



Grantham College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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130759

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Basic information about the college

Name of college: Grantham College

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Malcolm Saville

Address of college: Stonebridge Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 9AP

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Chair of governors: Philip Newton

Unique reference number: 130759

Name of lead inspector: Davinder Dosanjh, HMI

Dates of inspection: 5-9 February 2007

Background of the organisation

1. Grantham College is a general further education (GFE) college in Lincolnshire. The main site in Stonebridge Road is situated in the centre of the market town of Grantham. The population of the town and its surrounding villages is approximately 36,000. The college's mission is 'to enable, through partnership, the success of individuals, the community and business'.
2. The college is involved in a number of partnerships and activities at centres away from the college's main site. These include a formal partnership with the Central Technology and Sports College for the delivery of advanced level science courses. Sleaford College is used as the brand to deliver some programmes in the neighbouring market town. Yes is a brand used to provide the college's community and work-based learning programmes. It is located in accommodation in the town centre. Courses include basic skills, information and communication technology (ICT) and English as a second language (ESOL) provision. The local authority operates a selective system for secondary education. The college has formed partnerships with local schools to provide vocational education options for pupils aged 14-16.
3. The college offers provision in 14 out of the 15 Learning and Skills Council sector subject areas. There are around 225 work-based learners with the largest number of learners in construction. The college is a Centre for Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in multi-skilled and maintenance engineering. The college is involved in contracts for Train to Gain. In 2005/06, the college had 13,347 learner enrolments, of which 4,618 were learners aged 16-18 and 8,729 were adult learners. The number of female adult learners on courses is much higher than the number of male learners. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic background, though low, is greater than in the areas in which the college operates.

Scope of the inspection

4. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

5. This is a satisfactory college. Achievements and standards are satisfactory overall. College performance has been inconsistent since the last inspection with a decline in performance in 2004/05. In particular, success rates for adults declined substantially below national averages. While there has been improvement in 2005/06 success rates for adult learners remain below the national average. For learners aged 16-18, success rates are well above the national average at level 1 but satisfactory at levels 2 and 3. Success rates in work-based learning continue to improve and are above national averages. Key skills success rates are very high. Learners have high levels of attendance.
6. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, teachers plan lessons thoroughly and support learning with a wide range of varied learning activities. However, there is too much teaching which is only satisfactory, often teacher-centred and does not inspire learners.
7. Educational and social inclusion are good. The college provides a broad range of courses for full-time learners aged 16-19. There are a range of programmes for young people aged 14-16 which are available in many curriculum areas. The college is responsive to employers needs. Provision for learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties is good. However, provision for part-time learners and adult programmes is not as cohesively planned. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory.
8. Learners receive good guidance and support, particularly full-time learners. The college has increased the numbers of student tutors since the last inspection. Learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties receive very effective support. The college recognises it does not systematically diagnose the learning needs of part-time learners to ensure appropriate support is routinely provided.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Most success rates improved in 2005/06 after poor performance in 2004/05. The rate of improvement varies and is satisfactory overall. Quality processes are not sufficiently self-critical and target setting is underdeveloped. The college is not fully compliant with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. There is effective partnership activity. Financial management is good, and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: grade 3

10. The college's capacity to improve is satisfactory. There has been an inconsistent trend in improvements since the last inspection; success rates have mostly improved although in some cases they are still below national averages. The underperformance of adult learners has been persistent. The college uses local rather than national benchmarking which has led to an unrealistic view of its own performance. Data is not sufficiently evaluated to plan strategies for improvement. Although managers at all levels are keen to make improvements and have taken many actions to do so, these have not been evaluated sufficiently to know which are effective.
11. The college has adequate arrangements for the monitoring of teaching and learning. There is still too much teaching that is only satisfactory. The self-assessment report identifies most of the college's areas for improvement but is insufficiently self-critical and overstates the strengths. Some development plans lack sufficient focus to bring about adequate improvement and targets have not been met.

