

Preston 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 and social care, science and mathematics, engineering and manufacturing technologies, hairdressing and beauty therapy, visual and performing arts, languages, literature and culture, preparation for life and work, and business administration and law.

Description of the provider

1. Preston College is a large general further education (GFE) college serving the city of Preston and the surrounding area of central Lancashire. The college serves a population of approximately 250,000. Learners are drawn from the local area, nationally and overseas. The college's mission is 'to inspire learners to develop skills, knowledge and understanding that will contribute to a successful economy and society'.
2. The college provides courses in all areas of learning, except land-based qualifications that are funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In most of the sector subject areas, it is possible to progress from entry level to level 4. The college is a partner college of the University of Central Lancashire. The college has a main site (Fulwood Campus) in the north of the city, a nearby site for visual and performing arts provision, and over 60 learning centres throughout the locality.
3. According to college figures, in 2006/07, 19,847 learners attended the college. Of this total, 21% of learners were on full-time programmes; 78% of learners were adult learners, 47% were men, 53% women and 18% were of minority ethnic origin; some provision is offered in faith schools. Some 80% of learner enrolments were on part-time courses. The average number of work-based learners in training was 244 and the average on Train to Gain programmes was 1,500. The college employed an average of approximately 1,150 staff throughout the year.
4. In the Preston borough, minority ethnic groups make up 15.1% of the population of 132,000. In 2007, the proportion of school leavers with five or more grades at C or above for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was 54.1% against 59.2% nationally. The college gained Charter Mark recognition in 2002 and was first awarded Investor in People status in 1995. The college retained the Basic Skills Quality Mark when it was re-assessed in May 2002. The college was the first college in the area to be re-accredited with the Careers Quality Kite mark. The recruitment and marketing team recently received the Matrix award for information, advice and guidance.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Health and social care	Good: Grade 2
Science and mathematics	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Inadequate: Grade 4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Visual and performing arts	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Languages, literature and culture	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2
Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. Effectiveness of provision is satisfactory. Success rates have increased since the last inspection but remain at or around the national average. Work-based learning success rates are low and those for Train to Gain are high against the national average for national vocational qualifications (NVQ) success. Success rates at level 3 have remained consistently below the national average. Pass rates are generally high and retention rates low, particularly at level 3. Learners produce work of a high standard in some sector subject areas.
6. The quality of provision has improved and is now good. Teaching and learning are good and improving. The college arrangements for observing the quality of teaching and learning are effective in helping to improve standards. Additional learning support is good.
7. The college's response to social inclusion is good. The curriculum provision, together with the enrichment activities and guidance and support, promote a socially inclusive learning and working environment where anti-discriminatory practice is promoted, and diversity is celebrated. The curriculum matches the needs of the community well and opportunities for personal development are wide ranging. College wide enrichment activities are varied and valued by the learners. Links with local schools are extensive and provide a good range of choices for 14-16 year olds. Progression between levels and curriculum areas is good, and the proportion of learners that progress to higher education is good.
8. Guidance and support for learners are good. Most learners benefit from a good and wide range of information, advice, guidance and welfare services. Academic and personal support for learners is particularly effective. Arrangements to provide additional support for learners with diverse and complex needs are good, as is the take up of that additional support. The tutorial programme is good, and supports different age groups working at different levels well.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategic management is strong but the quality of curriculum management varies. The new principal and governors have set a clear strategic direction for the college. A very new management structure has established clear roles, responsibilities and accountability for managers at all levels. Quality assurance arrangements have led to improvements for many learners but they are not applied consistently across the college. Governors closely monitor the college's financial position but they do not receive sufficient regular data to help them monitor student achievements. Financial management is good and value for money is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college's capacity to improve is good. Since the last inspection overall success rates have improved from a low rate and are now broadly in line with national averages. In 2006/07, success rates on some level 1 and level 2 courses increased significantly; however, level 3 courses did not improve as well and remain below the national average. The college now has a clear strategic direction with a good focus on raising standards. A new management structure has improved communications and the clarity of responsibilities and accountability. Procedures for the observation of teaching and learning and effective staff development have led to improvements. The college is clear about its key strengths and has a sound understanding of what needs to be improved but inspectors found some strengths in the self-assessment report to be over-stated.

