the A levels in chemistry and biology, for example, the rates were both above 90% in 2006 and the pass rates close to 100%. GCE AS success rates are low, particularly so in mathematics. Retention rates on courses at level 3 are high. GCSE mathematics success rates, grades A* to C are improving but are currently below the national average. The GCSE human physiology and health success rate is above the national average.
38. Learners on GCE A level courses make good progress compared with their incoming attainment in GCSEs. On GCE AS courses their progress is less than satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality on full-time courses is generally good. Learners work safely and with confidence in practical sessions.

Quality of provision

39. Teaching and learning are good. The best lessons are well planned and use a wide range of learning materials. Learners receive good support from teachers during practical lessons. In a few lessons the teaching does not take sufficient account of the needs of the learners of lower attainment and insufficient checks

are made to confirm that all learners are appropriately engaged. Homework is set and marked regularly, returned promptly and generally contains helpful suggestions to enable improvements. Learners' progress is monitored effectively.

40. The range of courses is good and generally meets the needs of learners. Curriculum enrichment is good, and includes field trips, national and regional competitions and lectures by external speakers.
41. Learners receive good support. The prior attainment of learners entering GCE courses is significantly lower than is the case nationally. Learners deemed to be at risk of leaving early are identified early in the course and strategies are in place to help them develop learning skills. Tutorial support is effective and learners speak positively about the support they receive. Learners with particular learning difficulties are given appropriate individual support.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are good. The modern laboratories are well equipped and teachers and technicians are well qualified. Health and safety is addressed meticulously. Analysis of the underlying causes of poor performance has led to appropriate strategies for improvement. These are beginning to have a positive impact. A curriculum quality leader and an advanced teacher support the improvement strategies in teaching and learning. Observation of teaching and learning is thorough and links to staff development. The self-assessment and action planning processes are robust and self-assessment judgements are mostly accurate. Regular departmental and team meetings ensure key issues are addressed. Managers and staff work well as a team.

Land-based provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

43. The college offers full-time courses in animal care and management from levels 1 to 3. There are 65 full-time learners, mostly aged 16-18, with over half studying at level 3 and most on the national diploma in animal management. There are 24 apprentices, 7 in agriculture and 17 in amenity horticulture. Nearly 50 pupils aged 14-16 from local schools take level 1 land-based courses.

Strengths

- high success rates on the national diploma
- the use of realistic working environments to develop good vocational skills
- good leadership and management in work-based learning

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on level 2 college and work-based programmes
- low key skills success rates
- the ineffective target setting and action planning

Achievement and standards

44. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. The success and pass rates on the BTEC national diploma in animal management are high. The pass rate has been over 95% in both 2005 and 2006, but few achieve merit or distinction passes. Success rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 are low. Current in-year retention on full-time programmes is good. The apprenticeship success rate is improving but is low and apprentices make slow progress. Success rates in key skills are low. Attendance rates are high. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Most current learners are making good progress. Animal care learners develop appropriate practical skills for the level of their course.

Quality of provision

45. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The better lessons are well structured and use an appropriate variety of learning approaches. Learners work purposefully. Demonstrations are used well to help develop vocational skills. Learners enjoy their practical experience in "real life" working settings at the animal unit and the farm. In less effective lessons progress is often slow and work unchallenging for the more able. Questioning techniques are insufficiently probing. Teachers are well qualified and many have a wide range of relevant and up-to-date industrial experience.
46. The college offers a satisfactory range of full-time courses allowing progression from level 1 to level 3 which reflect local needs. Learners enjoy their college experience and value the good pastoral support. Links with employers create

good learning opportunities. Partnerships with schools are well established and productive. Courses for pupils aged 14-16 provide good opportunities for the early development of skills and many progress onto college courses. They learn in a supportive environment and are closely involved in the animal unit practical activities.

47. Support for learners is satisfactory. Reviews of college and work-based learners' progress and the planning of new work are unsatisfactory. The learning targets set are insufficiently specific and not challenging enough and their completion is not monitored closely enough. Insufficient attention is given to equality and diversity during work-based learning reviews.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications are good. Work-based learning is well managed. Management is collaborative and consultative. Staff contribute well through their course reviews to the curriculum self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is largely accurate but does not set sufficiently challenging quality improvement targets. Satisfactory verification arrangements are in place. Resources in animal care are good. The animal unit is well managed and supports learning well.

