

Wirral Metropolitan College

Inspection Report 14-18 May 2007

Audience Post-sixteen	Published July 2007	Provider reference 130493
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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
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: health and care; science and mathematics; construction; information and communication technology (ICT); leisure, travel and sports studies; and preparation for life and work.

Description of the provider

1. Wirral Metropolitan College is a general further education college with a high widening participation factor. The college is the third largest employer on the Wirral. The college provides a diverse curriculum and operates from three main sites: Carlett Park Campus, Eastham; Conway Park Campus, Birkenhead and Twelve Quays Campus, Birkenhead. The Twelve Quays Campus, a new build brought into use in September 2003, was part of a strategy to locate high quality training and education in Birkenhead. This £14 million investment replaced poor accommodation and facilities identified at the last inspection.
2. In March 2006, the college revised its mission to embrace the Skills Agenda. The new mission is "We will enhance the economic prosperity of young people, adults and employers through high quality, work-related education and training". The college has directly targeted the vocational training and education market and its curriculum focus has shifted to skills for life, employability and work. The college has Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status for both health and care, and construction.
3. Wirral is the 14th most deprived district in the country and contains five of the top 100 most deprived wards. The unemployment rate in the Wirral is 5.6% compared with 5% in the north west of England. Some 22% of the adult Wirral population are categorised as having long term illness with a high percentage of claimants for incapacity benefit. In September 2006, there were 1,453 young people, representing 12% of the population aged 16-18 in Wirral, who were not in education, employment or training (NEET).
4. In 2005/06, the college made provision in all 15 of the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) sector/subject areas. The total number of learners on roll in 2005/06 was 15,323, of which 84% were adults. The gender profile showed that 57% of learners were recorded as females. The highest proportion of adults and young people were on levels 1 and 2 programmes. About 5% of the college's learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared to a Wirral average of less than 2%. The college has increased the percentage of learners from wards with a high widening participation factor, from 27% in 1998/99 to 48% in 2006/07. A new principal took up position in October 2006 with a proactive agenda to address local community learning needs and improve achievement and standards and quality assurance.

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 and care	Good: grade 2
Science and mathematics	Satisfactory: grade 3
Construction	Good: grade 2
Information and communication technology	Good: grade 2
Leisure, travel and sports studies	Satisfactory: grade 3
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: grade 3

Where contributory grades have been awarded for subject sector areas, 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. Success rates for learners 19 years and older on long courses are high and above national averages. However, achievements for learners aged 16-18, between 2003/04 and 2005/06, were inadequate. The college has re-aligned its 16-18 curriculum and recent trends show improvements in achievement and retention. These recent improvements were also noted in the areas of learning inspected. However, there remains much variability in provision for 16-18 year olds across curriculum areas. Key skills achievement has been poor. The achievements for work-based learners are good. There is outstanding provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant reduction in the percentage of inadequate teaching. There is a thorough lesson observation process which identifies strengths and weaknesses in teaching. However, there are still too many lessons that lack variety in approach and do not meet all individual learning needs or sufficiently challenge learners.
7. The college offers a welcoming, well maintained and safe environment. Resources and accommodation have improved since the last inspection. The approach to social and educational inclusion is very good. The curriculum is now well matched to the needs of the community. There is a strong focus on raising the aspirations of learners who have often been characterised by disaffection and underachievement. There is good partnership work with schools, local community organisations and groups, other colleges and employers. The 14-16 programmes have been successful in promoting progression.
8. Learners benefit from good induction, guidance and support systems. A comprehensive range of support services is accessible. Initial assessment is good in identifying learners who need additional learning support. Vulnerable learners receive good support and benefit from a wide range of programmes and services. Learners enjoy their studies and are supportive and respectful to each other and staff. However, target setting is not used effectively to support good progress.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal and senior management team are focusing on improvements in achievement and standards and there are already measurable signs of improvement. The

inspectors largely agreed with the college self-assessment. The college has established effective quality assurance systems which are beginning to have an impact on raising standards, although these are not yet implemented consistently across all curriculum areas. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The accommodation strategy has been managed well.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: grade 3

10. The college's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Self-assessment processes are effective. The college has a good understanding of its weaker areas and recent actions to address these are beginning to have an impact. Some of these actions were not put in place sufficiently early and there is still too much uneven performance across the college. However, there is now a real drive to bring all the provision up to a good standard. Plans for further improvement are realistic, well led and supported by staff. Quality assurance procedures are now satisfactory but are not yet having sufficient impact across all areas of the college's work.

