



Leeds College of Music

Higher Education Institution

Inspection of Further Education
Provision
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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
- specialist provision in: music and music technology.

Description of the provider

1. Leeds College of Music is a higher education institution (HEI), gaining government approval to change its status from a further education (FE) provider to an HEI in the summer of 2005. It was established in 1971, having previously been known as the Leeds Music Centre. It is housed in recently constructed, purpose-built, accommodation in the city centre where all teaching on full-time courses takes place. Community education outreach classes are delivered at various centres throughout the region. The college has an adjacent 350-seater auditorium, 'The Venue', physically linked to the main site. This plays a major role in expanding performance opportunities for college ensembles, as well as hosting public performances from artists of all genres. A new teaching block, plus a student hall of residence with 180 bed-spaces, was opened in 2005.
2. Leeds is the largest metropolitan district in West Yorkshire and has a diverse economy. The area has a lower than average unemployment rate. There are, however, areas of the city where there is high unemployment. A number of inner city wards within Leeds are amongst the 10% most deprived wards in the country. The number of young people leaving Year 11 with five or more A* - C grades at GCSE is lower than the national average (45.2% compared with a national average of 53.2%).
3. In addition to Leeds College of Music, there are six further education (FE) colleges, three of which also have a specialist focus, 30 private training organisations and a network of family and city learning centres, located in the Leeds area. The majority of Leeds secondary schools also offer sixth form provision. The college is one of five HEIs in the city. The College is a member of Conservatoires UK.
4. In 2006/07, the college enrolled 960 full-time students, including those from the EU and overseas, 377 of these are on specialist music FE courses, mainly at level 3. There are 1,056 students on part-time access and outreach courses, and the local education authority sub-contracts most of its adult and community learning music provision to the College. There is also a successful Saturday music school for 7-18 year old children and young people. The college recently established, in partnership with Opera North and the Regional Music Services, 'Yorkshire Young Musicians', a new regional centre of advanced training for exceptionally talented young people. The college recruits nationally and internationally, especially for its HE provision, though the majority of FE students are from within the region. The college's mission is to *'provide high quality music education, enhanced by research and continually evolving to meet the needs of the profession and the community'*.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievements and standards	Satisfactory: grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: grade 3
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: contributory grade 3</i>

Subject sector areas

Music	Good: grade 2
Music technology	Satisfactory: grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

5. The FE provision at Leeds College of Music is satisfactory and improving. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. In 2006, success rates improved at all levels as a result of significant improvements in retention rates. Success rates on level 3 courses and on key skills are, however, low. Current retention is high; learners' attendance at lessons has improved. Standards of learners' work are good. Learners on music programmes and adults on short courses make good progress at the college.
6. Teaching and learning are good. The college has taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers plan most lessons well. They make effective use of excellent learning resources in studios and across the college to enhance students' learning.
7. The college's access and outreach provision is good. Adult learners benefit from inspirational and supportive teaching. Their musical skills are well developed and they become more confident to progress to higher levels. Successful initiatives and partnerships have led to better opportunities for children and young people to study at a higher level. Adult learners appreciate the choice of subjects and instrument tuition available. Participation levels by learners from black and minority ethnic communities are high. Adult learners are not sufficiently aware of the college's support services. Programme management is satisfactory.
8. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. It has effective strategies to widen participation, particularly for children, young people and young adults. It successfully attracts adult learners through its part-time evening provision but participation by 'hard to reach' learners from disadvantaged areas is low. The college has successfully engaged learners from black and minority ethnic groups and their achievement is good. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Participation by, and support for, learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities is good. In recognition of the need to attract more women to music technology and jazz, the college has planned taster and summer activities. Accessibility for learners with mobility difficulties is good.
9. Strong leadership and governance, and the commitment of all staff ensure that the college is well placed to further improve the quality of the FE provision. Self-assessment is largely accurate and managers now have

access to reliable data which they use effectively to inform action planning and decision-making processes. Learners benefit from outstanding facilities and a unique learning environment. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

10. The college's capacity to improve is good. It carefully prioritised its approach to addressing the wide range of issues raised at the last inspection and has been successful in improving the quality of provision. For example, the focus on retention has effectively brought about a number of key improvements in success rates, in most cases considerably exceeding targets. The self-assessment report is largely accurate and identified most of the key strengths and areas for improvement. It has been used effectively to set a clear agenda for improvement. Where monitoring and evaluation are strong, improvements have been dramatic. The high commitment of staff and several key appointments is successfully adding momentum to the senior management steer for excellence.