Construction

Good: grade 2

Context

49. Courses are available in a wide range of construction crafts and also in certificate and diploma technical provision. Work-based learning and school vocational training programmes run in many of the crafts. The 550 learners include approximately one third who are work-based and a fifth who are adults. Apprenticeships, mostly level 2, are available in most trades. Training is provided for the Construction Industry Training Board. The curriculum area has achieved joint CoVE status.

Strengths

- high success rates on level 1 courses
- high standard of learners' work
- much good teaching and learning
- good leadership and management
- good use of resources

Areas for improvement

- low success rates at level 3, including work-based learning
- lack of clarity in some learning targets
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity at learning reviews

Achievement and standards

50. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. The success rate at level 1 is high. In 2006 the rate was significantly above the national average, and all completing learners achieved the qualification. The level 3 success rate improved markedly in 2006 but is still below the national average. The success rate in work based learning has also improved markedly but is also still below average. Many apprentices make slow progress. The standard of learners' practical work is good. Learners are successful in external skills competitions at regional, national and international level. Portfolios are well maintained and contain high quality evidence.

Quality of provision

51. The quality of the provision is good. Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned. Teachers make good use of their site experience to contextualise theory lessons and learners demonstrate a clear understanding of theoretical principles. Projects are well designed. Key skills are placed in a vocational context. A good proportion of the assessment of apprentices' work is done in the work place. Assessment criteria are clear and assessors provide good feedback to learners.

52. The provision meets the needs of learners and employers well. The level 1 provision is helping to widen participation. Good progression opportunities are provided. Learners speak highly of the provision and of its vocational relevance.
53. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Teachers provide a good level of informal and pastoral support. Course teams track learners' progress effectively. In both work-based learning and in college provision the reviews of individual learner's progress are insufficiently rigorous. Learning targets are often too general to be useful. In some cases the targets are not checked to see they are achieved. Work-based reviews cover the compliance aspects of equality and diversity satisfactorily but give insufficient attention to developing learners' understanding of the issues.

Leadership and management

54. The curriculum area, including work-based learning, is well managed. Performance management is strong and programme teams have clear targets which are monitored effectively for completion. Course reviews identify key strengths and weaknesses clearly. Good practice is effectively shared. Data is used well to help improve success rates. Management meetings for work-based learning include all relevant staff and responsibility for the achievement of all elements of the framework is carefully allocated.
55. Staff development is good. Good use is made of resources. The new construction building and the injection of funding to develop the CoVE have significantly improved the provision. Workshops are well set out and contain a good selection of materials and tools. Classrooms are well equipped.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Good : grade 2

Context

56. Courses are provided by both full-time and part-time modes of attendance. Nearly 400 learners are on courses in hairdressing, beauty or holistic therapies. About two thirds of learners study full-time. Most full-time learners are aged 16-18 and most part-time learners are adults. The department has widened participation by offering courses at entry level. Work-based learning provision includes 35 apprentices in hairdressing and beauty therapy. About 60 pupils aged 14-16 are currently engaged on an accredited introduction to salon services course and attend college for one day a week.

Strengths

- high pass rates
- high success rates on NVQ 2 and 3 hairdressing courses
- good teaching strategies that inspire and engage learners
- good support for learners
- successful target setting and monitoring processes which help learners progress
- good management of the area.

Areas for improvement

- declining retention on NVQ beauty therapy courses at levels 2 and 3
- low apprenticeship success rates
- some over-crowded salons.

Achievement and standards

57. Achievement and standards are good. Pass rates are high on all courses. On many courses they are consistently above 95%. Success rates on hairdressing courses at levels 2 and 3 were high in 2006. Retention rates overall are satisfactory but have declined on beauty therapy courses at levels 2 and 3 and were below the national average in 2006. Success rates on apprenticeship frameworks improved in 2005/06, but are still low. Workplace reviews and assessments fail to ensure learners make sufficient progress.
58. The standard of learners' practical skills is satisfactory. Learners develop a broad theoretical knowledge and benefit from the expertise of highly qualified and experienced staff. Learners develop a good work ethic by adhering to strict codes of conduct in areas such as attendance, punctuality, and personal presentation.

Quality of provision

59. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching and learning strategies inspire and challenge learners. Careful thought is given to lesson planning so that learners are provided with a good learning experience. Teaching is differentiated to meet the needs of all learners and does so effectively. Learners gain confidence, work hard, are motivated, and enjoy their learning. Clear and challenging learning targets are set which help learners make good progress.
60. Resources overall are satisfactory. Some salons are over-crowded at times and the lay-out of some salons hinders the observation of practical work. In one lesson learners were interrupted when working with clients when staff and other learners squeezed past.
61. The wide range of courses helps promote progression from entry level to level 3. An academic full-time level 3 course has proved popular with students preferring a more theoretical route. Full-time learners undertake work experience. Enrichment activities give students valuable insights into aspects of the industry broaden their knowledge and inform them of progression routes.
62. Learners receive good support. Additional support is well integrated into the curriculum, providing vocationally contextualised learning activities which learners find interesting and relevant. Significant progress is made by entry level learners. Nearly all learners identified as requiring additional support receive it.

