

City of Wolverhampton College

Inspection report

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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 achievement 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, social care and early years; building and construction; information and communication technology (ICT); craft, creative arts and design; foundation for language and life; and business and administration.

Description of the provider

1. City of Wolverhampton College is a large further education college which was formed from the merger of two colleges in 1999. It now occupies eight sites located in Wolverhampton and neighbouring areas of south Staffordshire. The college enrolls the majority of its learners from Wolverhampton. The college serves a predominantly urban area which includes districts of significant deprivation, particularly in the centre of the city. The local unemployment rate of 5% is much higher than the national rate of around 2.3%. The percentage of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at A* to C, including mathematics and English in Wolverhampton, is significantly below the national average. Some 30% of learners are of minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 22% of people with such backgrounds in the local community.
2. The college provides courses in most sector subject areas. Learner numbers are highest in health, public services and care, and preparation for life and work. Qualification levels range from pre-entry to foundation degree. The college provides apprenticeship programmes to around 446 work-based learners. Part-time provision for 353 young people aged 14 to 16 is provided in collaboration with local schools.
3. City of Wolverhampton College enrolled 20,456 individual learners in 2006/07. Of these, around 19% were aged 16 to 18. About 66% of learners aged 16 to 18 were on full-time courses, with the numbers fairly evenly split between levels 1, 2 and 3. Some 15,048 adults were enrolled on part-time courses, mostly at level 1 or level 2.
4. The college's mission is: 'To support the development and regeneration of Wolverhampton and its region by providing education, training and skills development to enhance individual, community and economic prosperity'.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Health, social care and early years	Good: Grade 2
Building and construction	Good: Grade 2
Information and communication technology	Good: Grade 2
Craft, creative arts and design	Good: Grade 2
Foundation for language and life	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business and administration	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The college assessed the effectiveness of its provision as good and inspectors agree. Although many learners join the college with low levels of prior achievement and often low aspirations, they make good progress. Achievement and standards are good for learners of all ages on the majority of courses, although the college has correctly identified that the literacy and numeracy needs of learners and success rates in work-based learning, should be improved. Success rates for learners from different minority ethnic groups and for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are high.
6. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Lessons are generally well-planned and provide interesting and enjoyable activities that engage learners and help them to develop their knowledge and understanding. The college provides a good, extensive range of courses from pre-entry level to foundation degree which are well matched to the needs of individual learners and the development needs of the local economy. There are strong and effective links with employers.
7. Care, guidance and support arrangements are good. Tutorial arrangements are good and are supported by a wide range of specialist services. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality has improved and has helped ensure that learners complete their courses. However, the college recognises that its procedures for learners' target setting should be improved so that learners are provided with targets which are realistic, but sufficiently challenging.
8. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. Learners from diverse backgrounds, and often with low starting points, are integrated very successfully into the life of the college and make good progress.
9. Leadership and management are good and have had a significant impact on raising standards in the college. The college has a very clear mission and strategic direction which are understood by all staff. Its strong commitment to equality and diversity is reflected in its day-to-day management and valued by the diverse community of learners that it attracts. The college has benefited from significant improvements in accommodation and resources since the last inspection, but unsatisfactory accommodation in the areas which have yet to be redeveloped, remains.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college demonstrates good capacity to improve. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and rigorous. The self-assessment report for 2006/07 was accurate. The college's quality assurance arrangements are generally effective in monitoring and improving performance. Most of the areas for improvement, identified at the last inspection, have been successfully addressed. Success rates have improved and are above the national average.

The college has a robust lesson observation system and staff development programme that promote improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Financial management is strong. Good use is made of detailed and accurate management information to monitor the provision and plan for further improvements.

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

11. The college has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Success rates have increased for learners of all ages and at all levels. Attendance has improved and is now good overall. Strategies to increase the proportion of lessons that are good or better, and to enhance the impact of quality assurance at course level, have been successful. Clear improvements have been made in most curriculum areas, most notably in the previously inadequate provision of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). However, less progress has been made with improving key skills and work-based learning success rates, and in improving the quality of literacy and numeracy provision.

