

# City of Bath College

## Inspection Report 23–27 April 2007

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## Background information

## Inspection judgements

### Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: health, public services and care; building and construction; leisure, travel and tourism; crafts, creative arts and design; performing arts, media and communication; preparation for work.

## Description of the provider

1. City of Bath College is a medium-sized general further education (GFE) college in the city centre, serving Bath and the surrounding rural area of Bath and North East Somerset (BANES), a unitary authority. There is full employment locally; there are no large-scale employers and the service and public sectors dominate. The area is socially quite polarised; there is considerable affluence and social advantage in many wards but three wards in BANES are above the English national average for multiple deprivation. The area has a low proportion of minority ethnic inhabitants, at 4%; the college's minority ethnic population is just over 5%.
2. The local secondary schools are generally good, serving mostly prosperous areas. In 2005, the proportion of school students in BANES gaining five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grades A\*-C was 64%, seven percentage points above the national average. All but two of the local secondary schools have sixth forms.
3. The college offers courses in all 15 sector subject areas, although student numbers in some areas are very small. The range covers qualifications from pre-entry to degree level but the majority of provision is at level 3. Arts, media and publishing is the largest sector subject area. The college has primary responsibility for adult and community learning in BANES. In 2005/06, the college recruited 1,577 students aged 16 to 18 and 5,745 adult students. Of these, around 2,700 were full-time students. Around 44% of students are male and 56% are female. Some 170 school students aged 14 to 16 attend courses in the college. There is a small work-based learning provision, mainly in construction and hairdressing. The college is, in collaboration with Weymouth College and York College, a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) for stonemasonry.
4. In March 2006, the college was placed in formal recovery by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Since May 2006, it has been led and managed by an acting principal and temporary senior management team. At the time of the inspection, they were developing a new mission statement for the college. In 2006/07, the college broadly met its enrolment targets.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: grade 3
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: contributory grade 3</i>

### Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care	Good: grade 2
Building and construction	Satisfactory: grade 3
Leisure, travel and tourism	Satisfactory: grade 3
Crafts, creative arts and design	Outstanding: grade 1
Performing arts, media and communication	Good: grade 2
Preparation for work	Satisfactory: grade 3

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

5. This is a satisfactory college with a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Students' achievements are satisfactory as are the standards of their work and their progress; indeed, the standards of work in some curriculum areas are good or outstanding. The overall success rate has improved steadily over the last three years and is now just below the previous year's national average. The outstanding quality of provision in crafts, creative arts and design has been maintained. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but much teaching is dull and students' independent learning skills are not well developed. The current range of provision is unsatisfactory and does not adequately meet the needs and abilities of the local community. Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Welfare advice and help are extensive and those with additional learning needs are well supported. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory.
6. Leadership and management are now satisfactory. The college had suffered weak leadership and management, particularly financial, together with ineffective governance, for some time until a financial crisis and the resignation of the principal triggered the arrival of a new acting principal from May 2006. Consequently, it has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection three years ago. The acting principal and his interim senior management team's incisive implementation of a formal recovery plan has empowered middle managers, restored staff morale and set in train many of the radical actions needed to give the college a promising future.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: grade 3

7. The college has satisfactory capacity to improve its provision. The interim leadership team provides very clear direction and impetus for quality improvements and has taken radical and highly effective action to bring about recovery. Its impact is already evident. Governors, having acknowledged the scale and nature of the problems facing the college, took urgent and incisive action to address them and are now well placed to discharge their responsibilities in holding the leadership team to account for the performance of the college. Financial resources to support improvements are satisfactory. The college's management information system is now able to support the actions needed to improve the quality of its provision. Communication is good. Most of the judgments in the self-assessment report proved to be accurate. The report is supported by highly

insightful and evaluative recovery and development plans. These are unequivocally supported by the local LSC. However, whilst students' success rate has improved steadily over the last three years, this remains just below the previous year's national average. The lesson observation scheme is not yet sufficiently rigorous to bring about improvements in teaching and learning.