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

12. Since the last inspection, the college has made satisfactory progress. There has been a decline in college performance, particularly in 2004/05. Key skills and work-based learning have continued to improve and success rates are now well above the national average. Learners' attendance is very high. Since the last inspection the profile of teaching and learning has not improved. There have been significant improvements in the college's approach to equality and diversity but it is still not fully compliant with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Improvements have been made to accommodation.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- high success rates for learners aged 16-18 on level 1 provision
- successful work-based learning programmes
- high levels of attendance
- good resources for learning
- broad range of provision for full-time learners aged 14-19
- good support for full-time learners
- effective partnership activity and responsiveness to employers
- good financial management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates for adult learners
- the need to increase the proportion of teaching which is good or better
- underdeveloped support arrangements for part-time learners
- insufficient rigour of quality systems to drive improvements
- underdeveloped systematic review and evaluation to inform strategies.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

13. Inspectors did not agree with the college's assessment that the overall standards achieved by learners are good. Since the last inspection success rates have not continued to improve. College performance has been inconsistent, with a decline in performance particularly in 2004/05. The most significant decline has been in success rates on long courses for adult learners which have dropped substantially below national averages. In 2005/06, the college made improvements in success rates.
14. In 2005/06, success rates for learners aged 16-18 at level 1 improved significantly and are now well above the national average. At levels 2 and 3 success rates remain satisfactory. Success rates for adult learners have been declining since 2003 but have shown substantial improvement in 2005/06 at levels 2 and 3. However, they remain below the national average. The college attributes some of the poor performance at levels 2 and 3 to problems with NVQ programmes, particularly in Care. These were significantly affected by franchise and commercial work and these contracts have now been terminated. At level 1, success rates showed no improvements.
15. For work-based learners, achievement of frameworks is good and continues to improve. Success rates for framework completion by apprentices and advanced apprentices are above the national averages.
16. Pass rates for school pupils aged 14-16 on a range of vocational courses were very high in 2005/06. Progression onto full-time courses at the college is good. However, there is some poor retention on public services, catering and construction courses. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very successful on their courses. Females aged 16-18 perform better than males.
17. The standard of learners' work is generally satisfactory with good practical skills development in some areas such as hairdressing. Most participate effectively in their lessons, especially when they engage in a wide range of activities. Achievements in key skills have continued to improve and in 2005/06 were well above national averages.
18. Learners' attendance is very high and in 2005/06 was 88%, above average for similar colleges. Progression to higher education is good.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

19. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Inspectors agreed with the college that in the best lessons, teachers plan lessons thoroughly, and support learning with a wide range of resources and varied learning activities, which effectively engage and motivate learners. The best teachers make highly effective use of support assistants to help learners who have development needs in literacy and numeracy, or more complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
20. There is too much teaching which is only satisfactory. The college recognises that there are a number of key areas for further improvement in teaching and learning, which it has begun to address. In particular, there is too often a teacher-centred approach which does not inspire learners. There is insufficient focus on individual learning or challenge for all learners, and a lack of direct involvement in learning activities. The college recognises that the use of ILT (information learning technology) to support learning is under developed. Formative assessment is not always used effectively to confirm that learning had taken place.
21. The delivery of apprenticeship programmes has much improved since the previous inspection. The number of learners on apprenticeship programmes has increased significantly over the last year. The college recognises that further improvement is needed in linking on- and off-the job training.
22. Key skills are effectively delivered. The college has strengthened its key skills teaching team and invested in improved facilities. It has integrated key skills well into some vocational areas to bring greater relevance to learners. Key skills software is being used effectively to support and motivate learners in construction. This has contributed to an improved perception of key skills among students. Attendance at key skills sessions is carefully monitored. The number of learners taking key skills has increased significantly in the current academic year compared with 2004/05.
23. Monitoring of learners' progress is generally satisfactory. Learners' work is marked regularly, and many teachers provide clear and constructive feedback to learners. Independent learning plans vary too much in quality and effectiveness, and some do not provide sufficiently clear targets or timescales to help learners improve.
24. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. The college provides a broad range of courses for full-time learners aged 16-19 and very effective programmes for 14-16 year olds. Many pupils on these courses progress onto college courses. Work-based learning has increased and achievements are good. The college has developed a productive partnership with a local school to develop a bridging programme for learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