Key strengths

- the college's very clear mission and strategic direction
- high and improving success rates on the majority of courses
- highly effective teaching and learning which enable learners to make good progress
- outstanding social and educational inclusion
- strong commitment to equality and diversity
- good range of provision that is well matched to learners' needs
- good employer engagement and responsiveness to community priorities
- good personal support and guidance.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- standards of literacy and numeracy throughout the college
- success rates in work-based learning
- insufficiently challenging targets for learners
- the quality of accommodation and resources to support learning in a minority of areas.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

12. Achievement and standards are good. This agrees with the college's own assessment. The college's performance is particularly praiseworthy because many students enter the college with low prior qualifications, and often low aspirations. Since the last inspection retention has improved on most courses but pass rates have improved even more, so that success rates are now well above average for courses for all age groups and at nearly all levels. The one exception is level 3 courses for learners aged 16 to 18 where, although success rates have improved, some disappointing recent results on GCE AS and A2 courses have meant that they are satisfactory. Learners on level 3 courses generally achieve the results expected of them.
13. Learners from minority ethnic backgrounds make very good progress. The college's largest groups are of Indian and black Caribbean origin and both perform significantly better at the college than they do nationally. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make very good progress. Learners aged 14 to 16 develop good vocational skills and make significant gains in their personal skills. In 2006/07, some 83% 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 to higher education (HE) or employment, are high. Key skills success rates have improved to the national average and are now satisfactory, but vary significantly between different sector subject areas. In nearly all curriculum areas, learners produce work of a high standard in relation to their starting points and develop good practical skills, enabling them to prepare well for their future careers. The college correctly identified that its provision for the literacy and numeracy needs of its learners requires improvement.
14. Standards in work-based learning are satisfactory. However, the number of apprentices and advanced apprentices completing their framework successfully and within the agreed time is low. Success rates are high on the Train to Gain programme. Attendance has improved and is now good, although in a minority of curriculum areas it could be improved still further. Health and safety practices are effective. Learners receive good guidance on how to work safely.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

15. Inspectors agree with the college's own judgement that the quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are good. The college's comprehensive arrangements for lesson observation provide a detailed and accurate assessment of the standard of teaching and learning.
16. Teachers are well qualified and work hard to ensure that learners make the progress they are capable of. They plan their lessons carefully and provide

interesting activities that engage learners and help them to develop their knowledge and understanding. Teachers are particularly effective at helping learners to develop the occupational skills which they need to gain employment, or improve performance in their existing jobs. Feedback from learners demonstrates how much they value this approach. Learners respond well to the use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons. They also work well in groups and carry out practical work carefully. Teachers promote equality of opportunity well in their lessons. A minority of lessons are dull and uninspiring. In these lessons teachers do not take sufficient account of learners' needs and learners are not provided with an appropriate level of challenge. Sometimes teachers dominate lessons and learners do not have sufficient opportunities to develop and express their own ideas.

17. Assessment is fair and accurate. Managers review assessment procedures regularly to ensure their effectiveness and to enable good practice in different schools to be shared. The standard of most feedback to learners is good and provides useful guidance on how standards could be improved. Additional learning support is good. Arrangements to identify additional learning support needs are thorough and help is provided promptly. The take-up of additional learning support by those identified as needing help is very high. Long course success rates for those with additional learning support needs in 2006/07 were above the college average.
18. The college provides an extensive range of courses from pre-entry level to foundation degree which are well matched to the needs of individual learners and the development needs of the local economy. Courses include a well established vocational programme for school pupils aged 14 to 16, many of whom have experienced disaffection or failure at school. The college provides the opportunity for a fresh start for these young people.
19. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. Learners from diverse backgrounds are integrated very successfully into the life of the college. The college actively participates in a wide range of initiatives to promote learning for the most disadvantaged groups in the community and has successfully helped the long-term unemployed, young people with drug and alcohol dependency problems, ex-offenders and people with mental health difficulties. Learners participate in an appropriate range of enrichment activities. The tutorial programme covers drugs and alcohol awareness, sexual health and healthy lifestyles. Learners make a positive contribution to the community through voluntary work and fundraising activities.
20. The college enjoys very good partnership arrangements with employers and the community it serves. It has established links with some 615 employers in the public and private sector and some 700 learners are benefiting from these relationships through work placements and apprenticeship training. Employers value the flexibility of the college in meeting their training needs.
21. Care, guidance and support arrangements are good. Course information is clear and accessible and procedures to ensure that learners enrol on the right course are secure. Information and guidance available for school pupils is

comprehensive. Induction arrangements are good. Support for learners with physical disabilities or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very effective, and these learners make very good progress. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality is much improved and this has helped ensure that more learners complete their courses.