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

8. The college has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection in January 2004. Ineffective governance and weak financial management since the last inspection culminated in the financial crisis of January 2006 from which the college is now recovering. The standards of work and rates of attendance have improved since the last inspection but several areas identified then as needing improvement remain so, and some strengths have abated. Although the overall success rate has improved steadily over the last three years, it remains just below the previous year's national average. The range of courses at levels 1 and 2 is narrow and the college acknowledges that it does not fully meet the needs of its local community. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but has not improved since the last inspection.

#### Key strengths

- outstanding provision in visual arts and design
- good range of effective welfare support for students
- good identification of, and support for, students with additional learning needs
- radical and highly effective management action to bring about recovery
- much improved and readily accessible management information
- good internal communications by new temporary senior management team.

#### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- unsatisfactory key skills provision
- too much dull teaching
- poor target setting and monitoring of progress
- narrow range of provision at levels 1 and 2
- inconsistent practice in tutorials

- some poor accommodation and information and learning technology (ILT) resources
- ineffective use of lesson observation scheme to raise standards in teaching and learning
- underdeveloped strategic approach to employer engagement
- ineffective governance.



## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

9. The college accurately assessed students' achievement and standards overall to be satisfactory.
10. Success rates have risen by eight percentage points since the last inspection in 2004, and the rise of five points in 2005/06 was a significant one; but the overall success rate remains four points below the previous year's national average.
11. On long courses at level 1, representing about 12% of enrolments, success rates have been static for the last two years, at three points below the national average. They rose sharply in 2005/06 for students aged 16 to 18 to a rate well above the national average, but declined for adults because many students studying Skills for Life courses do not complete their full qualifications.
12. On long courses at level 2, representing about 25% of enrolments, success rates for both age groups have remained at around the national averages for the last two years.
13. On long courses at level 3, representing about 63% of enrolments, success rates rose six points in 2005/06 to reach the national average for the previous year. For students aged 16 to 18, however, they have been static for two years at a rate two points below the national average for 2004/05, whereas for adults they rose steeply to a rate well above the previous year's national average.
14. The success rate on all short courses rose in 2005/06 but is still three points below the previous year's national average, and for students aged 16 to 18 it fell slightly to a rate seven points below the national figure.
15. Achievements for work-based learners have improved considerably and are now satisfactory. Success rates are also satisfactory for school students aged 14 to 16 and for students on entry to employment (E2E) programmes. Success rates on key skills are unsatisfactory, and have been so since the college first offered the qualifications. The retention of students on many adult and community courses is outstanding; for those courses with accredited qualifications the pass rates are satisfactory.
16. Students make satisfactory progress during their time at college, and reach their predicted levels of achievement. The standards of their work, which

were noted as a key area to improve at the last inspection, are satisfactory, with some good or better. Attendance, also a weakness at the last inspection, has improved and is now satisfactory. However, the college cannot currently report accurately on students' punctuality at lessons.

#### Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The college's assessment of the quality of lessons was largely confirmed by inspectors' observations. In the best lessons, stimulating activities are used well to engage students and enhance their learning. The pockets of outstanding teaching practice are more due to the flair of individual teachers than a systematic approach across a curriculum area. Much teaching is dull. The capacity of students to develop their independent learning skills is limited because too few teachers help foster them. Schemes of work and lesson plans are clear and well structured. However, lesson plans rarely include differentiated activities and individual student profiles are inconsistently used so that not all students are able to learn at their most apposite level.
18. The college has taken insufficient action to improve the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Internal observations of lessons do not identify areas for teachers' development with sufficient precision or detail, nor are the subsequent actions to help teachers improve their practice specific or tenacious enough. Prompt, firm remedial action is taken, however, when unsatisfactory teaching is observed.
19. Accommodation and resources are generally satisfactory. In some areas, such as visual arts and design, accommodation and facilities are good and enrich learning; although here, and elsewhere, some rooms are cramped and poorly ventilated. The range of teaching techniques used is restricted by a lack of information and learning technology (ILT). Few classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards and data projectors and some students have limited access to computers. Learning through computerised resources is well established in a few curriculum areas and has proved beneficial. The college recognises the urgent need to extend its ILT and has plans to increase its imminent availability and use throughout the curriculum.
20. The teaching of key skills remains weak. Effective action has been taken in a few curriculum areas to improve it and achievements have improved significantly as a consequence.
21. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Detailed assignment briefs and extensive feedback are often provided. However, not all students

understand the assessment requirements of their course and in a few subject areas they receive little supportive critical feedback to improve their work. The use of target-setting and progress reviews is poorly developed in many areas. In these, students have a weak grasp of how they might make better progress and reach higher standards.