25. The extent to which the college meets the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. The college provides a wide range of programmes and good progression routes from entry level through to level 3 for full-time learners aged 16-19. A good percentage of learners from level 3 successfully progress to university. However, the college does not systematically monitor the progression of learners between levels within the curriculum. Learners on many courses have opportunities to gain additional qualifications allied to their main study to enhance their employability.
26. Curriculum areas have developed a suitable range of enrichment activities for their learners, including trips, external speakers, opportunities to participate in competitions and work experience. However, as recognised in the self-assessment report, managers have not reviewed or monitored this to determine how widely or well enrichment activities enhance learners' skills. Opportunities for sports are provided and there are two sports academies.
27. The college responds well to the needs of employers and takes a flexible approach when planning this curriculum. The CoVE in multi-skilled and maintenance engineering is enabling local companies, particularly engineering to develop new products well, develop their workforce skills and increase opportunities for apprenticeships. There are 15 young apprentices in engineering of which 3 are female and a further 10 in retail. Adult programmes and provision for part-time learners are not as cohesively planned or well developed.
28. Guidance and support are good. Marketing materials and course leaflets are comprehensive and learners receive good advice and guidance before they join the college. Since the previous inspection, the college has employed a schools liaison officer who works effectively with local schools. A team of well established student support tutors conduct initial interviews with full-time learners that ensure learners make appropriate choices. A further interview is carried out by curriculum staff and learners attend a taster day before their course begins. All full-time learners undertake initial diagnostic assessment and are then provided promptly with appropriate support through provision in maths and English GCSEs and key skills or additional support in literacy and numeracy. Tutors monitor attendance rigorously and achievement has improved significantly, particularly in key skills. The college provides effective additional learning support for those with sensory impairments and dyslexia. Very effective support is provided for learners with specific learning difficulties and disabilities.
29. Since the previous inspection, the college has increased the numbers of student tutors who plan the tutorial programme well. They work closely with course tutors and teachers. A senior tutor now co-ordinates this work. Topics cover equality and diversity well and include activities that embrace the five outcomes of 'Every Child Matters'. Sexual health, drug and alcohol misuse and mental health issues are also comprehensively covered. Apprentices on work-based learning programmes have responsive and flexible support from staff

who review their progress. These learners also have very effective support for literacy and numeracy. One student support tutor has developed particularly effective strategies with learners at risk of leaving or failing their course. However, as recognised by the college, it does not systematically diagnose the learning needs of part-time learners to ensure appropriate support is routinely provided.

30. Career advice is effective and the college has good relationships with Connexions staff. Student tutors' support for learners' applications to higher education have been particularly effective. Not enough advice and guidance is provided in specific vocational areas for learners who do not wish to apply to higher education.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

31. Leadership and management are satisfactory, in contrast to the college's own judgement of good. Most success rates improved in 2005/06 after a decline in performance but are still persistently under national averages for adult learners. This has not been sufficiently recognised in the college's self assessment.
32. The principal has created and fostered effective and productive partnerships with local schools, employers and organisations. Some have been very beneficial to learners and the college. These include membership of the Welland and Lincolnshire sub-regional strategic partnerships which secured funding for capital developments and engineering equipment.
33. The governing body is committed and has a range of skills and experience that supports the college. It effectively discharges its responsibilities in relation to financial governance. The chair has a clear strategic focus and an imaginative vision for the future. The role of governors in the rigorous monitoring of quality is less clear. Governing body 'pairings' with curriculum team leaders were established at the time of the last inspection and their terms of reference have recently been revised in order to enhance their effectiveness. There have been efforts made to address the gender imbalance on the governing body.
34. The college is responding to the weaknesses in equality and diversity identified in the last inspection and is developing further strategies. It does not yet publish sufficient data to be fully compliant with the Race Relations (Amendment Act) and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act. It agreed an appropriate policy for safeguarding young people in November 2006 and clear procedures are in place for checking staff appointed by the college. Training of staff in child protection had not been sufficiently monitored and, at the time of the inspection, all staff have not yet received appropriate training.