Leadership and management

63. The curriculum area is well managed. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities. Good channels of communication and a pro-active management approach ensure a prompt response to issues of concern. Advanced teachers and curriculum leaders provide valuable support to staff. There is effective sharing of good practice. In spite of attempts to promote the curriculum to males they remain under-represented in this area.

Visual and performing arts

Good: grade 2

Context

64. Full-time provision includes BTEC first and national diploma courses in performing arts, music and visual arts. Part-time courses are available for adults in the evenings in ceramics and jewellery. In 2005/6 there were 92 adult learners and 524 learners aged 16-18. Most learners study on visual arts courses. Progression routes allow learners to progress from courses at level 1 through to level 3, including foundation studies.

Strengths

- good achievement on the majority of art and design courses
- high standard students' work
- good teaching and learning
- effective support and guidance for students
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- low retention on some courses
- poor punctuality in a minority of lessons.

Achievement and standards

65. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high on the majority of visual arts courses. In 2005/6 success rates on the GCE A level in graphic design, and on the national diplomas in fashion and clothing, and in design were all at least 8% above the national average. Pass rates on these courses are regularly above 95%. Retention rates are low on a few courses, for example on the national diploma in music practice. The standard of students' work is good. Students on level 2 courses are often able to produce work of a standard typical of level 3 studies. National diploma dance students are able to execute formal movements confidently and accurately. There is good progression from first diploma courses to national diploma courses, and then to higher education. Some music learners are persistently late for early morning lessons.

Quality of provision

66. Teaching and learning are good. Lesson planning takes account of the needs of all students. Teachers set meaningful learning goals for students. Most learners are highly motivated and make good progress. Assessment practices are robust. Useful formative comments are provided on national diploma students' draft projects to enable them to achieve higher grades. Marked work is returned to students promptly.

67. Courses meet learners' needs well. There is a good range of provision. Enrichment activity is strong. Good work experience placements are available. For example graphic design learners work for a local design studio. Learners often undertake assignments for local businesses and public organisations, for example to design and complete murals. Drama students work with local schools on numerous projects. Learners take part in educational trips abroad and the college runs a radio station which is well-managed and delivered by students.
68. Support and guidance are good. Teachers provide regular academic and pastoral support. The tutorial system provides encouragement and effective pastoral support. Individual learning plans are used appropriately to help students set targets for themselves.
69. Learners with additional learning and other support needs are provided with good support. A scribe and a signer are available for students with auditory impairment. A special desk has been built for a wheelchair user studying graphic design.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are good. The style of management is open and transparent. Communications are good. Managers consult teachers regularly about change and teachers are involved appropriately in self-assessment. The self-assessment report is suitably self-critical and includes a useful improvement plan which has measurable outcomes. Performance reviews lead to action plans for improvement which staff are quick to implement. Specialist resources are good.

English and humanities

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

71. The provision comprises a range of GCE AS and A level programmes and GCSE English. Nearly 950 full-time and 75 part-time learners are enrolled. Almost all full-time learners are aged 16-18 and 60% are female. All part-time learners are adults. GCE AS and A level subjects offered include English language, English literature and English language and literature, geography and history. Most learners study four GCE AS subjects in year one and three GCE A levels in their second year.

Strengths

- high success rates on GCE A-level courses
- good accommodation and learning resources
- good academic and personal support provided by teachers.

Areas for improvement

- low pass rates on GCE AS English language and literature
- too many lessons which fail to cater for the individual needs of GCE AS learners
- insufficiently rigorous self assessment.

Achievement and standards

72. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Success, retention and pass rates at GCE A level are high. They are at or above sixth form college averages. GCE AS success and pass rates are mostly satisfactory but English language and literature and geography success rates are low. Retention rates on GCE AS courses are generally high. The higher, A* to C grade, success rate in GCSE English is above the national averages but is still low.

73. Most learners studying GCE A level and AS courses achieve grades broadly in line with those suggested by their GCSE results. The number of students progressing from GCE AS to A level is low on many courses. In lessons the verbal responses made by learners are often thoughtful and perceptive. Learners display a high level of enjoyment and engagement with the subject.