22. Tutorial arrangements are good and supported by a wide range of specialist services. The college makes good use of its team of mentors. Learners are referred to mentors following initial assessment or by tutors. They receive valuable help and guidance on time management, finance, coursework and study skills. Many also receive support for a range of personal and emotional problems which enables them to complete their programmes of study. Learners benefit from the college's counselling and careers guidance services. Crèche facilities are provided for those who require them.
23. Individual targets for learners aged 16 to 18 are not always sufficiently challenging. Teachers' expectations are sometimes too low and the most able learners are not stretched to reach their potential. Targets are not always clear, realistic or time-bound.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

24. Leadership and management are good, and this agrees with the self-assessment. Leaders set a clear strategic direction based on the college's mission and communicate it effectively throughout the college. Improvements are evident in many areas of the college's work, including attendance, success rates and feedback from learners. However, some aspects of the provision have improved more slowly. These include the quality of teaching and learning in a minority of curriculum areas, success rates in key skills and the progress made by learners on GCE AS and A2 courses relative to their prior attainment. Curriculum management is good and the management of work-based learning is satisfactory.
25. Quality assurance procedures are comprehensive and effective. The clear strategy to improve teaching and learning is supported by a robust lesson observation system. Accurate and detailed management information is used well by staff to inform decision making and to monitor and evaluate provision. Course reviews and self-assessment are increasingly rigorous and the college's self-assessment report provides an accurate reflection of its strengths and areas for improvement.
26. The college has a strong commitment to equality and diversity. Its responses to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA) are good. There is thorough monitoring of participation, success rates, learner feedback and many other aspects of the college's work by gender, ethnicity and disability. The college is

undertaking work to improve further the promotion of equality and diversity through teaching and learning, and to increase the representation of black and minority ethnic staff in management positions and on the governing body. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.

27. Staff development is good. The performance management system is aligned with team and college objectives, and the annual training plan is informed by strategic priorities, observations of teaching and learning, and self-assessment. Strategies for leadership development have been effective. The standard of accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory. Facilities are very good in some areas, such as the Metro One campus, but less than satisfactory in others, such as construction accommodation at the Wellington Road campus. Plans to improve this accommodation are well advanced.
28. The college works very well with a wide range of partners to meet the needs of learners in the local community. Effective links with schools, employers and community groups are used to inform strategic planning and widen participation in education and training. Governors provide a wealth of experience and expertise and are committed to the mission of the college. They are clear about the strengths and areas for improvement of the college and work well with the principal and senior leadership team to bring about improvements. Financial management is strong and the college provides good value for money.

Sector subject areas

Health, social care and early years

Good: Grade 2

Context

29. The college offers full- and part-time courses in health, social care and early years from entry level to level 4. There are currently 438 learners, mainly aged 16 to 18 following full-time courses and 1,510 part-time learners, mainly adults, on part-time courses. These include National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and other vocationally related qualifications and apprenticeship programmes. The college also provides the Foundation Award in Caring for Children course for learners aged 14 to 16. The college is a designated Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in health and social care in association with Walsall College.

Strengths

- high success rates on NVQ level 2 and 3 courses
- good teaching which promotes the development of high standards of care
- effective and flexible provision which meets employers' needs
- broad range of courses with good progression between levels
- highly effective leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- retention on a minority of courses
- insufficient identification of learners' skill levels in planning for their progress.

Achievement and standards

30. Achievement and standards are good overall but satisfactory on the majority of courses for full-time learners aged 16 to 18. Success rates have improved on most courses and are particularly high on NVQ courses at levels 2 and 3. However, a higher than average proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 does not complete courses and the retention rates on the first diploma and Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma at levels 2 and 3 are low. Achievement of the full apprenticeship framework is satisfactory. Learners aged 14 to 16 make good progress. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Standards of work in early years are good but are satisfactory in health and social care. Learners develop good work related skills and are able to link theory to workplace practice. Counselling learners acquire appropriate therapeutic skills. Progression to higher level courses and employment is good. Learners are highly motivated and enjoy their learning.