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 since the last inspection. Management information is now accurate, reliable and easily accessible to all staff. Pass rates have improved considerably in many areas of the college and whilst retention has improved, it was below the national average on most levels. Key skills delivery and achievement have improved and learners' success rates are above the national average.
12. The college's financial position has improved to category B and the college now provides satisfactory value for money. Quality assurance arrangements have improved and are satisfactory. Learners' individual performance is monitored more closely but there is insufficient attention in monitoring key areas for improvement, for example retention, by senior managers and governors.

Key strengths

- high pass rates in many areas
- good provision in health and social care, business administration and law and preparation for life and work
- good and improving teaching and learning
- extensive range of external links
- good support for learners
- good staff development
- good social inclusion and promotion of equality and diversity
- clear strategic direction
- good financial management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low retention on many courses
- low success rates on level 3 courses
- inadequate provision in engineering
- satisfactory curriculum management
- the accuracy and monitoring of target setting and consistent use of data
- governors' systematic monitoring of academic achievement.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

WBL

Inadequate: Grade 4

Train to Gain

Good: Grade 2

13. Inspectors agreed with the college judgement that achievement and standards are satisfactory. The success rate for 16-18 year olds at college aggregate level on long courses, has improved since the last inspection but has remained just below the national average throughout this period. College data show a modest improvement in 2006/07. The rate for adult learners shows a similar trend and has remained consistently just below the national average.
14. The success rate on long courses for 16-18 year olds at level 1 was marginally below the national rate in 2005/06, having improved from 11% below in 2003/04. There was a modest improvement in 2006/07. At level 2 the success rate for this group of learners has also improved since the last inspection but at a slower pace than the improving national average and remained below the national rate in 2005/06. College data show a significant improvement of 9% in 2006/07. At level 3 there have been modest improvements in the success rate since the last inspection but a decline in 2006/07. The rate has been consistently below the national average.
15. The success rate on long courses for adults at level 1 was consistently below the national average up to 2005/06, when the rate was 13% below. College data show a significant improvement of 16% in 2006/07. The success rate on NVQ courses at this level for these learners is low and declined in 2006/07. The success rate at level 2 has improved steadily since the last inspection and has remained consistently above the national rate. The success rate on level 3 long courses has remained consistently below the national average.
16. Analysis of syllabus level value added data indicates fluctuating scores year on year. The overall trend is an improvement from significant negative residuals in 2003/04 and 2004/05 to normal values in 2005/06 and 2006/07 indicating that learners now make progress as expected from their attainment on entry. A pilot study on contextual value added indicates that a number of other learners achieve better than expected from their entry profile.
17. Pass rates at most levels for both age groups are generally good. Retention rates are low in many areas. At college aggregate level for 16-18 year olds and for adults, retention rates in 2005/06 were below the national average and in the bottom quartile of similar colleges.
18. Success rates on Train to Gain, the employer training pilot (ETP) and on site assessment and training (OSAT) are high but overall success rates on apprenticeship programmes are particularly low.

19. Many learners work hard and enjoy their studies. Learners in several occupational areas produce work of a high standard and develop good technical and personal skills.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

WBL

Satisfactory: Grade 3

20. Teaching and learning are good. The college self assesses its teaching and learning to be good overall and inspectors used a range of evidence to confirm this. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors. A revised approach to the delivery of key skills is showing significant improvement in success rates in the curriculum areas piloting it. Although success rates are satisfactory overall, inspectors judge that good teaching and learning makes a significant contribution to good pass rates in many areas of the college.
21. Inspectors' findings broadly agreed with the results from the college's lesson observation system, although inspectors judged some sampled observations to be over graded. Of the 412 observations during 2006/07 the proportion of lessons judged to be good or better increased. However, the small proportion of observations graded unsatisfactory remained unchanged. Teachers of lessons judged to be less than good are given appropriate support and development and receive follow up observations within an appropriate timescale. Some development targets arising from lessons judged to be satisfactory are insufficiently specific or rigorous. Links between lesson observation and staff appraisal are good.
22. The provision of staff development to support improvements in teaching and learning is good. Take up is good on a wide range of staff development activities focusing on common areas for improvement identified through lesson observation. The college has identified further improvement in the quality of lesson planning and use of measurable lesson objectives as continued areas for development during 2007/08.
23. Attendance and punctuality are mostly satisfactory or better but the college recognises poor punctuality and attendance in some lessons as an area for further improvement. Early indications are that new initiatives to promote these improvements are working.
24. The college's procedures for assessing and monitoring learners' progress are good. Assessment and the use of assessment feedback to promote improvement is satisfactory or better. Internal verification is satisfactory and a cross-college forum is mostly effective in ensuring consistency and promoting the sharing of good practice.

