

Hopwood Hall College

Inspection Report 30 April - 4 May 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.

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); 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
- achievements and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. Hopwood Hall College is the tertiary college for the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale with two sites. The Rochdale site is in the town centre and the Middleton campus is set in a rural location 5 miles south of Rochdale. Rochdale is the second largest borough in Greater Manchester with a population of just over 200,000 and is ranked one of the most deprived boroughs in England. The proportion of qualified adults and the number of school leavers achieving 5 grade A*-C at GCSE are both below the local and national averages. The college's mission is to provide "the widest range of quality education and training to learners in the borough of Rochdale and beyond, to ensure they achieve their individual educational and employment goals, whilst meeting the skills needs of the area".
2. The college provides mainly vocational programmes and offers provision in all 15 Learning and Skills Council sector subject areas. In 2005/06, the college had 8,862 learners, of which 3,823 were aged 16-18 and 5,039 were adult learners. Provision is offered from entry level to level 4, around half of full-time learners are studying a level 3 course, a third are on level 2 courses and the remainder are on entry or level 1 provision. Most part-time students are adults on level 1 courses.
3. The proportion of learners from a minority ethnic background is 25%, which is above the proportion in the local population. At the time of the inspection, there were 273 apprentices on work-based learning programmes. The college is involved in contracts for Train to Gain, Adult and Community Learning and European Social Fund (ESF) provision. Around 240 international students and 300 learners on Higher Education (HE) programmes currently study at the college. The college works in partnership with other providers in 4 separate collaborative Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in: sport and leisure; early years; construction; and health care. The college works closely with local schools to provide vocational courses for around 500 pupils aged 14-16.

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
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Good: contributory grade 2</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

*Work-based learning (WBL)
Learners aged 14-16*

*Inadequate: grade 4
Good: grade 2*

4. Hopwood Hall College provides satisfactory quality education and support for its learners. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The college's success rate has increased in line with the national average. Success rates on level 1 courses and key skills improved significantly in 2005/06 and are above the national rate. However, the pass rates on level 3 courses have declined over the last three years and are low, particularly on AS courses. Achievement of learners on work-based learning is unsatisfactory.
5. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A more robust lesson observation system has been effective in identifying strengths in teaching and learning to share good practice. Staff development is closely linked to areas for development and has been effective in improving the planning of lessons. The use of information learning technology (ILT) to support learning is underdeveloped. Assessment is satisfactory and teachers' feedback generally helps students improve the quality of their work. Initial assessments accurately identify students with specific needs and good support is put in place quickly. Planning and monitoring of apprentices training and assessment is inadequate. A good range of courses are offered to widen participation and provide good progression opportunities. The college works effectively with many partners to meet the needs of the local community. Provision for pupils aged 14-16 from local schools is good. Guidance and support are satisfactory. A good range of welfare services support students. However, individual students' targets are not sufficiently challenging and the quality of the delivery of tutorials is inconsistent.
6. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. A range of effective strategies to widen participation are successfully engaging communities in areas of high levels of social deprivation. The college has a broad range of courses and internal progression is good. Strong links with local schools and very effective vocational courses for 14-16 year olds, promotes post-16 participation of under represented groups. There is good and inclusive provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of level 3 learners that progress to higher education is low and well below national averages for the sector.

7. Leadership and management of the college are satisfactory. Standards at the college have improved in line with national averages, although work-based learning remains unsatisfactory. A new management structure and quality improvement strategy is beginning to have a positive impact but this is not consistent across the college. Management information is more reliable and used better to monitor the college's performance. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Staff have a clearer understanding of the college's priorities to improve standards and the quality of teaching and learning. Partnerships are effective in promoting inclusion and widening participation. Governance and financial management is satisfactory and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: grade 3

8. The college has satisfactory capacity to improve. Overall success rates are improving in line with national averages. Success rates on level 1 courses improved significantly in 2005/06. However, learner achievement at level 3 has declined and outcomes for work-based learners remain low. The college's self-assessment and quality assurance processes are satisfactory. A number of well conceived quality improvement strategies are in place but these have not had time to show sufficient impact. Self-assessment has recently improved and is more rigorous. The college is clear about its strengths and has a sound understanding of what needs to be improved but inspectors found some strengths in the self-assessment report had been overstated.