Quality of provision

31. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good in early years and satisfactory or better in health and social care. Teachers are well qualified and draw on their good professional experience to develop learners' knowledge

and understanding of effective practice in care and early years settings. However, some lessons in health and social care are not sufficiently challenging because they do not extend learners' understanding as much as they should. Teaching in the workplace is good. Assessment is rigorous and effective. Constructive feedback is given to learners to enable them to improve their work. Initial assessment accurately identifies the needs of learners with specific difficulties and/or disabilities. The college provides a broad range of courses in health, social care and early years. The provision is flexible and highly responsive to the needs of learners and care sector employers. Support and guidance are good. The tutorial programme makes good provision for personal development, but insufficient account is taken of the level of learners' skills when setting individual targets and planning their progress. Learners are well informed about equality and diversity and health and safety issues.

Leadership and management

32. Leadership and management are good. Staff feel well supported and teamwork is good. Initiatives to improve standards have been successful. Management of the CoVE provision is good. The college has taken a leading role in developing a number of projects which have made a substantial contribution to recruitment and training in the care sector in the region. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The self-assessment report is accurate. Accommodation and resources are good.

Building and construction

Good: Grade 2

Context

33. The college offers a range of full- and part-time courses in brickwork, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, plumbing and in construction and civil engineering at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. There are currently 330 learners enrolled on full-time courses and 400 on part-time courses. Most full-time learners are aged 16 to 18 and most part-time learners are adults. Some 121 learners are following work-based learning programmes.

Strengths

- high success rates
- good development of learners' practical skills
- good progression from level 1 to level 2 courses
- highly effective support, advice and guidance
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- low success rate on the foundation construction award in brickwork
- unimaginative theory teaching
- unsatisfactory accommodation and resources in some areas.

Achievement and standards

34. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on the majority of courses are high; for example, in 2006/07, the success rate on the intermediate construction award course was 94%. Success rates were also high on the certificate in plumbing course and in most trade areas on foundation construction award courses. However, the foundation brickwork success rate was low, with less than half the learners who started the course achieving the qualification. Success rates are generally above average on advanced level courses. Completion rates on work-based learning programmes continue to improve and are above national rates. The current standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners develop good practical skills.

Quality of provision

35. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teaching of practical skills is good. Learners on carpentry and joinery courses use specialist power tools and equipment confidently and competently and groundworkers cut and shape bricks and blocks skilfully. However, many theory lessons are dull and uninspiring because the teaching is unimaginative and fails to give learners sufficient opportunities to express their own views. Courses are well matched to the needs and interests of learners and provide clear progression routes between levels. Progression between courses at level 1 and level 2 is particularly strong. In 2006/07, approximately 70% of learners who

successfully completed their courses at level 1 progressed to level 2. Some learners also benefit from course-specific enrichment activities. However, there is insufficient work experience for full-time learners and links with employers are underdeveloped. Support for learners is good. Course entry requirements are clear and course-specific aptitude tests help ensure learners are placed on the appropriate course. Vocational tutors have an excellent rapport with learners. They provide good individual support, monitor progress carefully and provide additional help frequently to enable learners to practise tasks where they are experiencing some difficulty. Reviews for work-based learners are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

36. Leadership and management are good. Standards have improved since the last inspection and teamwork is good. Learners' performance is monitored effectively and the self-assessment report is accurate. The college is aware that the unsatisfactory standard of some of its accommodation is having an adverse effect on learning, but plans to move to new purpose-built accommodation are well advanced.

Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

Context

37. The college offers courses in ICT from level 1 to foundation degree. Courses range from the application and use of IT to IT practitioner courses and are taught in a wide range of venues. Some specialist courses are also offered; for example, in networking. Learner numbers in ICT are declining. There are currently 1,040 learners, of whom 208 are following full-time courses and 832 follow part-time courses. Most full-time learners are aged 16 to 18 and most part-time learners are adults.

Strengths

- high success rates
- good standards of learners' work
- comprehensive and highly effective lessons
- very good range of provision meeting the needs of learners and the local community
- good and well co-ordinated leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient differentiation in many lessons
- unsatisfactory target setting in vocational programmes.