25. The college offers a good range of provision to meet the needs of most learners, employers and other community partners. Good opportunities exist for learners to broaden their learning, development and social experience through well promoted enrichment activities. An enrichment diploma certificate has been introduced as an incentive for learners. Activities are mainly for 16-18 year olds but all learners are encouraged to participate.
26. The school's liaison team contributes effectively in the community and is working closely with 90 schools. Schools are offered additional activities such as revision days and taster classes, and apprenticeships are well promoted. The college is now providing more choice for 14-16 year olds about which curriculum areas they participate in, and is providing them with an opportunity to work with pupils from other schools.
27. Links with employers are good in most curriculum areas. The employer engagement team is well established and works effectively with staff in the curriculum areas. Good promotional material has been prepared to inform a range of stakeholders about college initiatives, and the benefits of engagement. Links and communication with connexions and community partners are effective. Learners are well represented and have a voice across the college.
28. Guidance and support are good. The tutorial programme is good, well differentiated in terms of level and age, and themed to key academic events in the year. Additional learning support is good. The initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy is satisfactory and has recently been strengthened through the introduction of a computerised system. Take up of support offered following initial assessment is high as is the retention and achievement of those receiving it. There is good support for learners with learning difficulties.
29. Learners feel safe in college. Discreet and effective security arrangements are in place and risk assessments for all activities, including work placements are good.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Good: Grade 2

30. Leadership and management are satisfactory, in contrast to the college's own judgement of good. In the eight curriculum areas inspected, curriculum management was judged to be good in three, satisfactory in four and inadequate in engineering. Since the last inspection the college has made good progress in improving standards. Strategies have been effective in raising success rates from a low rate to now broadly in line with the national average. In 2006/07, success rates on level 1 and 2 courses increased significantly, however, in comparison to the national average, level 3 courses have not improved and remain below the national average. Despite some

good improvement in retention the college recognises that many courses and in particular level 3 courses retention is below the national average. The success of apprentices remains unsatisfactory and this is not sufficiently recognised in the college's self-assessment.

31. At the time of the inspection the principal has been in post for eight months. The new principal and governors, following staff and student consultation, have set a clear strategic direction for the college. A very new management structure has been implemented. There is now greater clarity of roles, responsibilities and accountability. Communications have greatly improved and are good. Staff support the college's priorities to improve teaching and learning, retention and achievement. Management of Train to Gain provision is good.
32. Quality assurance arrangements have been effective in securing improvements but these are not consistent across the college. Significant improvements have been made to management information which is more reliable and accessible to staff. Data are being used more effectively by managers to make decisions and set targets, although the process is not yet consistently implemented across the college. The college uses a good variety of methods to listen to the opinions of learners and stakeholders and responds well. Managers at all levels are working with several action plans and a range of targets that are not specific enough and this has led to a lack of clarity in monitoring key priorities.
33. The self-assessment process has been improved in recent years and the report is satisfactory. Some of the identified strengths are overstated; an over emphasis on the progress the college has made in recent improvements without enough recognition to the college's position compared to the national average. Some weaknesses are not sufficiently recognised. The lesson observation process is more comprehensive than in previous years, and outcomes are linked to appraisal. Staff development is good and along with the strategies to share good practice has led to improvements in teaching and learning.
34. Some aspects of provision are not yet monitored sufficiently, for example, senior managers did not closely monitor the in year progress in meeting the targets in the college's quality improvement plan. The tutorial system which includes student progress reviews has not been included in the observation process until September 2007.
35. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The college successfully recruits learners from a diverse range of ethnic and community groups. The college has developed effective partnerships and links with a wide range of employers, local groups and external agencies, which support the college's policy of inclusion. It has responded well to legislative requirements regarding race relations and disability. Policies are updated regularly, implementation plans are backed up by staff development and data are used effectively to monitor the impact of initiatives to promote equality and diversity. Effective staff training has taken place and guidelines produced to promote awareness

and understanding about child protection and safeguarding issues. The college has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults.