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

11. The college has made satisfactory progress in addressing the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Retention has improved significantly and is high on many courses. High priority has been placed on improving the quality of teaching and learning, which is now good. Course level operational management is coherent and effective. Music technology provision has improved and is satisfactory. Quality assurance arrangements, including self-assessment and action planning, have improved markedly. However, arrangements for monitoring and evaluation are not sufficiently effective across all areas of the college. Learners now receive initial assessment to determine their levels of literacy and numeracy to ensure they are enrolled on the right level of programme. Tutorial and academic review practice is inconsistent. Key skills success rates have risen slightly but are still low.

Key strengths

- outstanding contribution to promote music locally and nationally
- high success rates at level 1
- effective action to improve retention rates
- good teaching and learning
- broad range of specialist music provision

- strong partnerships which enrich opportunities for learners
- outstanding learning resources and specialist facilities
- strong leadership and governance.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates on level 3 courses and key skills
- the low internal progression from FE to HE on music technology courses
- the effectiveness of tutorials and individual learner reviews
- the sharing of best practice in teaching and learning
- the effectiveness of arrangements for monitoring and evaluation.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

12. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. This concurs with the colleges own self-assessment. In its self-assessment report and action plans for 2005/06, the college has placed high a priority on improving success rates on long courses, which were low in 2004 and 2005, and it has been successful.
13. In 2006, success rates improved at all levels as a result of significant improvements in retention rates. The success rate for learners aged 16-18 improved overall, and at level 1, the rate was high. At level 2, the rate was satisfactory. However, at level 3, the rate although improved, was low. The success rates for adults on long courses improved at all levels in 2006, but were still low. Success rates on key skills are low.
14. The college has taken effective action to improve retention rates. Improvements seen during 2005/06 have been sustained in 2006/07 and current retention is very high on most long courses, particularly at level 1 and 2 where on a number of courses the rates are 100%. Retention rates on level 3 courses have also improved and are high on most courses. The retention rate of adult learners on short courses is high.
15. Since the last inspection, the college has put in place more rigorous arrangements to follow up absences; as a consequence, attendance at lessons has improved. The arrangements have had more impact on music courses where attendance at lessons during the inspection was good, but in some music technology lessons observed by inspectors, attendance was low. The college provides a safe and inclusive environment for learners.
16. Learners enjoy their time at the college. They benefit from the opportunity to learn in high quality accommodation, alongside professional musicians and other learners with similar interests. Standards of learners' work are good overall. In music, learners develop excellent performance skills and very good critical analysis techniques. The standard of learners' work in music technology is generally satisfactory. Adults on short courses develop good skills and techniques. The learners in music and adults on short courses make good progress at the college, many exceed their expectations.
17. The proportion of learners who progress from level 1 to levels 2 and 3 courses within the college, is good. Progression to higher education from

music courses is also good. The college's self-assessment accurately identifies that the proportion of learners progressing from music technology courses to the college's higher education provision is low. It has reviewed the curriculum effectively to provide improved internal pathways.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

18. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that teaching and learning are good. The self-assessment report identifies most strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and the college has action plans in place to promote its continued improvement. Teachers plan most lessons well. In the best sessions, learners are set challenging targets and inspired to develop the skills to evaluate their own performances and those of others. Teachers make effective use of excellent learning resources in studios and across the college to enhance students' learning. In less effective lessons, learning objectives are vague and there are insufficient activities to engage and challenge learners throughout the lesson.
19. The college has taken action to improve the management and delivery of key skills. A new coordinator was appointed in September 2006 and a revised key skills policy has been developed. Learners now take appropriate adult literacy and numeracy tests as part of their key skills assessments.
20. Assessment is thorough and rigorous. Assignments are well designed and provide comprehensive guidance for learners. Marking criteria are clearly laid out. Teachers carefully mark learners' work and most provide helpful feedback, including information on how to improve standards. All work is subject to second marking through a sample system and standardisation procedures are effective. An electronic tracking system ensures that learners' unit grades are accurately recorded and monitored at their individual reviews.
21. The broad range of specialist music provision effectively meets the needs of learners. The curriculum reflects the vocational mission of the college and covers a comprehensive range of musical genres and traditions. There are good opportunities for progression from levels 1 to 3 and internal progression rates are particularly high. Progression from further to higher education and employment is good but very few learners progress from music technology to the college's degree programmes. Music and musical theatre learners participate in an extensive enrichment programme. However, too few music technology learners participate in enrichment activities.

