

South Leicestershire College

Inspection Report 4 - 8 June 2007

Audience Post-sixteen	Published July 2007	Provider reference 130750
--------------------------	------------------------	------------------------------

Contents

Background information	3
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement	6
Key strengths and areas for improvement	7
Main findings	9

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 on 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 the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; 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.

Description of the provider

1. South Leicestershire College is a general further education (GFE) college situated on the southern outskirts of Leicester. It operates predominantly from two sites. The college's main site is the former Wigston College. In September 2002, the college opened the South Leicestershire Learning Innovation Centre in newly built premises in Market Harborough.

2. In 2005/06, there were 6,300 learners, of whom 81% were over the age of 19. Half of these adult learners were sponsored by their employers. Some 17% of learners follow full-time courses. Enrolments are increasing, particularly in the 16-18 age group. More than one third of the college's learners are from areas of high deprivation. Some 27% of learners are of minority ethnic heritage.
3. The college offers courses in 12 of the 15 sector subject areas. Nearly half of the college's provision is in health, public services and care and in preparation for life and work. Information and communication technology (ICT) and business, administration and law, account for a further quarter of total learners. The college operates a training agency with an average occupancy of 100 work-based learners who follow modern apprenticeships. Nearly 300 school pupils aged 14-16 currently attend the college for one day each week, to follow vocational programmes linked to their school courses. In September 2004, the college opened its Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in supervisory management skills, which is based in the Martin Johnson Centre for Leadership and Management.
4. The college's mission is: 'To provide excellent and innovative vocational learning and so improve the life chances, employability and economic prospects of our learners'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: contributory grade 1</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

5. The college assessed the effectiveness of its provision as outstanding and inspectors agree. Achievement and standards are outstanding. The achievement of learners of all ages are significantly above national averages for courses at all levels. Success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups have improved during each of the last three years and are now outstanding.
6. Teaching and learning are good and are well matched to the needs of learners. The extensive lesson observation programme has enabled the college to obtain a detailed and accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. The college has recognised that sometimes lesson plans lack sufficient detail to provide a secure foundation for developing learning. The initial assessment of learners is thorough and the range of language, literacy and numeracy support available is excellent. Assessment is generally rigorous, but on a minority of courses at levels 1 and 2 it is less detailed, reducing its effectiveness in helping learners to make progress.
7. The college offers an outstanding vocational curriculum which fully meets the needs of its learners. The promotion of vocational programmes for school pupils aged 14-16 is a particular strength. The college has outstanding links with employers.
8. Guidance, support and care for learners are outstanding. Arrangements for initial advice and guidance are comprehensive. Learners receive excellent personal and specialist learning support. The learning mentors are an effective resource and are much valued by learners.
9. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Learners from all backgrounds are successfully integrated into college life. Learners with disabilities are welcomed and supported. Cultural differences and diversity are celebrated in all aspects of the college's work.
10. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal provides strong and inspirational leadership. Strategic planning is highly creative and innovative. The impact of leadership and management on raising standards is outstanding. The relentless determination to raise the aspirations of learners and to help them succeed is evident throughout the college. The college has an excellent record of collaboration, which has resulted in a series of highly successful initiatives to meet local and regional needs.

Quality assurance is good but the college has correctly identified that the quality of its course reviews should be improved.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

11. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. There is a shared commitment across the college to raise the aspirations, achievements and well being of its diverse range of learners. Achievement and standards and the quality of provision have improved during a period of significant expansion for the college. Targets for the improvement in success rates have been met and often exceeded. The vision of its leaders and the college's track record in bringing about improvement are impressive. The self-assessment report is comprehensive, well evidenced and accurate. Quality assurance is good and improving. The college is well resourced but has nearly exceeded its current capacity. It has successfully secured a new site to allow planned growth to continue. Funding for the new campus has been agreed and plans for the move are well advanced.

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

12. The college has made outstanding progress in addressing the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. Leadership and management have improved from satisfactory to outstanding. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 are now high on courses at all levels. Success rates for work-based learners are now satisfactory and current learners are making good progress. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is now outstanding and the quality of teaching has improved. The take-up of literacy and numeracy support is very high and has proved effective in ensuring successful outcomes for learners. The college no longer employs part-time agency teachers.