Achievement and standards

38. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on most courses are high and have improved significantly during the last three years. However, on a small minority of courses success rates, whilst still satisfactory, have declined. The standard of learners' work is high. Many learners demonstrate attainment above the level required by the course. Learners have a good understanding of the subject and those new to IT improve their skills quickly and gain in confidence. The quality of presentation and of assessment work are good. The college makes good use of available wall space to present and celebrate learners' work.

Quality of provision

39. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best lessons are well planned and comprehensive, meeting the needs of learners whilst also encouraging them to develop their own learning. Learners receive excellent support in these lessons and consequently make good progress. In less successful lessons, teachers do not give sufficient attention to the learning needs of individual learners. Aspects of differentiation are included in lesson plans but are only related to lesson outcomes rather than the learning which is planned. In some cases these outcomes are measured by the volume rather than the complexity of work.

40. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but sometimes marking is not detailed enough to identify what learners need to do to improve, or to provide them with sufficient help in improving the accuracy of their writing. The college offers a very wide range of courses in ICT at all levels which are well matched to the needs of individual learners and community priorities. Initial advice and guidance are good. Most students have diagnostic tests in literacy, numeracy and ICT which identify their additional learning needs. The support they then receive is effective. The arrangements for monitoring learners' progress are satisfactory, but the college knows that it needs to develop its arrangements for target setting in vocational programmes still further. Many learners are unaware of what their targets are, or do not know the dates by which their targets should be achieved.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are good. ICT provision is shared between two schools at the college but is co-ordinated extremely effectively, with a shared focus on achievement and standards which has helped to secure significant improvement since the last inspection. Communication is good, and staff take a full and active role in planning for further improvement; for example, in the production of the self-assessment report which is clear, self-critical and accurate. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous and the sharing of good practice is thorough. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Craft, creative arts and design

Good: Grade 2

Context

42. The college offers courses for some 150 full-time and approximately 300 part-time learners at all levels. Courses include a foundation certificate in floristry, a national certificate in fashion, introductory and creative arts diplomas, a first diploma in art and design, national diploma in art and design and a range of GCSE and GCE AS and A2 courses in art and design and photography. The college also provides a diploma in foundation studies in art and design.

Strengths

- high success rates
- good standards of learners' work
- much good teaching and support for learners
- extensive range of courses and good progression
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on a minority of courses
- insufficient development of learners' key skills
- cramped three-dimensional workshops and studio for pattern cutting.

Achievement and standards

43. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high; For example success rates on the introductory diploma, the diploma in foundation studies, GCE AS and A2 courses and on floristry courses are all well above national averages. However, success rates on the first diploma and national diploma in art and design are below average. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners achieve high standards in ceramics, life drawing, photography, printmaking, tailoring, textiles, three-dimensional design and in floristry. Learners crafted an award winning stand for the BBC 'Gardeners' World' show. The development of learners' key skills is insufficient. Key skills success rates are low. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

44. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use a good range of assignments and projects which contain challenging aims, objectives and learning outcomes. Vocationally related assignments help learners to understand what is required by employers. In the best lessons, learners are highly motivated, focused and enthusiastic, and enjoy their studies. Learners make positive contributions in lessons and their progress is good. A lack of punctuality was evident in a few lessons but was not allowed to disturb learning. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are thorough and fair. Learners speak positively about the helpful feedback and support they

receive from their teachers. The range of programmes and activities is a notable strength with courses provided at all levels and at various sites within the community. Progression within the college and into HE is good. Guidance and support for learners are good with well planned and supportive tutorials. The varied enrichment activities broaden the learners' experiences.

Leadership and management

45. Leadership and management are good. Key strengths highlighted in the last inspection have been maintained and most areas for improvement have been addressed. Managers provide a clear direction for the curriculum area and effective lines of communication. Self-assessment is thorough and accurate. Teachers are well qualified and have up-to-date professional experience. Accommodation, specialist resources and ICT have improved since the last inspection, although three-dimensional workshops and the studio for pattern cutting are cramped. Links with employers and the community are developing and a recent collaboration with the city council resulted in design work to support a project to help safeguard children.
46. Commitment to equality of opportunity is evident in the diversity of learners and in projects that encourage awareness of cultural differences and gender issues.