22. Initial assessment is used effectively to identify students' additional learning support needs. These specific needs are well met in discrete sessions by experienced learning support staff. However, liaison between teachers and learning support staff varies and some students are not supported enough in lessons. Nevertheless, most students who receive additional learning support make good progress.
23. The current range of provision is unsatisfactory and does not adequately meet the needs and interests of the local community, particularly for students aged 16 to 18. The college offers courses in all 15 sector subject areas, including some customised provision to cater for adults in a range of welcoming community environments. However, while the range of level 3 courses is good, there are too few courses at levels 1 and 2 to provide sufficient progression routes in most areas. The college acknowledges this deficiency and plans to introduce nine level 1 'pathways to employment and training' and further courses at level 2 from September 2007. The college's response to the needs of employers is satisfactory but a strategic approach to their engagement is underdeveloped. The number of work-based learners and 'Train to Gain' learners is increasing. The range of programmes is narrowly focused for adult and community learning and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
24. The college is part of the BANES 14 to 19 consortium and leads on the development of the new specialist diploma in construction. During the last year, links with other 14 to 19 partners, particularly schools and the local authority, have improved and are now satisfactory. Actions are being taken to provide opportunities for vulnerable groups of learners who may not otherwise continue in education and training.
25. The college recognises that its current timetable restricts students' choice; in most curriculum areas it is not possible to combine vocational courses with AS and A levels. There are good opportunities for students to benefit from additional qualifications and enrichment experiences, but not many make the most of these.
26. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Managers analyse participation and success rates by specific groups for the college as a whole and take appropriate action to address imbalances.

27. Guidance and support for students are satisfactory; the college judged them to be good. A good range of additional welfare support is available to all through college counsellors, student mentors and tutors, and local voluntary and community groups. Students have adequate access to advice and support on financial matters. Effective additional advice is available to international students.
28. Improved marketing has started to provide external stakeholders with better information and advice. Students have been involved in designing new publicity materials. Staff at the advice centre provide effective initial support and guidance although the centre's location lacks distinctiveness. Careers advice and guidance are good.
29. Induction is satisfactory. However, there is not enough emphasis on health and safety and few opportunities to increase students' appreciation of equality and diversity through the tutorial process. Not enough tutorials are well planned and effective. Students' experiences here differ widely, and too few receive sufficient guidance to develop independent learning skills or achieve high standards.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

*Contributory grades:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Satisfactory: grade 3*

30. Inspectors agree with the college's assessment that leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting principal and interim senior management team have effectively led the college's recovery from the financial crisis that became apparent in January 2006. Financial management is now satisfactory with robust monitoring and control procedures. Students' attendance and success rates have improved steadily since the last inspection but the latter remain just below the previous year's national average.
31. Senior managers provide strong leadership and a clear strategic direction for the college. All staff value highly the open management style and transparent communications with senior managers; middle managers and course leaders feel enfranchised by the increase in responsibilities given to them, such as running their own budgets. Since the resignation of the previous principal in early 2006, many new governors have been appointed. They are now tackling their tasks assiduously and are better equipped to carry out their full responsibilities as a result of much improved support

from the interim clerk and the quality and timeliness of better management information. However, governors did not discharge their full responsibilities adequately over the period since the last inspection and they failed to challenge senior managers sufficiently when the financial crisis began to emerge. The college agrees that its approach to the engagement of employers is insufficiently strategic and is taking action to address this.

32. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Curriculum management is satisfactory overall although its effectiveness is inconsistent. Managers have only very recently been given reliable and accessible data to monitor course performance and inform planning and not enough make good use of them. The college acknowledges that the quality of provision in several areas has declined since the last inspection.
33. Curriculum areas now make better use of the quality assurance systems to improve their provision. Lesson observations provide a largely accurate judgement of the quality of teaching and learning, although subsequent actions to help teachers improve are not yet having sufficient impact. There is not enough sharing of good practice resulting from lesson observations. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Access to professional development is good and training needs are identified through appraisal and the curriculum planning process.
34. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but many areas require updating and further maintenance. Some spaces are cramped and untidy. The college has a clear strategy for upgrading the campus. Specialist resources are satisfactory. The quality and accessibility of ILT varies considerably: it is very good, for example, in visual arts and media, but poor in health, public services and care and for students of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).
35. The college complies with race relations, child protection and disability discrimination legislation and staff have received up-to-date briefings. Physical access to buildings is satisfactory. The college has an appropriate race relations policy and evaluation of its impact and effectiveness is satisfactory. The college's promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity is satisfactory.
36. The recovery plan is well placed to bring about financial stability. However, with a track record of ineffective governance and financial management and the judgement that the college has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection, the college currently provides unsatisfactory value for money.

## Sector subject area

Health, public services and care

Good: grade 2

## Context

37. The college offers courses in childcare, counselling and public services at levels 2 and 3. There are 120 students on childcare courses, most of whom are aged 16 to 18 and female. There are 73 adults studying counselling. Of the 60 students on public services courses, most are aged 16 to 18 and male. Nine school pupils aged 14 to 16 are following a course in child development.

### *Strengths*

- high success rates in 2005/06 on all full-time courses
- good progress by students on work placements
- good teaching
- highly productive links with employers
- very good academic and pastoral support for childcare students
- well managed childcare courses.

### *Areas for improvement*

- inadequate classroom accommodation
- limited access to ILT resources.

## Achievement and standards

38. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high on full-time courses and satisfactory on part-time courses. Success rates improved in 2005/06 on all full-time courses and are now all above the national averages for 2004/05. Most part-time courses had improved success rates in 2005/06 and they are now at or above the previous year's national averages.

39. The standard of students' work is good on all courses. Students do not have enough access to computers to produce their work electronically. Childcare students on placement conduct themselves professionally and make good progress. For example, a student playing with toy animals with a young child skilfully introduced a book on animals to enhance the child's

language development. Students are reflective in assessing their own performance.

### Quality of provision

40. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned with comprehensive schemes of work. Students enjoy their lessons. They participate actively and mutual respect exists between them and their teachers. Accommodation is a medley of poorly ventilated rooms with little or no natural light. In hot weather, teaching time is lost because additional breaks have to be taken. Conditions restrict some practical activities, such as using particular glues. Teachers make the best of these rooms and there are some good classroom displays. Classrooms have very limited information and communications technology (ICT) resources; there are no interactive whiteboards and very few computers. School pupils aged 14 to 16 enjoy their course. They behave maturely and achieve well.
41. The range of provision is satisfactory. Links with employers are very good. Providers of work placements are enthusiastic about students from the college. The Royal Marines led a very successful day of fitness and unarmed combat for public service students.
42. Academic and pastoral support are very good. Tutors monitor students' progress regularly and set clear targets for improvement. They link well with additional learning support tutors. Public service teachers work effectively with additional learning support tutors on expedition and outdoor activity work.

### Leadership and management

43. Overall, leadership and management are good. They are satisfactory in public services. Teachers and course managers make good use of target setting, curriculum development and departmental budgets to plan improvements to the structure and delivery of their courses. Course reviews are evaluative and accurately identify strengths and weaknesses. The development plans arising from these reviews are realistic and monitored effectively. Lesson observations are very thorough and identify actions to improve teaching and learning. The lack of ILT resources restricts the development of better teaching and learning. Equality and diversity are promoted comprehensively in lessons and on work placement.

## Building and construction

Satisfactory: grade 3

### Context

44. The college offers full- and part-time courses from levels 1 to 3 in building craft occupations, carpentry and joinery, electrical installation, plumbing, refrigeration, stonemasonry and construction technician courses. There are 598 students, of whom 187 are full-time; nearly two thirds are adults, who generally attend alongside younger students. Evening classes cater for adults working in industry. There are 30 apprentices and 55 advanced apprentices on work-based learning programmes. Entry level construction qualifications are offered to 23 school pupils aged 14 to 16.

### *Strengths*

- high success rates on many courses
- high standards of practical work in refrigeration and stonemasonry
- good accommodation and resources at the construction skills centre
- highly productive partnerships with the refrigeration and stonemasonry industries.