35. Quality processes have not sufficiently identified critical areas for improvement and adult underachievement has been persistent. The self-assessment process did not identify the poor performance across a range of courses and levels in 2004/05. Although the self-assessment report was insufficiently self-critical in 2005/06, inspectors agreed with the college's judgement on areas for improvement. Strengths were generally overstated. Target setting is underdeveloped across the college and the quality improvement action plan does not set sufficiently specific targets.
36. Across a range of processes, managers do not evaluate information available to them to target and prioritise actions for improvement. For example, there is no meaningful documented analysis of the complaints and praise received in the college in order to check or evaluate responses or to enable improvements. Although it was identified as a weakness in the last inspection, value added data is still not evaluated to help the college set and monitor targets for improving students' achievements.
37. Resources for learning are generally good. The college provides a pleasant and secure environment for students, with imaginative displays of learners' work in many classrooms. Since the last inspection, the college has improved practical resources in specialist areas. Students have access to a good range of information technology (IT) resources, and the college is working to further improve its e-learning facilities. The college recognises that some accommodation for learners on visual and performing arts is unsuitable. The college has improved its accommodation at the main campus. College finances are well managed and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

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	424	69.8	60.3	9.5	2,154	61.3	59.1	2.2
	04/05	453	58.3	64.2	-5.9	1,432	49.3	61.6	-12.3
	05/06	662	75			1,593	49		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	14	92.9	65.1	27.8	1	100.0	52.3	47.7
	04/05	20	75.0	67.9	7.1	1	100.0	58.1	41.9
	05/06	12	75.0			0			
NVQs	03/04	75	60.0	61.0	-1.0	13	38.5	62.3	-23.8
	04/05	44	59.1	67.2	-8.1	9	44.4	66.9	-22.5
	05/06	64	80.0		-	3	67.0		
Other	03/04	335	71.0	60.0	11.0	2,140	61.4	59.0	2.4
	04/05	389	57.3	63.6	-6.3	1,420	49.2	61.4	-12.2
	05/06	382	67.0			1,516	51.0		

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	710	59.0	56.3	2.7	1,951	50.7	53.6	-2.9
	04/05	710	63.4	60.9	2.5	1,316	33.3	59.6	-26.3
	05/06	932	64			1,020	43		
GCSEs	03/04	125	68.0	61.3	6.7	94	47.9	58.8	-10.9
	04/05	196	65.3	64.1	1.2	98	66.3	62.3	4.0
	05/06	221	76.0			71	65.0		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	47	74.5	63.0	11.5				
	04/05	38	52.6	66.8	-14.2	2	50.0	70.4	-20.4
	05/06	32	59.0		-	1	100.0		
NVQs	03/04	75	36.0	51.9	-15.9	283	14.8	53.5	-38.7
	04/05	130	46.9	57.0	-10.1	572	17.8	59.6	-41.8
	05/06	170	57.0			415	28.0		
Other	03/04	463	58.7	54.1	4.6	1,574	57.2	52.7	4.5
	04/05	346	69.7	60.1	9.6	644	41.9	58.8	-16.9
	05/06	451	63.0			530	49.0		

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	872	68.8	64.1	4.7	827	44.6	53.5	-8.9
	04/05	982	63.4	67.5	-4.1	812	41.6	57.5	-15.9
	05/06	997	72.0			529	53		
A/A2 Levels	03/04	226	84.1	83.8	0.3	55	76.4	65.5	10.9
	04/05	136	83.1	85.6	-2.5	67	82.1	69.1	13.0
	05/06	247	87.0			51	76.0		
AS Levels	03/04	400	68.3	62.9	5.4	106	59.4	49.2	10.2
	04/05	518	65.8	65.5	0.3	89	64.0	52.2	11.8
	05/06	448	68.0			53	53.0		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	38	42.1	52.4	-10.3	18	22.2	43.5	-21.3
	04/05	11	18.2	60.2	-42.0	5	40.0	52.9	-12.9
	05/06	0			-	0			
NVQs	03/04	9	0.0	53.7	-53.7	194	27.3	57.0	-29.7
	04/05	18	27.8	62.4	-34.6	309	21.0	53.9	-32.9
	05/06	10	40.0			148	36.0		
Other	03/04	199	60.8	56.3	4.5	454	45.6	55.7	-10.1
	04/05	299	54.2	60.0	-5.8	345	46.5	58.3	-11.8
	05/06	268	69.0			243	55		

Table 4

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

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	53	13	32	26	47
	Advanced	16	38	31	50	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	52	63	38	75	50
	Advanced	16	63	34	69	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	53	74	53	74	58
	Advanced	10	50	44	80	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	57	4	16	12	24
	Advanced	17	41	30	29	19
2004/05	Apprenticeship	61	33	22	43	29
	Advanced	15	20	21	27	31
2005/06	Apprenticeship	37	68	33	68	38
	Advanced	11	45	27	82	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'