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

11. The college has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. It has successfully addressed some issues cited in the last inspection report. Adult success rates are now generally good. Curriculum managers have much greater confidence in the college's data on learners. Effective measures have been taken to eradicate unsatisfactory teaching. The financial health of the college is better and accommodation has been improved. However, the performance of 16-18 year old learners has not improved and in 2005/06 was still poor. There is some evidence to show that recent actions taken to address this are having a positive impact.

Key strengths

- good achievement on many adult courses
- outstanding provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- strong focus on the learning needs of the local community through many positive partnerships
- good guidance and support for learners
- clear agenda to address quality improvement
- well managed improvements to accommodation.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- poor success rates on a significant number of courses for learners aged 16-18 years old between 2003 and 2006
- poor key skills achievement
- a lack of variety in teaching and learning methods to meet the needs of all learners
- the setting and monitoring of challenging targets to ensure learners make optimum progress
- unevenness of performance and impact across the college of quality assurance procedures.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 16-18

Inadequate: grade 4

12. Achievement and standards is satisfactory overall. This judgement matches the college's own evaluation. During the three year period 2003/04 to 2005/06, the overall success rate for learners enrolled on long courses has been at the national average. Achievement and standards are good for learners aged 19 and over but are inadequate for learners aged 16-18 years old, who represent a third of full-time equivalent learners at the college.
13. Success rates for learners aged 19 and over are high. In 2005/06, success rates were just below the national average at level 1 but significantly above at levels 2 and 3. In 2005/06, success rates at level 1 increased by 5%, at level 2 by 7% and at level 3 by 13%. At levels 2 and 3 there has been significant improvements in national vocational qualifications (NVQ) success rates to a level significantly above the national average for similar colleges. This represents a strong trend of improvement with success rates increasing faster than the national rate. Retention rates for learners aged 19 and over are above the national average for all long courses at all levels.
14. Achievement and standards for learners aged 16-18 years old were inadequate between 2003/04 and 2005/06. Success rates at level 1 were just below the national average but were significantly below at levels 2 and 3. Some improvement was apparent in 2005/06, especially at level 3; however, performance was still too variable. The college has identified underperformance within five curriculum areas and on GCE AS and A level programmes, as significant contributory factors. In 2006/07, 52 courses, including GCE AS and A level programmes, were discontinued. Retention rates for the current year show significant improvement compared to a similar point in 2005/06, and standards of current work are much improved.
15. Framework success rates for work-based learners have improved to above the national average. Overall, key skills pass rates in 2005/06 were below the national average. In 2006/07, attendance at key skills tests have improved, as have portfolio completion rates and there are significant signs of improvement in pass rates. Progression for learners on the Entry

to Employment (E2E) programme is good. The achievement of personal goals by learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. Achievements for 14-16 year olds attending vocational taster programmes are good and their progression to further study is very good.

16. Learners make satisfactory progress in developing their vocational skills and in some vocational areas many develop high level skills. They work safely in studios and workshops. There is satisfactory progression to employment and to further and higher education courses. Assessment of learners' work is fair and accurate.

Quality of provision

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In better lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching methods well. Teachers are effective at taking account of individual learning needs and relating these to learners' experiences and the development of their vocational and work-related skills. There has been a significant reduction in the percentage of inadequate teaching; however, there are still too many lessons that are insufficiently challenging. In these less effective lessons, teachers' time management is weak and they do not use approaches that meet individual learning needs or challenge and support all learners.
18. The college has a thorough teaching and learning observation process. Teachers appreciate the advice they receive from teaching and learning champions and the efforts being made to spread good practice within and across curriculum areas. The college is continuing to develop its key skills provision, which is leading to improving success rates. There is better use of on-line testing and essential skills staff work well with curriculum staff to better integrate key skills into curriculum areas. The college's self-assessment of the quality of teaching and learning is largely accurate, although inspectors found that the proportion of lessons which were graded good or better was over generous when compared to inspectors' judgements.
19. Assessment is fair and accurate. Internal verification of assignments is thorough. In a minority of cases, individual learning plans contain insufficient detail to be useful. Feedback to learners is satisfactory overall and, in the best examples, allows learners to understand how they can develop and improve their skills.
20. The college's response to meeting the needs of learners, employers and the local community is satisfactory. The college has re-aligned the curriculum and changed focus to broaden its offer to better provide for