### *Areas for improvement*

- low success rates on most level 3 technician courses and level 2 electrical installation and plumbing courses
- lack of recognition in lessons of students' differing abilities
- ineffective setting and monitoring of targets
- underdeveloped sharing of good practice
- some cramped accommodation and unsuitable resources on main site.

### Achievement and standards

45. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates in refrigeration, stonemasonry, carpentry and joinery, building craft occupations and level 3 electrical installation have improved steadily since the last inspection and are high. Success rates on most level 3 technician courses and level 2 plumbing and electrical installation courses are low. Completion rates for apprenticeship frameworks in refrigeration and stonemasonry have improved and are now above the national averages for 2004/05; they remain low on electrical installation frameworks.
46. The standards of practical work in stonemasonry and refrigeration are high. Successes in national competitions in these areas are celebrated and do much to motivate students.



## Quality of provision

47. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good occupational skills which they use well to inspire students and illustrate theory. Students enjoy practical lessons but the pace of work is sometimes slow and the treatment of subject matter unimaginative. Teachers often fail to take into account students' different individual abilities; more able students are rarely stretched. The potential of ILT is not fully exploited. Some teachers do not check students' understanding frequently enough. The range of provision is satisfactory.
48. Poor use is made of target setting in reviews and tutorials. Targets are imprecise, particularly on technician courses, and progress is not adequately monitored. Assessment is conducted fairly and internal verification is rigorous.
49. Support for students is satisfactory. Initial assessment effectively identifies students' additional learning needs. Support is quickly made available and students are appreciative of the help they receive.

## Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, the quality of course management varies widely. The most effective practices are not often shared between the different craft teams. Students and teachers benefit from highly productive links with the refrigeration and stonemasonry industries. The accommodation and resources at the construction skills centre are good and well managed. There are some high quality training providers for work-based learners. Accommodation on the main site, however, is cramped and some resources are old and unsuitable. For example, there are no dedicated drawing facilities and the workshop benches are too low and in poor condition. Self-assessment is satisfactory and correctly identifies areas for improvement. However, the development plan does not identify specific actions to improve success rates on underperforming courses. The college has led a successful consortium bid to offer the new specialist diplomas in construction.

Leisure, travel and tourism

Satisfactory: grade 3

### Context

51. The college offers full- and part-time courses in sport, travel and tourism, including personal training and gym instructor qualifications. There are 110 students on sports courses and 46 students on travel and tourism courses. Most students are aged 16 to 18. The college also offers the assistant fitness instructor award to schools pupils aged 14 to 16. Short-course fitness qualifications are franchised to a local training provider and at the time of the inspection there were over 230 students studying for them.

### *Strengths*

- very high success rates on first diplomas
- good franchised provision in sport.

### *Areas for improvement*

- low success rates on most college-based sports courses
- insufficient application of industry standards in some sports teaching
- ineffective setting and monitoring of targets.

### Achievement and standards

52. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are very high on the first diplomas in sport and in travel and tourism. Success rates on the certificates in personal training and gym instructing run by the franchise partner are around the high national averages. Success rates on most college-based sports courses are low. However, in 2006/07, retention has improved compared to the same time last year.

53. The standard of students' work is at least satisfactory and much is good, with effective references to practices in industry. Students acquire a good range of practical skills.

### Quality of provision

54. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Many lessons are well planned, include activities that stimulate students and make effective use of ILT. Too few teachers, however, check or review learning regularly. In some sports lessons, insufficient attention is paid to industry standards of safe practice and professional presentation. Warm ups are conducted without proper consideration of potential hazards such as mirror walls and hard floor

surfaces. In one lesson, students coached each other without checking for injury. Some room décor, storage and staff dress are slipshod and set a poor example.

55. Target setting and monitoring are ineffective; few students have targets that are specific or precise and many reviews of their progress are superficial. Consequently, too many students fall behind with their work. In travel and tourism, too many students transfer from the full national diploma to the smaller national certificate.
56. The franchised provision is good. Teaching is exciting and students are fully engaged in learning. Communications, quality assurance and monitoring arrangements are good.
57. The range of provision is satisfactory. There is, however, neither provision at level 1 nor the opportunity to study GCE A levels alongside vocational courses. Links with industry are satisfactory and have improved recently in sport. In travel and tourism, links with employers are good.
58. The support given by teachers and tutors is satisfactory. It is much appreciated by many students but not enough is done to help some of them improve. Although group tutorials take place, tutors pay insufficient attention to the wider aspects of students' lives, such as drug and alcohol use and sexual health.

#### Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but sports courses, with the exception of the franchised provision, are less effectively managed than those in travel and tourism. Improvements since the last inspection have included the better use of data and the close monitoring of course performance. Regular course meetings include clear discussion of students at risk of leaving. The self-assessment report is largely accurate in its identification of areas to improve but it under emphasises the significance of low success rates.

Crafts, creative arts and design

Outstanding: grade 1

### Context

60. The college offers full- and part-time courses across a wide range of visual arts, crafts and design media. The majority of provision is at level 3. There are 217 full-time students, mostly aged 16 to 18, and 440 part-time students, mostly adults.

### *Strengths*

- outstanding pass rates on vocational courses
- excellent standards of students' work
- outstanding teaching and learning
- very well planned curriculum and assessment practice
- good accommodation
- well integrated support for students
- very good leadership and management
- wide ranging and productive links with the community.

### *Areas for improvement*

- insufficient monitoring of health and safety practice.

### Achievement and standards

61. Achievement and standards are good. Pass rates on vocational courses are exceptional. All students who completed the first diploma in art and design, the national diplomas in graphics and fashion, and the diploma in foundation studies passed their qualifications in 2004/05, and only 2 students failed in 2005/06. Success rates are also high for most of these courses and for A-level art and design.

62. The standard of most students' work is excellent. Life drawing is particularly strong with the confident use of large scale. There are many examples of good research and development, high technical skills, exciting imagery and skilled craftsmanship. Students combine particularly well the use of original artwork with computer imagery. Progression rates to higher education are high.

### Quality of provision

63. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Students comment frequently on the inspiration and confidence they gain in lessons and they are keenly

challenged to explore and express in original, independent ways. Additional learning support is well planned and integrated and support assistants have a good understanding of the needs and progress of students at risk. Since the last inspection, the accommodation has been relocated into imaginatively refurbished spaces. Studios offer stimulating and flexible environments. A few areas are cramped and those with computers are often hot and stuffy.

64. The range of provision is good and the curriculum is very well designed. Assignments are challenging and provocative. A second year diploma book design project provides many demanding learning experiences. An alcohol abuse project is particularly successful in addressing this issue through group debate. Excellent use is made of industry-generated graphic design briefs, fashion shows and community events.
65. Assessment is well planned, transparent and rigorously executed. Students value the regular group critiques and the particularly helpful verbal and written feedback on their work. Teachers continue to explore creative ways of helping students develop their skills further.
66. Students appreciate the good, frequent support they receive. One mature part-time student commented that he did not know where the tutors found their energy and enthusiasm every week. Students are particularly complimentary about the integrated support of tutors, technicians, library and counselling staff in providing help and guidance.

#### Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management are outstanding. Since the last inspection, and through periods of considerable change and challenge, the area has maintained very high standards and rectified weaknesses associated with accommodation and retention. Teachers and support staff are a closely knit and mutually supportive team. There are wide ranging and productive links with the community and local business. A gallery is maintained in the city to provide a showcase for students and local artists and a focus for community based projects.
68. The monitoring of health and safety practice is incomplete. No area risk assessments have been conducted since the refurbished accommodation was opened in 2005 and inspectors noted minor instances of poor practice.

Performing arts, media and communication

Good: grade 2

### Context

69. The college offers mostly full-time courses at levels 2 and 3 in drama, dance, music, music technology, media and photography. There are 202 students aged 16 to 18 and 65 adults studying full-time, and 18 adults studying part-time.

### *Strengths*

- high success rates in 2005/06 on first diploma in performing arts, national diplomas in music and music technology, and A-level media
- high standards of practical work in drama, dance and photography
- much good teaching and learning
- good accommodation and resources
- well managed interim arrangements and transition to new accommodation.

