

Burton 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.

Description of the provider

1. Burton College is a medium-sized general further education (GFE) college located in Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire and includes East Staffordshire and South Derbyshire in its catchment area. The college has premises at Shobnall Sports Centre, learning shops in Burton town centre and Uttoxeter, and a specialist information and communication technology (ICT) centre in Burton. In addition, the college makes extensive use of specialist performing arts facilities at a nearby community venue. The college has two Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in construction and in advanced manufacturing.
2. The college's catchment area is a mix of urban and rural areas. Three wards local to the college are classed as areas of deprivation. Unemployment in East Staffordshire mirrors national and regional rates; however, unemployment levels in South Derbyshire are below these. In 2006, the proportion of learners in Staffordshire achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE was just below the national average. Just over three-quarters of Year 11 school leavers in the locality continued in full-time education, which is above the national rate.
3. Burton College delivers programmes of learning in all sector subject areas. Provision ranges from pre-16 to higher education (HE), including adult and community education (ACL), work-based learning, employer-specific training and Learndirect provision.
4. During 2006/2007, the college enrolled 3,544 full-time equivalent LSC funded learners with 2,348 full-time and 4,329 part-time learners. Just over half of all learners were aged 16 to 18 years; 320 trainees started work-based learning programmes; and 400 learners participated in the increased flexibility programme at Key Stage 4. ACL provision included 2,130 learners and Learndirect had 320 learners. In 2006/2007, 16% of learners were from minority ethnic groupings, compared with East Staffordshire's population of 6.1%. Female learners outnumber males and around a quarter of learners are working towards Skills for Life targets.
5. The college's mission states "Burton College will continue to provide a diverse and flexible range of high quality education and training programmes to meet the needs of individuals, companies and the wider community".

Summary of grades awarded

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

6. The college provides a good quality of education and training. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall and good for learners aged 16 to 18 years. The success rate on long courses improved significantly between 2005/06 and 2006/07 and is broadly in line with the national average and above average for learners aged 16 to 18. Pass rates on long courses are high. Retention is satisfactory for learners aged 16 to 18 but low for adults, especially on level 2 courses. Learners on GCE AS and A level programmes make the progress expected of them based on their prior attainment. Success rates on key skills qualifications are satisfactory. The framework completion success rate for advanced apprentices is high and for apprentices is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory.
7. Teaching and learning are good. The internal lesson observation scheme is robust and detailed feedback to staff links to the appraisal and staff development schemes. Many teachers plan for differentiation effectively and use information and learning technology (ILT) effectively. Much teaching is stimulating, utilising a good variety of activities, with clear objectives. A minority of sessions are too teacher led with opportunities for group discussion and independent learning not fully utilised. Inspectors saw little evidence of the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons and lesson plans. The quality of feedback on marked work varies and some is unhelpful in bringing about improvement.
8. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The college has an outstanding range of provision which is highly responsive to learners' needs. Courses are offered at a range of locations to meet learner demand and needs. There is very effective collaboration with employers to raise aspirations and support local economic development. Partnership arrangements with schools, higher education and the community are outstanding.
9. Guidance and support for learners are good, as is the provision of additional learning support. Early assessment identifies need and support is offered promptly. There are well established links with external agencies to ensure support is comprehensive. Tutorials provide effective academic and personal support. The setting of detailed, timely targets is too variable; some are too broad to be useful to learners. Learners feel safe in college.
10. Leadership and management are good. Strategic direction is clear with a focus on raising standards and achievement. Quality improvement arrangements are comprehensive and secured significant improvement in long success rates from 2005/06 to 2006/07. Improvements to the college estate are substantial. Governance is very good. Governors monitor the college's academic performance thoroughly. Equality of opportunity is good. Managers target recruitment of underrepresented groups, thoroughly analyse their performance

and take action to address underachievement. However, promotion of equality and diversity through displays or notices is limited in college communal areas.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

11. The college's capacity to improve is good. Its track record is good as shown by the significant increase in the overall long course success rate between 2005/06 and 2006/07. The high quality of provision has been maintained and the college's responsiveness to the needs of learners and employers is outstanding. Comprehensive quality improvement arrangements and substantial staff development have proved effective in raising standards. However, managers have been less effective at improving success rates at level 2 for adults and resolving variability in the success rates for work-based learners.
12. The self-assessment process is rigorous and comprehensive. The process makes full and effective use of data. The self-assessment report is informative and provides a broadly accurate assessment of strengths and areas for improvement. The self-assessment report is supported by comprehensive and high quality development plans.