- 14-18 year olds from pre-entry to level 3. Programme delivery is flexible, and meets the needs of learners and employers. However, in some curriculum areas, learners are not offered work experience opportunities.
21. There are effective and productive links with a range of partners. The college's response to providing a 14-16 years curriculum is good and it works effectively with the majority of schools in the area. In addition, the college works collaboratively with a range of local partners to bring the expertise and resources of the college to a wide range of local initiatives.
22. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is very good, providing a safe and inclusive learning environment. The proportion of minority ethnic learners is larger than in the local population. The support provided for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. Provision of courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is good with some innovative approaches to learning. The college has been effective at reaching a high number of NEET learners and those from wards of high deprivation. Recruitment from these groups has increased from 27% in 1998/99 to 48% in 2006/07. Many learners on E2E programmes gain employment.
23. Pastoral support is good. Advisors and tutors respond effectively and quickly to help learners who need support. Learning mentors work effectively with learners who are at risk of leaving. Procedures for protecting vulnerable learners are good and they receive very good support. Good links with external agencies provide learners with a wide range of services and specialist advice. The college is very responsive to feedback from learners and uses focus groups and questionnaires well to elicit their views.
24. Tutorials are well planned. Learners value highly the individual support they get from personal tutors and in ensuring that they receive essential information on matters, including healthy lifestyles, drug and alcohol abuse and sexual health. The enrichment programme offers learners a wide range of activities that develop confidence.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: grade 3

25. Leadership and management are satisfactory. This judgement matches the college's own evaluation. There is clear leadership, which has led to

- improvements in adult success rates since the last inspection and better accommodation for teaching and learning. However, the college has been slow to address weaknesses in the achievements of learners aged 16-18 years old, although recent actions are beginning to have a positive impact.
26. Monitoring of performance has improved in the last two years and is now satisfactory. Data are used effectively to analyse course performance and there are rigorous reviews to identify areas of concern. Actions taken to address these are generally effective. The quality assurance system has not yet had sufficient impact in some areas of the college's work. The principal has set a very clear agenda for further improvement and this is well supported by staff. Self-assessment is generally accurate and inspectors agreed with many of the college's judgements.
 27. Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified and checks are carried out to ensure the safety of learners. There is a good programme of staff development. Some accommodation is new and provides a stimulating learning environment, much is satisfactory, but there is a minority that is not fit for purpose. Sports facilities are inadequate. Computer provision and learning resources are generally satisfactory. The college has good links with a range of partners. It has a strong focus on community links and is developing its strategy to engage with employers.
 28. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college's response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Education Act (safeguarding children) 2002 and the Children Act 2004, are satisfactory. There is successful recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups. Data are analysed to check if any groups of learners are under-performing and action taken, where appropriate. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are involved in evaluating how well the college meets their needs.
 29. Governors provide clear strategic direction. They have reviewed the mission statement and refocused the college on providing vocational courses. They provided effective oversight of the new building project. Governors recognise that the under-performance of learners aged 16-18 years old should have been acted on earlier. They are now rigorously monitoring progress to improve this situation. Financial management is good. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Sector subject area

Health and care

Good: grade 2

Context

30. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses at entry level to level 4 in health and social care and child care. Short and part-time long courses are offered in counselling. 293 learners follow full-time courses, of which 244 are aged 16-18 years old. Over 900, mainly adult learners, follow part-time courses. There are 658 learners on health and social care courses and 608 on childcare courses.

Strengths

- good and consistently improving success rates on NVQ courses at levels 2 and 3
- much good teaching
- a responsive curriculum to meet the needs of local employers and learners
- good support and guidance
- effective local and regional links with employers.

Areas for improvement

- declining or consistently poor results on full-time courses in childcare
- shortcomings in the management of full-time courses in childhood studies
- insufficiently rigorous monitoring of actions for improvement.

Achievement and standards

31. Learners' achievements are good overall. In 2005/06, success rates on NVQ courses in early years and care, which recruit high numbers, were well above the national average. Results on full-time courses are more mixed. In 2005/6, achievement on the first diploma and introductory diploma in care, was outstanding. Achievement on the national diploma in care declined but remained above the national average. Achievements on the diploma in child care and education have been consistently low for several years and the achievement rates on the certificate course and the foundation award declined to well below the national average.