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

9. The college has made satisfactory progress in addressing the areas for improvement since the last inspection. Management information is now more accurate and accessible and managers are beginning to use the data in self-assessment and to inform decisions. The provision for literacy and numeracy is good. The pass rates for adults on level 1 courses and the teaching in hospitality have improved. The framework achievement of apprentices on work-based learning programmes continues to be low and remains unsatisfactory.

Key strengths

- high success rates on level 1 and basic skills courses
- good initial assessment and additional learning support
- good internal progression
- good provision for learners aged 14-16

- effective collaboration and partnership working in the local community
- good response to the needs of the local area
- effective strategies to widen participation
- strong pastoral support
- good communications.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low pass rates on level 3 courses
- poor framework achievements of apprentices on work-based learning
- the quality of lessons so that more are good or better
- the use of ILT to support learning
- individual target setting and review of learners' progress
- poor quality accommodation and resources in some areas
- improve further the rigour of quality assurance to drive forward improvements.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Inadequate: grade 4

Learners aged 14-16

Good: grade 2

10. Inspectors did not agree with the college's assessment that achievements and standards were good and judged them to be satisfactory. Since the last inspection, overall success rates have increased in line with the national average with significant inconsistencies across the college. The performance on level 1 courses improved in 2005/06 and is well above the national average for learners aged 16-18. At level 2, success rates are satisfactory. The most significant decline is in the success rates at level 3 for learners aged 16-18. Success rates on short qualifications are satisfactory.
11. Pass rates on level 1 and basic skills courses have improved significantly in 2005/06 and are good. On level 2 courses, students' achievements are around the national average. Pass rates for all age groups on level 3 courses declined in 2005/06 and are well below national averages for learners aged 16-18. The achievement of learners on AS courses has declined and is low. Students on GCE A level courses do not make the progress expected from their GCSE results. Retention across the college for all age groups improved in 2005/06 and is broadly satisfactory. College data on in-year retention for 2006/07 indicates further improvements. Pass rates and progression of learners aged 14-16 are good.
12. Achievements of work-based learners are unsatisfactory and there have not been any significant improvements since the last inspection. The framework completion of apprentices and advanced apprentices are well below national averages. Success rates of apprentices on construction programmes, for the majority of learners, are low. The success rate of Train to Gain learners is satisfactory.
13. Key skills achievements have improved and are above the national success rates except in work-based learning. The standard of learners work is generally satisfactory with some good practical skill development of learners in vocational areas. Students on entry level and level 1 courses develop in confidence and learn to work independently. Students on English speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacy and numeracy courses make good progress. Students' attendance has improved since the introduction of a

new monitoring system in September 2006 and at 86% is now satisfactory. Progression to higher education is low.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

*Work-based learning
Learners aged 14-16*

*Inadequate: grade 4
Good: grade 2*

14. Inspectors agree with the college's own judgement that the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. A new and more robust system of annual lesson observations provides a more consistent and accurate view of the standards of teaching and learning. College records indicate that in too many cases, observers pay too much attention to teaching and the level of student activity, and give insufficient attention to measuring and assessing whether learning is effectively taking place for all students. The appraisal process is directly influenced by the outcomes of lesson observations and effectively informs individual and whole college staff development. Intervention strategies, including subject coaches and mentors, are improving individual staff performance in teaching, planning and assessment.
15. The college's recent focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning is beginning to have an effect. Most lessons are well planned and identify a range of activities and opportunities for differentiation. However, in the lessons observed by inspectors, many teachers did not give sufficient attention to meeting the varied needs of their students. Teachers make good use of their vocational expertise to develop students' practical skills. Planning and monitoring of apprentices' training and assessment is inadequate. The college has recognised that too few tutors use ILT to enhance the learners' experience and plans are in place to improve facilities in classrooms. A new virtual learning environment (VLE) contains a good range of resources to support learning; however, it is not being used effectively across all curriculum areas.
16. Assessment is regular and learners generally receive appropriate feedback on assignments and tests. In some curriculum areas, teachers carefully explain the assignment and marking criteria to reduce jargon and provide students with a better understanding of what is expected of them. Teachers' feedback clearly explains what students need to do to improve their grade and most resubmit their assignments to improve their performance. However, this practice is not consistent and in some courses feedback is too minimal to be of use to students.