22. Through effective partnership development, the college has collaborated with a network of providers to enhance opportunities for talented children and young people to further develop their skills and to explore European and Indian musical traditions. The college enhances opportunities for young people through its close links with the local authority's arts projects. The college plays an outstanding role in raising the profile of music throughout Leeds, the region and nationally.
23. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Arrangements for initial advice and guidance are effective in recruiting learners to appropriate courses. Although the identification of additional learning needs is sound, the provision of additional support has been slow to be implemented. The college does not analyse the impact of additional learning support on learners' achievement. The induction to courses and the college is satisfactory. An 'at risk' register is used effectively to alert staff to the needs of vulnerable learners. The college has not developed measures to monitor and assure the quality of the many new learner support initiatives.
24. An appropriate range of support services meet the needs of learners. This includes advice on sexual health, drugs awareness, financial management and counselling. Advice on careers and progression are good. Appropriate use is made of learner support funds. Part-time adult learners are insufficiently aware of available support services.
25. Tutorials have improved since the last inspection with the introduction of better monitoring of learners attendance, tutorials with individual learners, and better performance monitoring. However, attendance at both group and individual tutorials is low and this limits their effectiveness, as recognised in the college's self-assessment.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: grade 3

26. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal and governors provide a clear vision and strong leadership of the college's FE provision. Governors bring a broad range of expertise to the college and provide a good level of challenge to the senior management team. The principal and governing body have been instrumental in providing a firm agenda for improvement. Since the last inspection, the college has successfully re-organised its management structure to increase the focus on raising

- learners' achievements. Success rates at all levels rose in 2005/06 as a result of significant improvements in retention. Current in-year college data indicate that this position has been maintained. A range of improvement strategies have been given increased momentum by a number of key appointments and the commitment of staff at all levels. However, several of these strategies are too new to judge their full impact on learners' achievements.
27. Quality assurance has improved and is satisfactory. Arrangements for self-assessment have been strengthened. Managers now have access to reliable data which they use effectively to inform self-assessment, decision-making processes and action planning. Quality improvement plans are reviewed regularly in curriculum areas but some targets are not sufficiently precise. Monitoring and evaluation is weak in other areas of the college; for example, arrangements to analyse the impact of support on learners' achievements and part-time learners' use of support services.
28. A revised system for the observation of teaching is in place. The outcomes are used to inform appraisal and teachers awarded satisfactory grades are supported and re-observed. However, some reports do not contain clear action points to help the teacher to improve. Arrangements for identifying and sharing good practice in teaching and learning are informal.
29. Curriculum management is good in music; it is satisfactory in music technology and in access and outreach provision. The introduction of course leaders in September 2006 has increased accountability for course performance and led to improvements in the monitoring of the quality of provision. The curriculum has been reviewed and re-designed to better meet learners' needs. Cohesive links between the higher and further education sections of the college are enhancing opportunities for learners' progression and expanding participation in group performances, such as the large symphony orchestra. Communication at all levels of the college has improved and is now good.
30. High quality accommodation and outstanding specialist resources provide a dynamic and inspirational learning environment. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. The majority of full-time teachers have teaching qualifications. Whilst part-time staff are not always qualified teachers, they have relevant professional qualifications and are often practicing musicians. Investment in staff training and development has been effective in improving the quality of provision.