Quality of provision

32. Teaching and learning are good on most courses. Well planned lessons with clear objectives engage learners in a variety of activities. Effective

links are made between theory and work placements. The better lessons offer challenge and are conducted at a brisk pace and provide frequent checks on learners' progress. Good use is made of learning and information technology (ILT) in a minority of lessons. In less effective lessons, there is a lack of pace, poorly managed activities and low attendance. Key skills are well integrated into teaching and learning and assessment on main courses.

33. Thorough needs analysis and productive links with employers, both fostered by the CoVE, have led to the development of a wide range of part-time courses that meet employers' needs. In addition, some full-time courses, such as the access to higher education course, have been restructured to better meet the needs of learners. On the diploma in child care and education, a two hour workshop has been introduced recently in recognition of the high assessment demands on this course. Most courses offer good enrichment activities such as trips, visits, guest speakers and involvement in charitable events.
34. Learners benefit from good support. Good quality group tutorials and regular individual reviews with smart target setting are achievement focused. Learners with additional learning needs are well supported both in and outside of lessons. Those receiving support complete their courses and achieve the award at rates generally above the course average.

Leadership and management

35. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. There is good management of NVQ provision. Robust assessment planning and scheduling and good tutorial support for learners in the workplace, promote high levels of achievement. Team work and communications are effective. Curriculum management of full-time courses is generally effective. However, difficulties in replacing teachers, who had retired or left, had an adverse impact on full-time course organisation and management in childhood studies. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, but there is insufficiently rigorous monitoring of actions for improvement.

Science and mathematics

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

36. The college offers national diploma, national certificate and first diploma qualifications in applied science. GCSE courses are provided in mathematics, biology, science, and human physiology and health. Provision also includes access to higher education courses and NVQs in laboratory skills. There are 163 learners on foundation courses, 207 on intermediate courses and 152 on advanced courses. One-third of learners are full-time and two-thirds are part-time. Around a quarter of learners are aged 16-18 and three quarters are adults.

Strengths

- good progression on access to higher education and applied science courses
- good range of learning activities in many lessons
- flexible curriculum in industrial science that meets the needs of learners and employers
- effective action to improve retention rates in the current year.

Areas for improvement

- low retention rates on many courses
- low success rates on many advanced courses
- weak planning of learning in a minority of lessons
- insufficient use of data to monitor the quality of provision.

Achievement and standards

37. Learners' achievements are satisfactory. Pass rates are high on most courses and have improved over the last three years. Pass rates on GCE AS and A level courses had been low and these courses were discontinued at the end of 2005/06. Retention rates have been low on many courses but these have significantly improved in 2006/07. Success rates are low on many advanced courses. There is good progression from first diploma to national diploma courses and from access courses to higher education. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Most learners have an adequate understanding of key concepts in science and mathematics and demonstrate appropriate skill development.

Quality of provision

38. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a good range of learning activities in many lessons. Planning is clear and detailed, with regular reinforcement of learning objectives. Effective use is made of resources to support activities in lessons and learners make good progress. Weaker planning limits the effectiveness of learning in a minority of lessons where a relatively narrow range of activities is used and learners are less actively involved. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory.
39. There is an appropriate range of programmes and activities to meet the needs and interests of learners. The flexible curriculum in industrial science is particularly effective in the way it meets the needs of learners and employers. The provision includes day-release courses in applied science, NVQs in laboratory skills, and distance learning programmes supported by tutorials in the workplace. Progression routes are good on applied science and access courses, but more limited for other provision. The enrichment programme is satisfactory.
40. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance onto courses have improved and there is good personal support for learners. Appropriate guidance is provided to support learners in progressing to higher education or employment.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been effective action to improve retention rates in the current year. This has included reviewing the curriculum offered, restructuring programmes and amending schemes of work. There is closer monitoring of underperforming learners. Staff have worked closely with their colleagues in health and social care to review and implement strategies to improve performance. Communications and teamwork are effective. Quality assurance arrangements are sound and the self-assessment report is largely accurate. Insufficient use is made of data to monitor the quality of provision and promote quality improvement. Many course team reviews are insufficiently evaluative.

Construction

Good: grade 2

Context

42. The college offers a range of full-time, part-time day and evening programmes from levels 1 to 4 in construction crafts, services and professional studies. At the time of inspection, there were 137 learners aged 16-18 years old and 153 adult learners. Approximately 65 pupils attend school link courses in construction. Through the CoVE, a comprehensive range of customised training is offered to employers.