36. Resources to support learning are good. Teaching staff are appropriately qualified and many have recent and relevant industrial experience. Appropriate checks are in place to meet legal safeguarding requirements. Accommodation is good and provides an attractive learning environment. Learning centres are used well by learners and there is a good range of communal areas. However, a minority of teaching rooms are not well suited to current needs and are cramped.
37. Governors are committed and have a wide range of skills and expertise that support the college. Governors monitor their own performance and the chair has a one to one with each member of the board to discuss their input and training needs. Governors are aware of the college's strengths and areas for improvement; they ask challenging questions at board and committee meetings. Governors closely monitor the college's financial position but they do not receive sufficient regular data to help them monitor student achievement. Their monitoring of educational performance is satisfactory and the college recognises this as an area to improve. A quality and standards committee has just been established but has not yet met. Arrangements for strategic planning have been improved by governor away days that focus on key factors affecting the college. Financial management is good and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Sector subject area

Health and social care

Good: Grade 2

Context

38. Full-time provision includes BTEC first and national diploma courses in early years and health and care. Part-time courses are available for adults in the evenings in counselling, and childcare and education. In 2005/06, there were 1,527 adult learners, 509 learners aged 16-18 and 68 learners aged 14-16. There are progression routes from level 1 through to foundation degree level in health and social care.

Strengths

- good success rates on most courses
- learners produce good written work
- good teaching and learning
- highly effective support for learners
- extensive enrichment programme
- good curriculum management.

Areas for improvement

- insufficiently rigorous self-assessment process.

Achievement and standards

39. Achievement and standards are good. In 2005/06, success rates on many 16-18 courses were good. On BTEC national certificate in care and the certificate in children's care learning, success rates are high and above the national average. Retention rates are improving across the 16-18 provision but remain low in the adult level 2 provision.
40. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners produce comprehensive work files, marking is timely and tutor feedback allows for improvement of grades.

Quality of provision

41. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good and lessons are well planned. In the better lessons effective questioning techniques are used to identify individual learning. Planning does not always show how individual learning needs will be met. Assessment is fair, accurate and reliable and internal moderation of assessments is well organised.
42. The curriculum is responsive to the needs of the local community. Extra-curricular activities provide learners with the opportunity to make a

contribution to the college and the local community. The key skill provision was extended at the suggestion of employers. Good work experience placements are available for many courses. Key skills are taught as an integral part of the curriculum and recent results show improvement. There is a well planned enrichment programme, which includes a range of additional qualifications and provides opportunities for key skill achievement and helps young and vulnerable learners to appreciate the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Advice and guidance to learners are good and learners are supported well to progress. Progression rates within further education, into higher education and into employment are good.

43. Support for learners is good. Regular and useful progress reports are sent to parents and guardians, many of whom are involved in the college support for learners. Good one-to-one additional learning support is available in the classroom for learners with physical and sensory disabilities. Tutors are effective in setting and monitoring targets with learners regarding their academic attainment, punctuality and attendance in tutorial lessons. The college provides useful information on managing finances, searching for jobs and personal development that helps young and vulnerable learners to achieve economic well-being. Counselling services are accessible and used well by learners.

Leadership and management

44. Curriculum management is good. The management and monitoring of initiatives to improve standards of education and learning are effective. All tutors have access to achievement data and many use this effectively to improve standards. Recording of key skills and value added data is good. Appraisal is used to set course targets and actions which are closely monitored by managers. Staff are effectively deployed and most staff hold a relevant teaching qualification.
45. The self-assessment process lacks rigour in that it does not identify some key characteristics of the provision. For example, poor attendance and retention on some courses are addressed at course team level but have not been identified in the self-assessment report. The curriculum area's approach to equality and diversity is good.

Science and mathematics

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

46. GCSEs are offered in biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics and double award science. General certificate of education (GCE) AS and A levels are offered in biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics, further mathematics, physics and psychology. BTEC first and national diplomas and national certificates are also offered in applied science. There were 670 learners who enrolled in 2007/08, 70% of which are full-time 16-18 year olds located in the main college and faith schools.

Strengths

- good success rates on GCE A level mathematics, psychology and the BTEC national diploma in applied science
- much good teaching
- good support for learners
- well resourced science laboratories.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on GCSE mathematics and science
- inappropriate curriculum offer for some learners
- insufficiently rigorous quality assurance at course level.