Quality of provision

74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners receive effective academic and personal support. Teachers possess strong subject knowledge, which is used well to enhance learners' motivation and confidence. Classroom display is used well to support learning. Lesson planning is unsatisfactory, plans lack sufficient detail. On GCE AS courses teaching strategies are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of all learners. Questioning techniques to assess learners progress

are poorly developed. Written feedback to learners is not sufficiently detailed to help learners make progress.

75. The courses meet the needs and interests of the learners satisfactorily. There is an appropriate choice of GCE AS level and A level subjects and modules and a range of curriculum-based enrichment activities.
76. Learners receive satisfactory support. An effective tutorial system is in place. Learning resources are good. Teaching materials are of good quality and readily available. The learning environment is safe. Progress reviews take place twice-termly and are well co-ordinated by personal tutors. Learning targets are often not sufficiently specific or measurable to be useful in guiding learning. Learners receive an appropriate induction.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications within the department are good. Team meetings are held regularly. Quality processes and procedures exist but are not used effectively to drive improvement. For example, observation of teaching takes place regularly but the grades awarded are too generous. Self-assessment is insufficiently evaluative. It does not focus closely enough on reasons for unsatisfactory performance and on what needs improving. Accommodation and learning resources are of good quality. Classrooms are well equipped. The learning resource centre provides a good learning environment and is resourced well.

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	1048	63	60	3	1737	55	59	-4
	04/05	1284	61	64	-3	1132	58	62	-4
	05/06	1170	67			557	58		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	58	71	65	6	*			
	04/05	77	77	68	9	*			
	05/06	37	46			*			
NVQs	03/04	118	66	61	5	64	70	62	8
	04/05	231	71	67	4	72	71	67	4
	05/06	230	75			28	57		
Other	03/04	872	62	60	2	1673	54	59	-5
	04/05	976	58	64	-6	1059	57	61	-4
	05/06	903	66			529	58		

* numbers too small for success rates to be significant

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	1658	50	56	-6	1233	49	54	-5
	04/05	1662	56	61	-5	1274	53	60	-7
	05/06	1576	64			1078	61		
GCSEs	03/04	416	61	61	0	268	39	59	-20
	04/05	409	60	64	-4	293	44	62	-18
	05/06	316	64			179	69		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	161	77	63	14	*			
	04/05	170	72	67	5	*			
	05/06	84	73			*			
NVQs	03/04	376	45	52	-7	159	44	54	-10
	04/05	333	49	57	-8	150	51	60	-9
	05/06	392	67			255	69		
Other	03/04	705	41	54	-13	803	54	53	1
	04/05	750	54	60	-6	828	57	59	-2
	05/06	784	62			642	56		

* numbers too small for success rates to be significant

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	4147	71	64	7	986	49	54	-5
	04/05	4088	72	68	4	766	55	57	-2
	05/06	3768	74			799	59		
A/A2 Levels	03/04	919	89	84	5	57	63	66	-3
	04/05	1076	89	86	3	50	76	69	7
	05/06	913	93			29	83		
AS Levels	03/04	2376	70	63	7	113	43	50	-7
	04/05	2229	67	66	1	102	34	52	-18
	05/06	2010	69			64	48		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	330	59	52	7	*			
	04/05	201	66	60	6	*			
	05/06	87	82			*			
NVQs	03/04	58	48	54	-6	126	48	47	1
	04/05	46	76	62	14	90	70	54	16
	05/06	61	69			93	67		
Other	03/04	464	55	56	-1	676	49	56	-7
	04/05	536	63	60	3	496	53	58	-5
	05/06	697	63			609	57		

* numbers too small for success rates to be significant

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	173	3	32	43	47
	Advanced	62	3	31	45	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	213	20	38	52	50
	Advanced	70	21	34	56	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	202	48	53	55	58
	Advanced	50	26	44	46	54

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

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

b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	184	1	16	22	24
	Advanced	60	0	19	27	30
2004/05	Apprenticeship	220	5	22	19	29
	Advanced	56	9	21	25	31
2005/06	Apprenticeship	192	9	33	16	38
	Advanced	50	12	27	26	34

* 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'

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

Year	Number of starts in year	Achieved Objectives *	Progression **	Still in learning
2003/04	-	-	-	-
2004/05	105	6	47	23
2005/06	109	58	57	26

* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period

Outcomes for Employer Training Pilots and National Employer Training Programmes managed by the college 2003/04 to 2005/06.

Year	Number of starts in year	Planned learning completed *	Still in learning
2003/04	59	50	0
2004/05	352	297	0
2005/06	219	18	176

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