Strengths

- good development of workplace skills
- much good teaching and learning
- good partnerships with employers
- effective learner support
- outstanding leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- poor performance by adults on level 1 courses
- insufficient feedback on learners' written work.

Achievement and standards

43. Achievement and standards are good. For 16-18 year olds, level 1 performance is good and above national average. Success rates for levels 2 and 3 programmes are at the national average. Success rates for adult learners at level 1 are below the national average, with some courses performing poorly. Success rates at levels 2 and 3 are significantly above national averages.
44. The development of learners' professional and practical skills is good. Learners make good progress towards their learning goals, and work is of high quality. Learners develop good industrial skills. Team work and the development of cooperative skills are key features of the learner experience. They learn to cooperate well together and work productively in teams.

Quality of provision

45. The quality of provision is good. In the best lessons, there is much good teaching which is stimulating and challenging and uses a variety of

- strategies and resources to promote learning. Lessons are well planned. In satisfactory lessons, teaching is more formal and not all learners are fully engaged. Assessment is rigorous and well planned. Schedules of assessment activities are clearly understood by learners who know how the assessments fit into their learning programme. There is insufficient written feedback on learners' written work.
46. The provision offered meets the needs of learners and the wider community. Learners are well motivated and work to industrial standards. Employers are actively involved with the curriculum, and provide guest speakers, resources, and structured work experience. Guidance and support for learners is good. Support for learners with additional needs is effectively co-ordinated. Key skills are well integrated within the craft provision and supported by specialist staff. There is an extensive school links programme with good progression onto post-16 courses or into related employment and training.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are outstanding. Classrooms are well equipped with a range of learning resources and teachers use them effectively and imaginatively. Workshops are well equipped, spacious and provide a safe and effective working environment to support learners develop their skills. The CoVE is very well managed. Resources have been targeted to increase breadth of provision and to improve learners' experience. There is an embedded culture of promoting and reinforcing health, safety and welfare in workshops and learners use appropriate equipment and procedures to help them stay safe.
48. The development of staff is excellent. Staff are well qualified and new teachers have a phased introduction to their role and dedicated support from experienced specialist staff. There is a strong focus on quality improvement, resulting in very effective actions in the current academic year. Staff work together well as a team and effectively share best practice. Self-assessment and internal verification are comprehensive and robust.

Information and communication technology

Good: grade 2

Context

49. Courses offered are all aimed at adult learners, although a small number of 16-18 year olds are on some courses. Part-time courses range from entry level introductory courses to level 3. The only full-time course is a combination of smaller courses in IT and business administration. All courses at levels 2 and 3 are intended for those wishing to gain employment in an office setting. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,507 learners on part-time courses and 41 on the full-time programme.

Strengths

- high success rates
- much good teaching and learning
- strong focus and effective actions to bring about improvements.

Areas for improvement

- poor use of short term target setting to motivate learners.

Achievement and standards

50. Success rates for ICT courses are high. The most significant part-time courses have success rates which are significantly above the national averages, varying from 14% to 42% above. The only full-time course offered is a combination of several smaller courses and as such does not have an overall success rate. However, of the 50 learners who completed during 2005/06, 22 gained employment, three went on to higher education and a further five progressed to other courses.
51. The standard of learners' work is generally good, although in some sessions it is very good. Many beginners use software with confidence after a few weeks. Learners on the level 3 course undertake very complex and difficult tasks, and are able to explore and experiment with the software.

Quality of the provision

52. There is much good teaching. In better lessons, teachers have a very detailed knowledge of their learners which they use effectively to tailor the support that learners receive. In community venues, lessons are appropriately relaxed and well planned to meet the needs of individuals in

- very welcoming environments. European computer driving licence (ECDL) lessons are focused and business-like. Additional learning support is good. Assessments for the NVQ programme are carried out effectively.
53. The provision offered meets the needs of learners and the wider community. Provision is designed flexibly and offers clear progression paths from entry level to level 3. Support for learners is satisfactory. All learners on substantive courses are screened to assess their numeracy and literacy needs promptly and additional support is available for those learners who need it. Short term target setting does not take place routinely in tutorials. Where targets are agreed they are seldom time bound and are often insufficiently precise; they are not used to motivate learners.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are good. There is a good ethos of quality improvement within the area. Regular team meetings discuss quality improvement issues and actions are agreed and effectively tracked. All members of staff are closely involved in the self-assessment process. Internal verification processes are satisfactory. Standardisation meetings for ECDL are regular and effective.
55. Resources are generally good. Community venues provide a good standard of accommodation. Learning materials are clear, easy to read and learners like them. All IT equipment is of industry standard and in good condition. Technician support is good.