31. The promotion of equality and diversity now has a higher profile within the college and is satisfactory. However, the monitoring of its effectiveness is in the early stages. The college has taken action to ensure that it meets the statutory requirements of the amended Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and the Special Education Needs Act (SENDA). Appropriate measures are in place to safeguard learners aged under 18 and vulnerable adults.
32. Strong partnerships and collaborative working with the creative industries and other external organisations successfully enrich the curriculum. Financial management is effective. Good use of self-funding, for example, to support ensemble groups, extends the opportunities available for the wider community. The number of learners enrolling on FE courses has declined over the last four years which is in line with the college's strategy to provide more focused high quality provision. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Subject sector reports

Music

Good: grade 2

Context

33. Full-time provision includes a level 1 introductory certificate, the BTEC first diploma and national diploma courses in popular music, performing arts (musical theatre), music and jazz. At the time of the inspection, there were 256 learners on full-time courses. Approximately 350 learners aged 19+ study on part-time courses in the college and community venues and 14 are studying on the access to higher education (HE) course.

Strengths

- high retention and success rates at levels 1 and 2
- very high standards of learners' work
- very good teaching and learning
- inspirational and unique learning environment
- effective curriculum management.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on national diploma courses
- gender imbalance on some courses.

Achievements and standards

34. Achievements are satisfactory and the standards of learners' work are very high. Retention rates have increased significantly and are high. Success rates are high on levels 1 and 2 courses. In 2005/06, the success rate on the introductory certificate was 100% and on the first diploma it was 82%. Success rates on national diploma courses are low.
35. Learners produce very high standards of work. Many develop excellent performance skills both individually and in a range of ensembles, with sensitive and expressive phrasing and style. They are able to analyse their own and others' work critically. Written work is also good. Progression from level 1 to levels 2 and 3 courses is good and many move on to higher education. Learners' attendance at lessons is good.

Quality of provision

36. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are lively and well planned. Teachers use a wide variety of activities to engage and challenge learners and most make excellent progress. Teachers are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects; many are practising performers. Team teaching is highly effective in providing both instruction and individual support for learners. Teachers use a wide range of technology to enhance learners' experience, for instance, by videoing their performances and recording discussions during assessment.
37. Assessment is rigorous and detailed marking provides clear feedback to learners. Initial assessment and support arrangements are satisfactory. A coordinated system provides tutors with details of students' profiles and any issues arising with their conduct or personal circumstances.
38. The college offers a unique and inspirational learning environment. An exceptionally wide range of courses and extensive opportunities for enrichment are available. Accommodation and facilities are very high quality. The choice of four national diploma courses allows learners to specialise in particular musical styles. A variety of organised showcases, ensembles, competitions, workshops and visiting speakers are well attended. All learners take part in the wide range of instrumental and choral groups. Partnerships and self-funded provision provide opportunities for the wider community to take part in music making; for instance, Saturday morning sessions for young musicians, and the South Asian Arts Association (SAA-UK).

Leadership and management

39. Curriculum management is effective. The new structure has improved staff ownership of the curriculum and enables managers to delegate effectively. Staff communicate well. Innovative curriculum developments ensure good co-ordination between different units of qualifications. Staff use data routinely. The gender balance on some courses is poor. There are no female learners on the jazz course and only a small number on the first diploma.
40. Specialist resources are very good. The energising environment focuses on music making at a high level. FE learners raise their standards through listening and performing with undergraduates. The library has a unique collection; there is an extensive range of equipment and many well equipped spaces for performance and rehearsal.

Music technology

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

41. The college offers full-time courses in music technology from levels 1 to 3. There are 114 full-time learners, mostly aged 16-18 and predominantly male. Over half study at level 3. A small number of part-time evening classes are available for adults studying part-time.

Strengths

- high success rates on level 1 courses
- effective teaching to promote technical skills development
- outstanding resources and technician support.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on level 3 courses
- low levels of internal progression from further to higher education
- low participation rates in enrichment activities.

Achievements and standards

42. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. The success rate on the introductory diploma in performing arts is high. Current retention on level 3 courses has risen significantly and is good: at levels 1 and 2 it is 100%. Success rates on national diploma and certificate courses in music technology are low; however, those who pass national diploma courses generally achieve high grades. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Most learners make good progress in developing technical skills and written work is of an appropriate standard. Attendance at some lessons observed by inspectors was poor.