### *Areas for improvement*

- low retention rates on first diplomas in music and media and AS courses in drama and media
- inconsistent application of support and monitoring systems
- insufficient sharing of good practice across disciplines.

### Achievement and standards

70. Achievement and standards are good. In 2005/06, and in previous years, success rates were significantly above the national averages for 2004/05 on the first diploma in performing arts, national diplomas in music and music technology, and A-level media. Retention rates are low on first diplomas in music and media and AS courses in drama and media.

71. Students in dance, drama and photography are highly motivated and actively engaged in practical expressive work. They attain high standards; their work is stimulating, innovative and fulfils the challenging expectations set by teachers.

### Quality of provision

72. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons and assignments well. Many have a keen insight into the learning characteristics of individual students. They give significant autonomy to students and employ a wide

variety of teaching techniques and stimuli for practical work. For example, one drama group used thought-provoking art work to engender an improvisation and devising assignment. Assessment is used well to check, monitor and extend learning. A few lessons, however, allow students to become disengaged and passive. They are then neither clear of the progress they are making nor of teachers' expectations of them. The departments enjoy good accommodation and resources, including outstanding ILT facilities. Some media rooms lack adequate ventilation.

73. The good range of provision at levels 2 and 3 across all the main disciplines means the college can cater for a broad cross-section of aptitudes and interests.
74. Support for students is satisfactory. Group and individual tutorials are well managed by most tutors. They effectively celebrate successes, provide information, and set and monitor progress targets. Their deployment, however, is inconsistent across different disciplines. A minority of students in music, music technology and media receive insufficient and irregular support and guidance. They are unclear of the process and are not aware of the targets to which they should be working. Some also lack clear advice about higher educational options.

#### Leadership and management

75. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Effective quality assurance has maintained good standards since the last inspection. The self-assessment report identifies most of the key areas for improvement. Teachers make good use of their first-hand industrial experience in their respective creative fields. There are fruitful links with the community and local business. The use of temporary accommodation during the recent construction of the new performing arts building was very well managed and any adverse impact on students was minimised. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between the disciplines; for example, highly effective ways of assessing and monitoring progress in drama and dance are not used elsewhere.

Preparation for work

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

76. The college offers literacy and numeracy, ESOL and English as a foreign language (EFL) courses to 515 students from pre-entry level to level 2 during the day and evening. Of the 213 ESOL and 131 EFL students, 36 are full-time. There are 98 literacy, 31 numeracy, 25 entry to employment (E2E) and 17 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD). The majority of students are adult females and three quarters are studying at entry level.

*Strengths*

- high and improving retention rates on many ESOL entry level programmes
- good development of self-confidence
- good development of language skills
- much stimulating and dynamic teaching
- good additional learning and personal support
- effective action to improve programmes.

*Areas for improvement*

- low retention rates on ESOL level 1 and level 2 courses
- low success rates on most literacy and numeracy programmes
- weak target setting and monitoring of students' progress
- inadequate access to ILT for ESOL and EFL students.

Achievement and standards

77. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students gain good levels of self-confidence and are able to apply their new skills in their daily lives. ESOL and EFL students develop good language skills and become confident and accurate speakers. Retention on many ESOL entry level courses is high. However, retention rates for ESOL and EFL students at levels 1 and 2 are low. Success rates on most literacy and numeracy programmes are low. However, the majority of learners do improve their skills and gain partial achievement.

Quality of provision

78. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is often stimulating and dynamic. Activities are well designed and encourage interaction. There is lively debate and students reflect their daily lives and experiences. For



example, in an ESOL lesson, students enjoyed sharing their experiences of learning about the education system in the UK. An E2E engineering project successfully helped students to develop decision making, teamwork and an understanding of health and safety through building a remote-control robot.

79. Target setting and the monitoring of students' progress, however, are weak, and this often mitigates the good teaching. Individual learning plans are incomplete. Tutorials do not focus sufficiently on how well students are progressing. There is no proper diagnostic assessment on ESOL and EFL programmes. The range of provision is satisfactory, although very few students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enrol at the college.
80. Accommodation has improved with dedicated rooms and language laboratories. Some rooms are poorly ventilated. Access to ILT for ESOL and EFL students is inadequate, although literacy and numeracy students have good access to computers.
81. Additional learning and personal support are good. There is good, attentive pastoral care and effective support for specific needs such as dyslexia and deafness.