Foundation for language and life

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

47. The college provides courses in literacy and numeracy from entry to level 2 and in ESOL from pre-entry to level 2. Provision includes intensive courses, part-time courses in the day and evening, provision for learners on vocational courses and community and workplace provision. Currently, there are 1,167 learners, 61% of whom are following programmes in literacy and numeracy. At present, 78% of learners are adults, 59% are women and 62% are from minority ethnic groups.

Strengths

- high and improving success rates in literacy and numeracy
- good development of skills for ESOL learners
- good teaching and learning of ESOL
- highly effective individual support, advice and guidance
- effective management actions to improve the quality of ESOL provision.

Areas for improvement

- low attendance and poor punctuality on many part-time literacy programmes
- much dull and uninspiring teaching and learning in literacy
- poor accommodation in ESOL community and workplace learning venues
- insufficient impact of management actions to improve teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy.

Achievement and standards

48. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are improving and are high on literacy and numeracy at entry level and level 2 and on most ESOL programmes. Success rates on literacy and numeracy at level 1 are satisfactory. Retention on the majority of ESOL programmes has improved but remains low on a significant minority of programmes. ESOL learners develop good language, study and work skills. They attend well, are punctual and are well focused on their goals. In ESOL, a culture exists where tutors and learners view lateness as unacceptable. The development of learners' skills in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory but attendance is low on part-time courses in literacy. Teachers do not always challenge learners who arrive late for lessons.

Quality of provision

49. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning in ESOL are good. Learners participate well in a good variety of stimulating and interactive activities which keep them fully engaged in enjoying and developing their communication and team working skills. Language learning is well presented in everyday contexts and includes a good amount of topics in citizenship and employment. The individual needs of learners are well identified and directly

inform the planning and review of courses. ESOL teachers use ILT well to stimulate learning. Much teaching in literacy is dull and uninspiring. The variety of teaching and learning activities is insufficient and not always related to learners' own work, lives and interests. Planning to meet individual learners' needs in mixed level classes is insufficient, with few extension activities for faster learners and insufficient challenge for more able learners. The range of provision in literacy, numeracy and ESOL is satisfactory, with intensive and part-time provision and classes at two main college sites, in the community and in the workplace. Productive links are developing with the local football club and employers.

50. Individual support, advice and guidance for learners are highly effective. Induction is comprehensive. Learners are clear about what they need to achieve to make progress. The use of additional learning support in literacy and numeracy classes is good. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to the progress of individual learners.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have taken effective steps to improve the quality of ESOL provision. Success rates and the quality of teaching and learning have improved significantly since the last inspection. Management actions to improve teaching and learning, attendance and punctuality in literacy and numeracy have yet to have any significant impact. The monitoring of the quality of community provision is insufficient. Good practice in ESOL is not shared sufficiently with literacy and numeracy. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and accurate. Accommodation is generally satisfactory but on ESOL community and workplace programmes it is poor because of cramped and noisy rooms.

Business and administration

Good: Grade 2

Context

52. The college offers a wide range of full- and part-time courses in business and administration, accounting, law, management and secretarial provision from level 1 to foundation degree. Courses include GCE AS and A level as well as specialist legal and medical secretarial courses. There are currently 201 learners aged 16 to 18 and 141 adults on full-time courses. There are 758 learners, mostly adults, following part-time courses, many of whom study in the workplace. There are 47 work-based learners.

Strengths

- very high success rates
- good standards of learners' work
- wide range of programmes enabling clear progression routes and meeting employers' needs
- good teaching that encourages learners' independence
- effective course management.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates for modern apprentices
- insufficient focus on the language, literacy and numeracy needs of learners in target setting and planning.

Achievement and standards

53. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high on most courses. The success rates on 'Train to Gain' courses are high. Learners make satisfactory progress on business related GCE AS and A level courses. Framework completion rates for modern apprentices are low. Key skills achievement is satisfactory but too few learners develop skills at level 3. The standard of learners' work demonstrated in lessons and assessments is good. Most learners take responsibility for their own learning and have developed good research skills. Learners also display good practical skills and improving self-confidence. Despite strong monitoring, attendance remains unsatisfactory on some courses.

Quality of provision

54. The quality of provision is good. Much teaching and learning are good. Very positive working relations between learners and teachers help to build confidence and independence. Most lessons are well planned and actively engage learners in stimulating practical activities. Group work is managed well. However, in a minority of lessons insufficient account is taken of learners' language, literacy and numeracy skills so that their needs for challenge or support are not fully met.