Quality of provision

43. Teaching and learning are good. The structure of work in the better lessons, allows a lively pace to be sustained and challenging objectives to be achieved by learners. Teachers use innovative learning resources to promote the development of technical skills and effective use is made of group work to encourage independent and collaborative learning. In the less effective lessons, learning objectives are vague and learners are not sufficiently challenged.

44. Assessment procedures are rigorous. Assignments are well constructed to ensure that learners are able to achieve high grades. A robust internal verification system operates. The quality of written feedback on learners' work is variable and assessments are not always returned within the agreed timescale.
45. The college offers a satisfactory range of full-time FE courses. However, too few learners progress internally onto HE provision, which is one of the college's key strategic objectives. The self-assessment report identifies this issue and is addressing it through an FE/HE progression strategy. Enrichment opportunities are available but participation rates are low. In the second of two alternative timetabled weeks, less than 50% of level 3 learners took part. The industry partnership scheme provides good opportunities for visiting practitioners to provide industry related inputs to music technology courses.
46. Support for learners is satisfactory. Weekly tutorials provide a useful source of information but learners' attendance is erratic. Individual academic reviews are held twice a year, but learners' targets are not linked sufficiently to initial assessment and do not take into account all aspects of their programme.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Operational course management is effective. More rigorous selection procedures have had a positive impact on retention at all levels. The use of data enables more effective monitoring of retention but the system is not yet fully embedded. Staff contribute to curriculum self-assessment through annual programme evaluations. The resulting report is largely accurate but overstates strengths in progression and enrichment. It recognises the significant gender imbalance on courses and a series of summer workshops are planned to encourage more females onto music technology courses. Learners benefit from outstanding learning resources and technician support. Teachers are well qualified with current industrial experience.

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 FE specialist colleges (which includes mainly agriculture & horticulture, and art & design colleges).

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	208	32	62	-30	171	36	49	-13
	04/05	159	50	65	-15	102	29	61	-32
	05/06	174	81	**	**	36	56	**	**
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	04/05	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	05/06	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
NVQs	03/04	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	04/05	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	05/06	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	03/04	208	32	61	-29	171	36	49	-13
	04/05	159	50	66	-16	102	29	61	-32
	05/06	174	81	**	**	36	56	**	**

* denotes no enrolments

** 2005/06 national rates not available

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 FE specialist colleges (which includes mainly agriculture & horticulture, and art & design colleges).

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	150	54	62	-8	115	48	55	-7
	04/05	154	49	68	-19	138	35	61	-26
	05/06	131	69	**	**	38	58	**	**
GCSEs	03/04	56	54	**	**	12	67	**	**
	04/05	31	65	**	**	4	50	**	**
	05/06	10	60	**	**	2	50	**	**
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	04/05	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	05/06	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
NVQs	03/04	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	04/05	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	05/06	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	03/04	94	54	63	-9	103	46	57	-11
	04/05	123	46	69	-23	134	34	62	-28
	05/06	121	69	**	**	36	58	**	**

* denotes no enrolments

** 2005/06 national rates not available

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 FE specialist colleges (which includes mainly agriculture & horticulture, and art & design colleges).

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	237	59	65	-6	125	46	49	-3
	04/05	245	53	69	-16	112	43	56	-13
	05/06	202	61	**	**	104	56	**	**
A/A2 Levels	03/04	21	86	**	**	8	75	**	**
	04/05	18	78	**	**	*	*	**	**
	05/06	16	63	**	**	*	*	**	**
AS Levels	03/04	36	81	71	10	9	44	**	**
	04/05	40	70	77	-7	9	67	**	**
	05/06	19	53	**	**	8	25	**	**
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	22	55	45	10	15	60	**	**
	04/05	*	*	*	*	*	*	**	**
	05/06	*	*	*	*	*	*	**	**
NVQs	03/04	*	*	*	*	*	*	**	**
	04/05	*	*	*	*	*	*	**	**
	05/06	*	*	*	*	*	*	**	**
Other	03/04	158	51	67	-16	93	41	**	**
	04/05	187	46	68	-22	98	40	**	**
	05/06	167	62	**	**	93	57	**	**

* denotes no enrolments

** 2005/06 national rates not available