#### Leadership and management

82. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-assessment is accurate and critical and actions to improve are implemented effectively. Data are used well to monitor how courses perform. The merger of EFL with ESOL and the introduction of the new national standards have been successful. Communications and the sharing of good practice are improving. The college has been slow to enrol staff on level 4 subject specific qualifications and train them to recognise and record progress and achievement.
83. Leaders provide a clear sense of direction and support staff well. Curriculum planning is now more focused on students' needs and expressed views. The observation of teaching and learning is well planned but does not focus enough on learning. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory, although too few teachers have attended formal training on the implementation of the Disability and Race Relations legislation.

## 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 to 18				19+			
		Starts	Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts	Transfers	College Rate
1 Long	03-04	462	57	56	1	1598	53	55	-2
	04-05	511	56	60	-4	1300	61	59	2
	05-06	500	71			1120	54		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	25	68	59	9	25	56	48	8
	04-05	17	76	65	11	1	100	53	47
	05-06	0	-			0			
NVQs	03-04	59	0	56	-56	13	0	56	-56
	04-05	23	0	61	-61	82	81	62	19
	05-06	46	46			29	59		
Other	03-04	378	65	56	9	1560	53	55	-2
	04-05	471	58	60	-2	1217	60	59	1
	05-06	454	73			1091	54		

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 to 18				19+					
		Starts	- Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts	- Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	03-04	698		61	52	9	1081		48	49	-1
	04-05	723		63	56	7	1111		58	54	4
	05-06	732		61			833		61		
GCSEs	03-04	177		72	57	15	157		57	55	2
	04-05	159		70	61	9	138		68	59	9
	05-06	179		76			102		74		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	76		68	58	10	27		59	53	6
	04-05	14		50	63	-13	3		67	56	11
	05-06	0		-			0		-		
NVQs	03-04	173		43	42	1	150		28	48	-20
	04-05	133		46	52	-6	173		49	53	-4
	05-06	86		77			177		67		
Other	03-04	272		63	50	13	747		49	48	1
	04-05	417		67	54	13	797		59	53	6
	05-06	467		59			554		57		

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 to 18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	03-04	1574	54	62	<i>-8</i>	1322	49	51	<i>-2</i>
	04-05	1484	62	64	<i>-2</i>	1434	54	53	<i>1</i>
	05-06	1547	62			877	68		
A/A2 Levels	03-04	347	72	84	<i>-12</i>	236	56	69	<i>-13</i>
	04-05	299	69	85	<i>-16</i>	222	59	73	<i>-14</i>
	05-06	282	80			195	66		
AS Levels	03-04	592	58	61	<i>-3</i>	139	57	48	<i>9</i>
	04-05	500	63	63	<i>0</i>	135	63	50	<i>13</i>
	05-06	589	57			99	63		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	292	12	50	<i>-38</i>	54	2	45	<i>-43</i>
	04-05	57	53	52	<i>1</i>	4	-	44	<i>-</i>
	05-06	12	83			3	-		
NVQs	03-04	45	33	50	<i>-17</i>	230	28	44	<i>-16</i>
	04-05	20	30	54	<i>-24</i>	161	49	47	<i>2</i>
	05-06	20	65			84	62		
Other	03-04	298	70	55	<i>15</i>	663	55	53	<i>2</i>
	04-05	608	59	56	<i>3</i>	912	53	56	<i>-3</i>
	05-06	644	59			496	70		

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes managed by the provider/college 2003/04 to 2005/06.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVO rate**	National NVO rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	20	20	48	5	31
		timely	22	18	30	5	19
	04-05	overall	6	17	48	0	34
		timely	4	0	31	0	21
	05-06	overall	15	33	54	33	44
		timely	16	0	34	0	27
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	8	38	47	25	32
		timely	8	38	24	25	16
	04-05	overall	15	47	50	41	38
		timely	14	49	29	40	22
	05-06	overall	46	67	58	57	53
		timely	46	59	38	50	33

\* 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'

Table 5

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

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate*	Progression rate**
03-04	6	67	34
04-05	20	90	50
05-06	21	62	62

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

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