Key strengths

- excellent success rates for learners of all ages
- outstanding performance of learners from minority ethnic groups
- excellent participation and success rates of learners aged 14-16
- good teaching and learning which is well matched to the needs of learners
- outstanding employer engagement and responsiveness to local priorities
- outstanding guidance, support and care to promote achievement
- strong and inspirational leadership
- highly creative and innovative strategic planning
- highly successful collaborative partnerships
- an aspirational culture which is reflected in all of the college's work.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the quality of lesson planning and assessment on some courses
- the quality of course reviews.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: grade 1

13. Achievement and standards are outstanding. This agrees with the college's own assessment. The overall success rate for the college of 83%, places it in the top 10% of colleges of its type nationally. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 and for adult learners are significantly above national averages for courses at all levels. This performance is particularly noteworthy because many learners enter the college with low prior qualifications and frequently low self-confidence. Success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups have improved during each of the last three years and are now outstanding. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make excellent progress and their achievements are well above average. Learners aged 14-16 develop good levels of vocational skills as well as making significant gains in their personal and social skills. In 2005/06, some 79% of these younger learners who followed a course leading to an externally accredited qualification were successful, and their progression to higher level courses in the college was good. Progression rates within the college and from the college into employment are very high.
14. Key skills success rates have improved and are now outstanding. In 2005/06, the success rate on level 1 key skills programmes was 76% and at level 2 was 84%, more than 20% above the national average. In recent years, work-based learners have achieved success rates which were close to the national average. However, improvements in the management of work-based learning and the progress made by current learners on programmes, enable the college to predict a significant improvement in the success rate this year.
15. Learners produce work of a very high standard and develop good practical skills which equip them well for employment. The college's excellent links with local employers enable it to provide work experience in settings, which demonstrate good professional practice for younger learners and help adult learners to develop and extend their skills so that they can improve their job performance and prepare for career progression. Attendance is good.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

16. Inspectors agree with the college's own judgement that the quality of provision is outstanding.

17. Teaching and learning are good and have improved since the last inspection. The extensive lesson observation programme has enabled the college to obtain a detailed and accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. In the majority of lessons, teachers use a wide range of interesting and imaginative teaching methods to enable them to meet the needs of different groups of learners successfully. Teachers have received extensive training in the use of new technology to improve learning and the creative use of interactive whiteboards is a feature of many lessons. In the best lessons, teachers plan carefully and provide interesting and challenging activities that engage learners and help them to develop their knowledge and understanding. The teaching of practical vocational skills is a particular strength and teachers make sure that safe working practices are followed rigorously. However, the college has recognised that sometimes lesson plans lack sufficient detail to provide a secure foundation for developing learning. Schemes of work also vary in quality, with a minority of examples providing little more than a list of topics to be covered and resources to be used.
18. The teaching of key skills is very good. In most sector subject areas key skills are taught by teachers who have vocational experience of the area, enabling them to ensure that learners develop their key skills throughout their course and that assignments are relevant to what learners need to know. The initial assessment of learners to identify their additional learning needs is thorough. The range of language, literacy and numeracy support available, including in-class support, attendance at the 'learning zone' and individual mentoring is excellent and learners say how much they value it.
19. Assessment is rigorous and provides learners with sufficiently detailed feedback for them to understand how to improve their work. On a minority of courses at levels 1 and 2, assessment is less detailed, reducing its effectiveness in helping learners to make progress. Teachers enjoy an excellent rapport with learners. The majority of learners say how much they enjoy their lessons, but the results of the college's surveys of learners' views indicate that some think that the quality of teaching could be improved still further.
20. The college offers an outstanding vocational curriculum which fully meets the needs of its learners. The promotion of vocational programmes for school pupils aged 14-16 is a particular strength. The college offers training in motor vehicle engineering, construction, health and social care for increasing numbers of school pupils and has recently extended its provision to pupils in Year 8. There are excellent opportunities for pupils who are disaffected or at risk of joining those who are not in employment, education or training. Many of these learners progress to full-time courses at the

college. The curriculum enables young people to learn about healthy living and the college's projects to improve well-being, such as 'Stub it out' and 'Don't be a tosser', an imaginative anti-litter project, are embraced by all staff and learners.

21. The college has outstanding links with more than 260 local and national employers and is the preferred supplier of training for many local businesses. Employers value the flexibility of the college in meeting their training needs.
22. Learners benefit from a very wide range of enrichment activities but apart from first aid courses the college does not encourage learners to follow additional externally accredited qualifications. The students' union promotes a good range of social and educational activities.
23. Guidance, support and care for learners are outstanding and have contributed significantly to the continuing improvements in success rates at the college, as well as enabling young people to deal with significant changes in their lives. Arrangements for initial advice and guidance are comprehensive. Learners are carefully matched to programmes based on their prior attainment, interests and aptitudes. Learners aged 16-18 receive challenging performance targets at the beginning of their course and their progress towards meeting their targets is reviewed frequently through the very effective tutorial programme. The college's learning mentors provide additional help for those who need it and are highly valued by learners.
24. Learners receive excellent personal and specialist learning support. The college provides a range of specialist equipment, resources and support staff for learners with visual impairment, hearing impairment, wheelchair users and those recovering from mental health difficulties. Childcare arrangements are good. The counselling service is well used by learners.
25. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The college is attracting increasing numbers of learners from deprived areas and providing programmes at a wide range of community venues for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ex-offenders, speakers of other languages and mental health service users. Learners from all backgrounds are successfully integrated into college life. Learners with disabilities are welcomed and supported. Cultural differences and diversity are celebrated in all aspects of the college's work, including a learner-led annual diversity day.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