Achievement and standards

47. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on A2 psychology and mathematics are good as is the success rate on the BTEC national diploma in applied science, which has shown much improvement in 2006/07. Success rates are low on GCSE mathematics and science. There are marked differences between groups in some AS subjects. Learners taking qualifications offered by the college at faith schools have a history of poor performance for A2 chemistry and adults perform consistently below 16-19 learners in AS mathematics. Attendance and punctuality on full-time courses is good, but not always so, on part-time courses. Learners work safely and with confidence in practical work. Progression from A2 to AS level increased by 25% in three years. No data are available for progression to science related higher education.

Quality of provision

48. Teaching and learning are good. The best lessons are well planned and managed, and make use of a wide variety of learning materials. Information learning technology (ILT) is used effectively in some lessons, although in some instances its full potential is not realised. Learners receive good support during practical lessons. In some lessons, insufficient checks are made to

confirm that all learners are productively engaged in learning. In better lessons the range of learners' abilities are carefully addressed.

49. Assessment and monitoring are satisfactory. Homework and assignments are set and marked regularly, and generally contain helpful suggestions to enable improvements. Electronic monitoring of learners' progress helps to improve learning and prepare learners for examinations. However, some target grades are low.
50. The type of courses and their mode of delivery do not meet the needs of all groups. The only options available to learners at the faith schools are GCSEs, and AS level options for adult part-time learners are also limited. These learners are expected to complete their studies in the same time-span as full-time sixth form learners, even though the former two groups are studying under significantly different and often more demanding conditions.
51. Support for full-time learners is good. There is an effective tutorial programme although this is not available for part-time learners. Learners are appreciative of teachers' willingness to give help during and outside of lessons.

Leadership and management

52. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a good programme of classroom observations linked to appraisal of staff and this has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. New staff are effectively mentored. Quality assurance at course level often lacks rigour as does action planning and target setting. However, the self-assessment does identify a number of strengths and areas for improvement identified by inspectors. Science laboratories are well resourced and learners benefit from using a wide range of equipment. Some mathematics teaching rooms have limited resources to support learning. Promotion of equality and diversity is good.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

53. The college offers a range of full- and part-time engineering programmes at levels 1 to 3. There are 172 full-time learners aged 16-18 and 88 full-time adult learners. There are 14 part-time learners aged 16-18 and 52 part-time adults; 94% of learners are male.
54. Programmes are provided in mechanical production and electrical engineering, plus light vehicle and motor cycle maintenance, with a small amount of vehicle refinishing. There are 209 learners following motor vehicle trades; 196 mechanical production and 66 electrical. There were 319 employer training pilot learners in 2005/06.

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- a wide range of programmes to suit local needs
- good support for learners
- high success rates in employer training pilot in 2005/06.

Areas for improvement

- very low success rates on most courses
- slow management response to low success rates.

Achievement and standards

55. Achievement and standards are inadequate. There are very low success rates on most programmes. Retention rates have been low and declining. Improvements occurred in some, but not all, programmes in 2006/07. Achievement rates have fluctuated over the years. During the last two years, there have been improving trends to some rates. Some are now at national rates, though a majority remain below.
56. In 2005/06, the success rate for 16-18 year olds on long courses was 51% compared to a national rate of 62%. The success rate for 19+ learners on long courses was 48% against a national rate of 68%. College data for 2006/07 shows improvements to 60% and 49% respectively.
57. There have been recent improvements in the success rate for performing engineering operations, which is above the national rate. The success rate for certificate in vehicle maintenance and repair is declining and below the national rate. Other programmes have static or fluctuating achievement and retention rates. Overall performance is not improving year on year. The

majority of 2006/07 success rates remain below the 2005/06 national rates. In 2005/06, the success rate for employer training pilot was high.