Leisure, travel and sports studies

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

56. Courses in sport, travel and tourism are offered from level 1 to 4. There are 143 learners aged 16-18, and 72 aged 19 years or older. Of these, 144 are following programmes in leisure, travel and tourism, and 81 are following programmes in sport. Leisure, travel and tourism courses include: an introductory diploma in hospitality; travel and tourism; a first and national diploma in travel and tourism; and preparation in cabin crew. Sport programmes offered are a national diploma in sports and exercise science, and in outdoor education.

Strengths

- improved retention and pass rates for most programmes beginning in 2006/07
- good enrichment activities
- effective links with industry in travel and tourism
- good learning and pastoral support.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on most programmes 2003/04 to 2005/06
- poor progress for learners on outdoor education programmes
- no additional qualifications offered to supplement main learning aim
- poor accommodation for sport programmes.

Achievement and standards

57. Success rates between 2003/04 and 2005/6 on most programmes were poor and well below national averages. Retention and pass rates for most programmes that began in 2006/07 are good and show considerable improvement on previous years. Success rates on cabin crew and the travel and tourism certificate programmes are very good. Retention rates for most other programmes which started in 2006/07, and are still running, are high. Attendance overall is satisfactory for the current year. First year learners on outdoor education programmes are making slow progress. Planning and continuity of learning has been affected by staff changes and the lack of tracking of learners' progress.

Quality of provision

58. Teaching and learning are good and learners enjoy their sessions. In the better lessons, the pace was brisk with a wide range of activities which built on learners' skills and experience. Theory and practical elements are mixed well. Commercial standards are reinforced well. Learners on all programmes benefit from good enrichment to develop their confidence, team building, health and social skills. Enrichment activities link well to vocational assignments.
59. Links with industry are good on travel and tourism programmes. Some programmes have been rescheduled to meet industry recruitment times. Progression to industry is very good. Learners benefit from a good range of industry standard resources, including the college's travel agency.
60. Pastoral and learning support is good. Learners with particular needs are supported well to enable them to achieve their qualifications. Effective initial assessment enables support to be targeted quickly. Tutorials effectively meet learners' needs. Target setting is not always clear or appropriately recorded.
61. Assignment briefs are clear and learners receive good guidance on how to secure higher grades. Learners receive insufficient feedback on how to improve spelling and grammar. Key skills are integrated into learners' programmes and assignments are vocationally relevant. No additional qualifications are offered to learners to enhance employment prospects or supplement their main learning aim.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good recent action has been taken to address retention and success rates, including restructuring programmes and closer monitoring of learners' progress. Teaching and learning have improved and are good. Staff are fully involved in self-assessment which is self critical and realistic. Quality assurance and audit systems, including course review and internal verification, are satisfactory. There is a strong improvement culture within the area. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Accommodation for theory and practical sessions on the sport programme is poor.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

63. The college offers courses in literacy and numeracy from entry level to level 2, provision for supported entry level learners, and key skills courses in communications and application of number. There are 593 learners enrolled on discrete essential skills courses of which 48 are on the full-time Gateway Entry to Employment intensive short course and 200 learners in work-place provision. There are 43 full-time and 87 part-time supported entry level learners. Additionally, there are 1,156 learners undertaking application of number and communications key skills.

Strengths

- outstanding success rates for learners with disabilities and/or difficulties
- excellent success rates in entry level numeracy
- good development of learners' personal, social and vocational skills
- good personal support
- effective programme management.

Areas for improvement

- unsatisfactory success rates on adult numeracy level 1 courses
- low achievement in key skills
- some ineffective classroom management
- insufficiently developed sharing of good practice in teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

64. Achievement is satisfactory overall. There is excellent achievement on supported entry level programmes. The skills for working life, adult social skills and entry level adult numeracy courses, have success rates well above the national average. Success rates on adult numeracy at level 1 are unsatisfactory, with poor progression to level 2. Achievement in key skills is low. However, over the last year, many courses show an improving trend, including on key skills programmes.
65. Learners on supported entry level courses make excellent progress and many achieve above the level which might be expected. Assessment is satisfactory. Many learners assessed at level 1 or below, contribute confidently and openly in discussions around a variety of issues. Assessments set are clearly marked and annotated with constructive comments.