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

13. The college has made good progress since the last inspection. It has maintained and further developed strengths and successfully remedied most weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Hospitality provision has improved substantially with very high success rates and good teaching and learning. Success rates for construction crafts and work-based learning have improved substantially to a satisfactory level. Retention at level 2 has improved for learners aged 16 to 18 years but, for adults, the retention rate has continued to decline since the last inspection.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on long courses
- significant improvement in long course success rates
- good teaching and learning
- comprehensive curriculum provision
- highly effective partnership work leading to outstanding educational and social inclusion
- very effective collaboration with employers
- thorough identification of, and provision for, additional learning needs
- strong leadership and clear strategic direction
- comprehensive quality assurance arrangements.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low retention rates
- satisfactory levels of attendance
- inconsistency in the quality of marking and individual learning plans (ILPs)
- achievement of key skills
- insufficient promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 16 to 18

Good: grade 2

14. Achievement and standards are satisfactory in contrast to the college's judgement of good. The success rate on long courses improved significantly between 2005/06 and 2006/07 and is now broadly average overall and above average for learners aged 16 to 18 years. Pass rates are high on most courses. The retention of adult learners is low and is satisfactory for learners aged 16 to 18 years. On level 1 courses, the success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 years is consistently high; for adults it has improved substantially and is now high mainly because of improvements in retention. Success rates of learners aged 16 to 18 years on NVQ level 2 programmes rose in the past year, but the adult rate of success on these programmes has fallen substantially and is now low. This is largely due to poor retention on ICT courses delivered in community venues. On GCE AS and A level courses, learners aged 16 to 18 years reach satisfactory standards. They make satisfactory progress relative to their prior attainment, although there are wide variations between subjects. On national diploma courses, success rates have risen and are now high. Success rates on very short Skills for Life courses have declined and are low.
15. Success rates for key skills qualifications vary over time. Rates fell in 2005/06 but recovered in 2006/07 to a satisfactory level. The framework completion success rate for advanced apprentices is high and for apprentices is satisfactory. In business and engineering, rates have improved consistently over the last three years, but there is too much variability in rates in other sector subject areas. The success rate of learners aged 14 to 16 years has varied over the past three years and is now satisfactory.
16. Progression rates have improved over the last four years as a result of a fuller curriculum offer. Progression of learners aged 14 to 16 years to full-time courses is good. Progression from entry to employment (E2E) programmes into employment or education and training is above local averages but low. The proportion of learners progressing to HE courses is rising and around two thirds of those starting HE programmes at the college this year are the first in their family to progress to this level.
17. Learners receiving additional learning support achieve significantly better than other learners. Male learners aged 16 to 18 years achieve as well as females; however, the success rate of adult male learners is low. Learners from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve at a similar level as white British learners. The achievement of Pakistani learners aged 16 to 18 years improved substantially in 2006/07.

18. Learners' enjoyment of college is good. They feel safe in college. The standards of learners' work is good and they pay due regard to health and safety. Attendance is satisfactory overall and improving but with wide variations between curriculum areas.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

19. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good, which agrees with the college's self-assessment.
20. The college has a robust and effective lesson observation system, which contributes well to improvement in teaching and learning. The college's judgements on teaching and learning are accurate. Graded observations incorporating detailed feedback are well linked to staff development plans and appraisal. The college does not yet analyse observation data by level of course and age group of learners but plans to do so. The college has invested considerably in staff development to improve teaching and learning. It has focused on improving the use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning and the use of teaching strategies to meet the needs, range of abilities and learning styles of individual learners. Advanced practitioners and subject learning coaches support teachers and disseminate good practice well.
21. Teachers take good account of differing learning needs in detailed lesson plans and in classroom activities. Much teaching is stimulating, utilising a good variety of activities, with clear objectives. In these lessons, learners are fully engaged, attentive and productive. In some lessons, strong exposition from teachers enhances learning. However, a minority of classes are too teacher-led, with opportunities for group discussion and independent learning not fully utilised. Inspectors saw little evidence of the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons and lesson plans.
22. Teachers generally use interactive whiteboards and other multi-media resources well to enhance learning. A few subject areas make good use of the college's virtual learning environment to post learning resources and links to extra materials, but other subject areas have very limited resources available by this means.
23. Assessment arrangements are effective. The college has clear assessment guidelines and internal verification procedures. The quality of marked work varies. Some scripts have constructive comments showing learners how to improve their grade. However, a number of scripts have few comments and fail to correct poor grammar and spelling. The college's arrangements for the assessment of key skills are satisfactory.
24. The college has an outstanding range of provision which is highly responsive to learners' needs. The level and variety of courses is wide and particularly relevant. The college works very effectively with employers who praise the college highly for the flexibility of training. Detailed information and intelligence is used to target courses and new training initiatives very effectively. At the time of inspection, 3,413 employees from 763 companies receive training

through the college. Excellent relationships and very effective collaboration exist between local secondary schools and the college through the increased flexibility programme for pupils aged 14 to 16.

25. The promotion of educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Effective partnerships with employers and community groups raise aspirations and support local economic development needs extremely well. Adult learners who would not normally attend college access learning at community venues. There is very good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
26. A good range of enrichment activities are delivered alongside full-time programmes including opportunities to make a positive contribution through charity work. The provision of work experience is underdeveloped and the college is taking steps to increase work-related opportunities for more full-time learners. Good practice exists on courses in early years and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
27. Guidance and support for learners are good. High quality promotional materials and helpful information, advice and guidance support learners well in making appropriate choices and settling onto their programme. Additional learning support is good. Learners' additional learning needs are diagnosed early and support is provided swiftly. The college provides discrete and effective support for learners with specific disabilities and/or difficulties within the classroom. Learners value the support they receive. Nearly all those identified as needing support take it up but some work-based trainees do not. A support fund enables learners to access childcare provided at the college and at a range of community learning venues. Well established links with external agencies help to ensure learners receive relevant specialist help. Learners living independently are supported well through regular contact with student services staff. Learners receive useful sexual health advice through the college's 'clinic in a box' sexual health service.
28. The tutorial programme is well planned and covers many aspects of the Every Child Matters agenda. Tutors provide effective academic and personal support, though the setting of detailed, timely targets is too variable and some targets are too broad to be useful to learners. The introduction of tutorial co-ordinators in each curriculum area has led to earlier identification of learners at risk of not succeeding, but it is too early to comment on their effectiveness. Learners' attendance is monitored closely, but the effectiveness of this in improving attendance varies between departments.
29. Learners value the support they receive from teachers and other specialist staff highly. Opportunities to use college resources at break times and attend catch-up workshops are well supported and help learners achieve.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

30. Leadership and management are good. The principal, supported by senior managers, provides strong leadership. Communications are good. The college has re-structured its management arrangements to provide a more effective focus on raising standards and success rates. A comprehensive set of ambitious targets are mostly met. Improvements to the college estate are substantial. Nearly all the key issues identified at the last inspection have been improved. The principal and senior managers set a clear and responsive strategic direction which is well supported by staff. As the self-assessment report recognises, managers have been less effective at reversing the downward trend of retention rates for adults at level 2 and the variability in success rates for work-based learning.
31. Governance is very good. Governors' knowledge and understanding of the needs of the local community are particularly strong and contributes substantially to the setting of the college's strategic direction. Governors monitor the college's academic performance thoroughly. They bring a good range of relevant skills and experience to support the college's work.
32. Comprehensive quality improvement arrangements maintain and secure rising standards. Success rates rose substantially between 2005/06 and 2006/07. Managers thoroughly and regularly review the performance of subject areas and cross-college functions. They take effective action to resolve most issues and maintain strengths. Course reviews and self-assessment are thorough and accurate. Managers implement quality development plans effectively and monitor these closely. The college has established procedures for staff appraisal and a substantial staff development programme. The views of learners and employers are collected through a thorough programme of surveys and meetings. An observation system regularly and accurately assesses the quality of teaching and learning. Staff and managers make good use of accurate data to check learners' performance.
33. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The college successfully targets recruitment at groups underrepresented in education. Senior managers thoroughly analyse the performance of different groups and have improved the success rates of male learners aged 16 to 18 years and learners from minority ethnic groups. The college complies with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA). Procedures for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults are appropriate, including holding a central register. Staff and governors receive regular training on race relations, equality of opportunity and child protection. However, there is little evidence in lessons and in college communal areas of promotion of equality and diversity.