Quality of provision

58. Teaching has improved and is good in 2006/07. Lessons are appropriately planned. Teachers maintain detailed records of learners' preferred learning styles, personal circumstances and particular needs. Successful efforts are made to accommodate individual preferences when teaching and promoting learning activities. Classroom lessons involve a range of approaches including good use of ILT where appropriate. Many classrooms are equipped with new ILT equipment, which is appropriate. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory. Assessment of learners' work is detailed with good advice given on how improvements can be made.
59. There is a wide range of engineering programmes on offer, from pre-entry level to level 4. The college works closely with local feeder schools and special schools. Pre-entry level programmes fulfil a social need and include excluded school pupils and ex-offenders. Programmes in motor vehicle, mechanical and electrical are offered at levels 1 to 3. There are good progression routes throughout the engineering offer.
60. Guidance and support for learners has improved and are now good. Personal support and informal guidance are good. All learners have a personal learning adviser who provides a weekly tutorial. Additional learning support is effective in that the success rate for learners receiving this support is higher than that for learners not receiving support.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are inadequate. There has been a slow response to low retention and achievement rates over many years. The college has very recently re-organised its engineering management structure. The new management team appointed has not had sufficient time to impact sufficiently on long standing issues of data management and under performance. The self-assessment has not been successful in identifying many of the long standing areas for improvement. The arrangements for widening participation and promoting equality and diversity are good.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

62. The college offers a range of full-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Courses include NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 in hairdressing, levels 1, 2 and 3 in beauty therapy and holistic therapies. There are 215 full-time learners aged 16-18. Twenty-two are on entry level provision. There are 103 full-time adult learners. School pupils aged 14-16 follow hairdressing and beauty therapy courses.

Strengths

- good success rates on beauty therapy courses
- good teaching and learning in beauty therapy and for adults in hairdressing
- wide range of provision
- good enrichment
- good professional standards.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on NVQ hairdressing levels 1, 2 and 3
- inappropriate accommodation for hairdressing
- ineffective use of data to inform self-assessment.

Achievement and standards

63. Success rates in beauty therapy are good at all levels. Improvement has been made in retention rates in hairdressing. However, success rates on hairdressing at all levels remain significantly below national average. Attendance is consistently high and is strictly monitored. There is a good standard of practical and written work. Learners are highly motivated and enjoy their studies.

Quality of provision

64. Teaching and learning are good in beauty therapy and for adults in hairdressing. Lessons were generally well planned and accorded with the scheme of work. In the better sessions ILT was used. Key skills sessions are taught by non-vocational specialists although assignments are vocationally relevant and are set by the vocational tutors. The introduction of virtual learning environment (VLE) helps to provide learners with good access to course material from inside or outside the college. Learners found this particularly helpful.
65. The curriculum offer is good with a wide range of progression opportunities from entry level and level 1 through to level 3. Entry level learners study the appropriate hairdressing and beauty therapy course. There is good enrichment within the specialist area. Competition work is encouraged and

displays in corridors celebrate the success achieved. Learners enjoy attending trade fairs and attending additional courses provided by the college. Learners also have the opportunity of international travel, for example, in 2006/07 learners visited Geneva.

66. Support for learners is good. The student induction and progress planner is comprehensive and includes agreed and appropriate targets which are effectively reviewed at three points per year and through the tutorial process.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Learners work well and are respectful and courteous to each other and to their tutors. There is a very strong sense of teamwork evident in both learners and staff. The standard of professionalism displayed by both staff and learners is exemplary. Student appearance is consistent throughout the entire provision and reflects industry expectations.
68. The accommodation in hairdressing is inappropriate. There is one large salon for hairdressing located on the fourth floor. Up to three separate salon sessions are timetabled concurrently. The area is noisy and despite the size, space is very limited. There are two discrete beauty therapy salons.
69. The use of data to inform the self-assessment process is ineffective. Self-assessment did not identify all the programmes which performed below the national averages. The team are working hard to improve performance and there is a significant improvement across all three levels of hairdressing, however, success rates in hairdressing remain below the national average. The promotion of equal opportunities is good.

Visual and performing arts

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

70. The college provides full-time courses at levels 2 and 3 including provision in media, art and design, graphic design, interior and spatial design, performing arts, ballet, tap, music technology and drama. Part-time courses are available for adults in the evenings in digital photography, embroidery and ceramics. There are 1,988 learners in total. Of these there are 156 learners aged 16-18 and 444 adult on visual arts courses. There are 1,006 16-18 year olds and 382 adults on performing arts courses.

Strengths

- good success rates at level 1 and 2 for 16-18
- high standard of learners' technical skills
- excellent resources in media and dance.

Areas for improvement

- very low success rates on many courses at level 3
- inappropriate curriculum range for some groups of learners
- insufficient focus on quality improvement.