55. Teachers make good use of ILT. Assessment is robust. Most marking effectively guides learners towards improvement. The wide range of programmes provides clear progression and meets employers' needs. Progression into employment and HE is good, with many examples of learners succeeding from very low starting points. Enrichment opportunities are built into all main programmes and these broaden learners' experiences.
56. Support for learners is good. Tutorials are purposeful and learners' progress is monitored effectively. Learners speak highly of the support they receive from tutors. The language, literacy and numeracy needs of all full-time learners are assessed on entry but learners are rarely set targets to develop these skills. Too frequently targets are based on task completion rather than the development of knowledge or skills which challenge learners.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are good. Roles are clearly defined and communication and teamwork are good. Challenging performance targets are set and generally met. Success rates have improved. Partnership working with local schools is good and plans to develop specialist diplomas in business are well advanced. The curriculum area receives strong support from local employers and employment agencies, which increases learners' employability. Self-assessment is comprehensive but subsequent action plans lack detail.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	04/05	1593	64	62	2	4199	56	61	-5
	05/06	1438	65	68	-3	3417	64	67	-3
	06/07	1670	73	*	*	2442	72	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	40	58	64	-6	6	67	64	3
	05/06	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
	06/07	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
NVQs	04/05	101	64	66	-2	102	76	71	5
	05/06	116	82	70	12	43	79	72	7
	06/07	182	81	*	*	183	81	*	*
Other	04/05	1452	64	61	3	4091	55	61	-6
	05/06	1322	63	67	-4	3374	64	67	-3
	06/07	1488	72	*	*	2259	71	*	*

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	04/05	1630	57	61	-4	4353	67	60	7
	05/06	1587	66	65	1	2468	67	66	1
	06/07	1763	73	*	*	2879	74	*	*
GCSEs	04/05	456	62	66	-4	253	66	64	2
	05/06	365	67	69	-2	241	70	67	3
	06/07	452	75	*	*	252	75	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	70	67	67	0	33	58	65	-7
	05/06	18	61	66	-5	31	68	65	3
	06/07	40	63	*	*	27	52	*	*
NVQs	04/05	173	60	56	4	680	59	62	-3
	05/06	196	68	64	4	586	70	69	1
	06/07	164	77	*	*	582	70	*	*
Other	04/05	931	53	59	-6	3387	73	58	15
	05/06	1008	65	63	2	1614	66	65	1
	06/07	1115	72	*	*	2020	74	*	*

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, 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	04/05	1392	61	66	-5	1851	52	57	-5
	05/06	1461	66	68	-2	1602	66	62	4
	06/07	1589	69	*	*	1573	71	*	*
A/A2 Levels	04/05	195	83	85	-2	61	82	74	8
	05/06	224	90	86	4	88	80	74	6
	06/07	250	86	*	*	74	73	*	*
AS Levels	04/05	510	58	64	-6	139	55	53	2
	05/06	548	59	64	-5	160	51	57	-6
	06/07	592	61	*	*	128	54	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	331	67	60	7	33	61	52	9
	05/06	146	78	68	10	14	71	54	17
	06/07	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
NVQs	04/05	27	52	54	-2	323	60	55	5
	05/06	34	71	66	5	327	76	65	11
	06/07	42	76	*	*	404	79	*	*
Other	04/05	329	49	57	-8	1295	49	57	-8
	05/06	509	59	62	-3	1013	64	62	2
	06/07	706	69	*	*	967	69	*	*

* The 2006/07 national rates were not released at the time of this inspection

** Qualifications not offered

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2005 to 2007.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No. of learners *	College NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate **	College Framework rate **	National framework rate **
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	22	45	48	21	34
		timely	15	40	31	13	22
	05/06	overall	92	52	53	33	44
		timely	96	43	34	20	28
	06/07	overall	52	52	64	35	56
		timely	54	30	41	21	35
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	223	45	51	31	39
		timely	213	30	29	18	22
	05/06	overall	280	52	58	40	52
		timely	321	33	38	21	34
	06/07	overall	254	59	65	51	60
		timely	224	37	45	29	42

* 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'

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