Quality of provision

66. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is very good teaching and learning in supported entry level and some classes within discrete literacy. The individual needs of the learners are well integrated into the planning of supported entry level classes and teaching is clearly linked to the achievement of targets. Teaching is challenging while being supportive. In a significant number of lessons in the primary essential skills area, insufficient attention is paid to individuals' preferred ways of learning. Pace is slow and learners are not sufficiently challenged.
67. There is effective use of assessment to support and motivate learners on supported entry level classes. Thorough initial and diagnostic assessments of learners' abilities take place in a timely way. Most teachers make satisfactory use of initial and diagnostic information in selecting teaching methods. Learners agree clear and specific learning targets which are clearly understood and recorded in individual learning plans.
68. There are effective links with local communities and employers to encourage new learners into learning. Support for learners is good. Specialist support for learners with additional needs is effective in enabling learners to fully participate in classes. There is a well established tutorial system in place for all full-time learners.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear management focus on improving learners' literacy and numeracy. There is a well structured observation system in place for both full- and part-time staff. Staff are very well qualified and a significant number have either literacy or numeracy level 4 qualifications, and skills for life awareness training. A thorough and rigorous quality assurance system is used to monitor all courses. Sharing of good practice is not well developed.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2003 to 2005, 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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	03/04	1754	57	59	-2	2617	57	58	-1
	04/05	2511	59	62	-3	2382	57	61	-4
	05/06	1529	58			1910	62		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	61	64	63	+1	9	33	53	-20
	04/05	49	63	64	-1	2	50		
	05/06	0				0			
NVQs	03/04	77	57	61	-4	31	48	66	-18
	04/05	91	60	65	-5	30	60	70	-10
	05/06	108	70			53	62		
Other	03/04	1616	56	58	-2	2577	58	58	0
	04/05	2371	59	61	-2	2350	57	60	-3
	05/06	1421	57			1857	62		

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2003 to 2005, 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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	03/04	1256	46	56	-10	2165	59	54	+5
	04/05	1371	48	60	-12	2138	61	59	+2
	05/06	1228	50			1795	68		
GCSEs	03/04	110	62	64	-2	317	71	58	+13
	04/05	97	49	65	-16	302	64	63	+1
	05/06	98	48			274	68		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	109	67	60	+7	12	58	56	+2
	04/05	98	68	66	+2	16	63	61	+2
	05/06	0				9	78		
NVQs	03/04	224	41	51	-10	607	53	54	-1
	04/05	245	47	56	-9	507	59	62	-3
	05/06	213	60			526	71		
Other	03/04	813	42	53	-11	1229	58	53	+5
	04/05	931	46	58	-12	1313	61	57	+4

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2003 to 2005, 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	699	44	61	-17	1609	56	52	+4
	04/05	744	45	65	-20	1391	58	56	+2
	05/06	641	55			1335	71		
A/A2 Levels*	03/04	61	37	83	-46	98	65	69	-4
	04/05	77	66	84	-18	94	65	73	-8
	05/06	23	61			50	64		
AS Levels*	03/04	201	48	60	-12	174	48	50	-2
	04/05	165	42	63	-21	127	45	53	-8
	05/06	113	46			86	51		
GNVQs and precursors*	03/04	208	32	50	-18	92	35	43	-8
	04/05	190	34	59	-25	50	22	51	-29
	05/06	69	59			13	46		
NVQs	03/04	34	74	50	+24	463	51	48	+3
	04/05	43	51	53	-2	464	56	54	+2
	05/06	31	77			370	69		
Other	03/04	195	49	51	-2	782	62	53	+9
	04/05	269	48	56	-8	656	63	56	+7
	05/06	405	54			816	75		

* courses discontinued in 2006/07

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college in 2004/05 and 2005/06.

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2004/05	Apprenticeship	12	0	29	0	46
	Advanced	0				
2005/06	Apprenticeship	25	76	50	80	58
	Advanced	0				

* 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 NVO rate **	National rate **
2004/05	Apprenticeship	0	0	21	0	29
	Advanced	0				
2005/06	Apprenticeship	25	76	50	80	58
	Advanced	0				

* 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'