Contributory grade

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: grade 1

26. Inspectors agree with the college's self-assessment that leadership and management are outstanding. The principal provides strong and inspirational leadership and is supported by a very able senior management team. Strategic planning is highly creative and innovative, seeking to capitalise on the excellent progress which has been made since the last inspection. The impact of leadership and management on raising standards is outstanding. The relentless determination to raise the aspirations of learners and to help them succeed is evident throughout the college.
27. The college has an excellent record of collaboration, particularly with schools and employers, which has resulted in a series of highly successful initiatives to meet local and regional needs. Recent examples include the development of the South Leicestershire Skills Centre in partnership with four local schools, and the college's role in the development of the Media Innovation Centre in Film and Television Excellence, supported by a number of Asian media companies.
28. The promotion of equal opportunities is outstanding and is given a very high priority in the day-to-day life of the college. Learners participate fully in activities to promote diversity, including leading some staff training activities in understanding different cultures. The college makes a full response to meeting its statutory requirements for safeguarding, disability and discrimination. It is aware that the minority ethnic profile of the corporation does not match that of learners and is attempting to redress this. Governance is outstanding. Governors have a wide range of relevant skills and monitor all aspects of the college's performance very thoroughly.
29. Managers and teachers throughout the college use data confidently and are skilled in their analysis and evaluation. Self-assessment is very thorough and accurate. Quality assurance is good, but the college has correctly identified that the quality of its course reviews varies. Sometimes the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is less thorough than other aspects of the reviews. Action plans that accompany the reviews rarely incorporate agreed targets and a minority lacks detail.
30. Performance management is effective. The new appraisal scheme identifies clear objectives for teachers, which are based on an assessment of their teaching performance drawn from lesson observations. Teachers are well qualified and recognise that the well planned staff development programme

is helping them to develop their teaching skills still further. Accommodation and learning resources are good. The college manages its finances extremely well and has improved its financial health through a period of significant growth. It provides outstanding 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.

16-18						19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	03-04	179	83	60	23	1380	85	59	26
	04-05	296	81	64	17	1398	86	62	24
	05-06	329	86			1044	85		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	11	64	65	-1	3	33	52	-19
	04-05	8	63	68	-5				
	05-06	15	67			4	50		
NVQs	03-04	1	100	61	39	2	50	62	-12
	04-05								
	05-06	4	100			4	100		
Other	03-04	167	84	60	24	1378	85	59	26
	04-05	288	82	64	18	1398	86	61	25
	05-06	310	87			1036	85		

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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	03-04	542	63	56	7	1096	70	54	16
	04-05	494	77	61	16	1028	65	60	5
	05-06	434	77			867	69		
GCSEs	03-04	173	38	61	-23	98	72	59	13
	04-05	93	85	64	21	90	81	62	19
	05-06	82	85			77	83		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	50	66	63	3	3	0	57	-57
	04-05	24	83	67	16	6	67	70	-3
	05-06	50	78			2	100		
NVQs	03-04	49	63	52	11	210	72	53	19
	04-05	52	64	57	7	258	61	60	1
	05-06	49	82			246	71		
Other	03-04	270	78	54	24	785	69	53	16
	04-05	325	76	60	16	674	64	59	5
	05-06	253	73			542	66		

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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	03-04	242	58	64	-6	728	65	54	11
	04-05	233	66	68	-2	732	76	57	19
	05-06	185	76			745	77		
A/A2 Levels	03-04	16	75	84	-9	11	46	66	-20
	04-05	32	91	86	5	19	90	69	21
	05-06	23	87			19	95		
AS Levels	03-04	65	62	63	-1	28	64	50	14
	04-05	69	61	65	-4	36	72	52	20
	05-06	48	77			34	82		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	66	58	52	6	14	57	43	14
	04-05	42	62	60	2	14	86	53	33
	05-06	84	73			17	71		
NVQs	03-04	10	50	54	-4	128	66	47	19
	04-05	13	62	62	0	165	69	54	15
	05-06	14	71	66	5	242	72		
Other	03-04	85	54	56	-2	547	65	56	9
	04-05	77	62	60	2	498	78	58	20
	05-06	16	76			433	79		

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes managed by the 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	29	66%	48%	38%	31%
		timely	26	35%	30%	19%	19%
	04-05	overall	24	33%	48%	25%	34%
		timely	26	19%	31%	12%	21%
	05-06	overall	30	53%	54%	43%	44%
		timely	32	44%	34%	34%	27%
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	31	45%	47%	19%	32%
		timely	32	6%	24%	3%	16%
	04-05	overall	38	63%	50%	32%	38%
		timely	39	23%	29%	5%	22%
	05-06	overall	39	74%	58%	64%	53%
		timely	40	35%	38%	25%	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'