34. Financial management is outstanding. Very effective financial arrangements assign funding to subject and cross-college areas which provide learners with good or outstanding resources and accommodation. The college provides good value for money.

Learners' achievement

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	626	67	65	2	2153	61	62	-1
	05/06	621	77	69	8	2735	61	65	-4
	06/07	902	80	*	*	1580	78	*	*
GNVQ's	04/05	18	61	68	-7	2	100	64	36
	05/06	0				0			
	06/07	0				0			
NVQ's	04/05	75	75	68	7	20	70	66	4
	05/06	74	80	72	8	17	82	74	8
	06/07	101	71	*		19	68	*	
Other	04/05	533	66	64	2	2131	61	62	-1
	05/06	547	76	69	7	2718	60	65	-5
	06/07	801	81	*		1561	78	*	

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	1023	65	61	4	1237	61	60	1
	05/06	1024	66	66	0	868	62	66	-4
	06/07	1226	70	*		1021	58	*	
GCSE's	04/05	428	63	64	-1	75	81	63	18
	05/06	486	66	68	-2	106	72	67	5
	06/07	520	67	*		81	69	*	
GNVQ's	04/05	2	100	67	33	1	100	74	26
	05/06	10	30	69	-39	0			
	06/07	27	74	*		6	50	*	
NVQ's	04/05	103	46	57	-11	312	54	61	-7
	05/06	131	48	65	-17	214	60	68	-8
	06/07	239	73	*		501	45	*	
Other	04/05	490	70	61	9	849	62	60	2
	05/06	397	72	66	6	548	61	65	-4
	06/07	440	72	*		433	72	*	

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	1490	66	68	-2	832	61	58	3
	05/06	1493	71	70	1	892	61	63	-2
	06/07	1494	75	*		869	69	*	
A/A2 levels	04/05	234	80	86	-6	59	78	69	9
	05/06	307	88	87	1	38	74	72	2
	06/07	290	89	*		38	68	*	
AS Levels	04/05	623	68	66	2	72	69	52	17
	05/06	608	65	67	-2	63	62	55	7
	06/07	486	66	*		79	43	*	
GNVQ's	04/05	69	65	60	5	36	72	54	18
	05/06	52	65	66	-1	23	65	57	8
	06/07	29	76	*		21	90	*	
NVQ's	04/05	34	59	63	-4	175	66	56	10
	05/06	37	76	71	5	214	56	63	-7
	06/07	19	68	*		142	70	*	
Other	04/05	530	56	60	-4	490	56	59	-3
	05/06	489	68	65	3	554	62	64	-2
	06/07	670	76	*		589	71	*	

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

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	43	60%	48%	44%	34%
		timely	47	43%	31%	34%	22%
	05/06	overall	49	67%	53%	51%	44%
		timely	67	33%	34%	21%	28%
	06/07	overall	72	68%	64%	64%	56%
		timely	80	34%	41%	29%	35%
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	161	51%	51%	43%	39%
		timely	192	16%	29%	14%	22%
	05/06	overall	128	74%	58%	70%	52%
		timely	91	36%	38%	33%	34%
	06/07	overall	208	63%	65%	60%	60%
		timely	191	43%	45%	39%	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'

Data Source: QSR Table LSC provider Gateway WBL Success Rates report Period 12

Table 5

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college 2005 to 2007

Year	Number of starts in year	Achieved Objectives *	Progression **	Still in learning
04/05	83		58%	
05/06	58		43%	
06/07	79		51%	

* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period

Data Source: QSR Table LSC provider Gateway WBL Success Rates report Period 12

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