17. Initial assessment accurately identifies learners' additional learning needs and students are quickly provided with specialist support which includes lip speakers, interpreters and specific equipment to help them complete their course. Individual support is effective; in class support, tutors are generally used well but occasionally planning does not consider how they can best help identify students.
18. The college offers a good range of provision and has developed its curriculum to meet the needs of the local area. Students can progress from entry level to higher education and rates of progression in the college are good. The college maintains a good focus on widening participation initiatives and the proportion of students on level 1 courses has increased. The college has good partnerships with a range of organisations, including local strategic groups, schools and the wider community.
19. Students on vocational programmes have access to a range of additional qualifications which improves their employment and progression opportunities. The range of extra-curricular activities, including external speakers, visits and competitions, is generally good. A broad range of enrichment opportunities, competitive sport and recreational activities is provided. These are mostly offered at the Middleton campus and students at the Rochdale site do not access these activities. The participation and impact of this provision is not monitored centrally by the college.
20. The provision for the 500 pupils aged 14-16 from local schools is good. Their achievement of accredited vocational courses is very good and almost two thirds continue in further education. The college is involved in four partnership CoVEs and these provide direct links to employers and the relevant industries. There are some good examples of work with employers but the college acknowledges that it needs to be more responsive to employers.
21. The management of key skills has improved since that last inspection. The college has strengthened key skills teaching and integrated the delivery into vocational courses. Key skills remains a weakness in work-based learning. The college operates different key skills delivery models on each of the two college sites. Plans are in place to evaluate the merits of each and produce a best practice model for implementation in September 2007.
22. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Marketing information provides learners with sound advice before they join the college. Learners are aware of the comprehensive range of personal support and welfare services, including help on financial matters. Many students benefit from free buses on the key routes to the college campuses. Good systems are in place for

meeting additional learner support needs, particularly those students with sensory impairments.

23. The group tutorial programme includes an appropriate range of topics that are relevant to the courses being studied by students and cover many aspects of the outcomes in "every child matters". Health and safety is promoted in the college and the work place. The college has correctly identified inconsistencies in the quality of the delivery of tutorials. Individual student progress, including progress of work-based students, is reviewed regularly. However, targets set for individual students are not sufficiently challenging and the actions to achieve them are not clear.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Inadequate: grade 4

Learners aged 14-16

Good: grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

24. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection the college's strategies have been effective in improving success rates on level 1 and key skills. However, achievements on level 3 courses have declined and the success of apprentices remains unsatisfactory.
25. A new management structure has improved the clarity of roles and responsibilities. Communications are good. This is beginning to have a positive impact. Staff support the college's priority to improve teaching and learning and student achievement. The management of work-based learning provision is now better integrated into curriculum areas, but this has not yet had sufficient impact on the quality of provision.
26. Quality assurance systems are satisfactory and management information is more reliable. The lesson observation process is more comprehensive than in previous years, and outcomes are linked to appraisal. Sharing of good practice and staff development to improve teaching and learning are beginning to lead to improvement. A rigorous system of curriculum area reviews is in place, though not all areas have yet been through the process. All curriculum managers have regular performance meetings with senior managers and set targets for improvement. Some aspects of provision are not yet monitored sufficiently, for example, the tutorial system which includes student progress reviews. The self-assessment process was strengthened in 2005/06 and is satisfactory.

27. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The college successfully recruits students from a diverse range of ethnic and community groups. It has responded well to legislative requirements regarding race relations and disability. Policies are updated regularly, implementation plans are backed up by staff development and data is used effectively to monitor the impact of initiatives to promote equality and diversity. Students learn about aspects of equality of opportunity through the tutorial programme, though some work-based learners do not have sufficient understanding about equal opportunities.
28. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Teaching staff are generally well qualified and appropriate checks are in place to meet legal safeguarding requirements. The learning environment has been improved, although some accommodation and resources are dated and not well suited to current needs. For example, several classrooms are too small and there is insufficient access to computers.
29. Governor monitoring of educational performance is satisfactory. Governors are aware of areas for improvement in the college and are receiving increasingly accurate information to help them monitor student achievements. Arrangements for strategic planning are enhanced by governor away days that focus on key factors affecting the college. Financial management is satisfactory and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Learner's 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	1,113	62	59	+3	1,797	49	59	-10
	04-05	2,329	65	62	+3	1,796	52	61	-9
	05-06	2,974	75			1,604	67		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	114	70	63	+7	3	67	54	13
	04-05	125	64	64	0	6	50	54	-4
	05-06	53	70			3	33		
NVQs	03-04	41	49	61	-12	7	43	66	-23
	04-05	64	63	65	-2	11	36	71	-35
	05-06	126	63			26	50		
Other	03-04	958	61	59	+2	1,787	49	58	-9
	04-05	2,140	65	61	+4	1,779	52	61	-9
	05-06	2,797	76			1,477	66		

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	1,457	64	56	+8	1,397	57	54	+3
	04-05	1,805	66	60	+6	1,410	56	59	-3
	05-06	2,521	67			1,527	64		
GCSEs	03-04	318	74	64	+10	359	59	57	+2
	04-05	333	74	66	+8	350	61	63	-2
	05-06	413	72			342	77		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	134	64	60	+4	50	68	56	+12
	04-05	146	67	66	+1	33	73	62	+11
	05-06	67	73			15	73		
NVQs	03-04	133	41	51	-10	252	52	54	-2
	04-05	176	46	56	-10	301	48	62	-14
	05-06	240	43			352	57		
Other	03-04	872	64	53	+11	736	56	53	+3
	04-05	1,150	67	58	+9	726	57	57	0
	05-06	1,801	68			788	62		

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	1893	60	61	-1	1,234	57	53	+4
	04-05	2037	62	65	-3	984	64	56	+8
	05-06	1970	61			911	61		
A/A2 Levels	03-04	426	82	84	-2	147	65	69	-4
	04-05	325	83	85	-2	91	78	73	+5
	05-06	341	79			74	76		
AS Levels	03-04	779	59	60	-1	166	55	50	+5
	04-05	864	55	64	-9	145	54	53	+1
	05-06	648	54			119	59		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	273	45	50	-5	61	57	43	+14
	04-05	170	65	59	+6	35	77	51	+26
	05-06	49	65			10	50		
NVQs	03-04	27	44	51	-7	156	55	48	+7
	04-05	35	54	53	+1	235	61	54	+7
	05-06	34	41			177	64		
Other	03-04	388	52	51	+1	704	57	54	+3
	04-05	643	60	56	+4	478	65	56	+9
	05-06	838	59			473	60		

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes managed by the provider/college 2004 to 2006.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	32	47	48	3	31
		timely	32	44	30	3	19
	04-05	overall	13	69	48	31	34
		timely	12	50	31	17	21
	05-06	overall	30	67	54	37	44
		timely	35	43	34	17	27
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	97	45	47	13	32
		timely	96	28	24	4	16
	04-05	overall	126	51	50	33	38
		timely	133	36	29	19	22
	05-06	overall	115	50	58	41	53
		timely	109	45	38	32	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

Success rates on work-based learning 'Train to Gain' programmes managed by the college 2005 to 2006.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**
Train to Gain	05/06	overall	268	83%
		timely	117	52%

* 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'