Achievement and standards

71. Success rates at levels 1 and 2 for 16-18 year olds are good. For instance, in BTEC introductory diploma in art and design success is 17% above the national average, and in the one year vocational graded exam in dance success rates are 18% above the national average.
72. Success rates on level 3 courses for all ages are low, and below the national average. Retention rates at levels 1 and 3 are also below the national average and have declined. Pass rates on dance at level 2 are good. Many learners have high aspirations and they are developing to a high standard. On level 3 courses retention is below the national average in a significant number of diploma courses.
73. Learners produce work of a high standard and develop useful technical skills.
74. Attendance and punctuality are low. The college has recognised this and appropriate improvement measures are in place.

Quality of provision

75. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The better lessons are well structured with carefully planned objectives clearly outlined at the beginning of the session. Teachers demonstrate their specialist skills in exciting ways to inspire and motivate learners. Most teachers have current professional knowledge

and experience, and this vocational relevance is valued by learners. However, in some lessons teachers use limited teaching strategies and over long verbal introductions which fail to engage learners.

76. Some courses are inappropriate for the learning needs of the learners. Numbers of early leavers are exceptionally high on these courses. The enrichment programme provides learners with the opportunity to enhance and broaden their experience. Learners benefit from visits to museums, art galleries and theatres. Performing art learners perform at local and regional venues. There are good links with local universities and external organisations, and extended links with the dance industry at a national level. Good support for additional learning needs is available. Second year learners in dance and art are effective mentors to first year learners.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is insufficient focus on quality improvement. Success rates are below the national average for the majority of full-time learners at level 3, and many issues remain from the last inspection report. Challenging targets are not consistently set or monitored, and sharing of good practice is limited. The recent re-structure has not yet impacted upon quality improvement, which lacks robustness at course level. Excellent resources in media include fully equipped television and radio studios, ample specialist computers and a television gallery with an editing suite. Dance facilities include spacious specialist studios with sprung floors. The promotion of equality of opportunity and the use of management information data is satisfactory.

Languages, literature and culture

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

78. The college offers full-time and part-time courses at the main campus and six Muslim faith schools to both 16-18 years old and adult learners. There are approximately 480 learners in English language and literature at GCSE, AS and A level, and 183 learners for modern foreign languages and British Sign Language taught at levels 1 and 2.

Strengths

- high success rates for Urdu AS and A2
- high success rates for British Sign Language for year 2006/07
- good teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- low retention and success rates for 16-18 year olds on GCSE courses
- insufficient employer engagement.

Achievement and standards

79. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for Urdu AS and A2 and British Sign Language are high, above the national average. Success and retention rates for GCSE English language for 16-18 year olds are low for the last three years. Success rates for English A2 were high in 2004/05 and 2005/06 but declined in 2007. There have been significant increases in success rates over three years for GCSE for adult learners, from 53% in 2004/05 to 70% in 2006/07. Learners make good progress, are confident and well motivated and are set challenging individual targets. The standard of learners' written work is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

80. Teaching and learning are good. In good or better lessons planning and delivery are good with confident teaching that is responsive to learner needs. There are detailed lesson plans and schemes of work. Clear sharing and recapping of learning objectives keeps learners on track, enables ownership and consolidates learning. Teachers use a good range of interesting activities and resources to stimulate learning and challenge learners. However, there is insufficient use of ILT resources. Skilful questioning, prompting and frequent checking engage the learners, and in English AS and A level lessons learners develop good analytical skills. Learners enjoy their learning and participate actively in group and pair work activities in a relaxed pleasant learning environments. Assessment is satisfactory. The setting, marking and assessment of learners work and monitoring of progress is satisfactory.

81. The range of provision for English and Urdu is satisfactory and narrow for other modern foreign languages. Effective partnerships with faith schools enable women learners to attend courses to meet their cultural and personal needs in Blackburn, Bolton and Lancaster. Learners benefit from college enrichment opportunities. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Tutorial sessions with personal learning advisors are effective in providing learners with pastoral and academic support.

Leadership and management

82. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A developing culture of continuous quality improvement has contributed to improved teaching, promoted sharing of good practice and helped with standardisation of documentation. The arrangements for internal and external observation of teaching and learning are robust. Roles and responsibilities are clear with good direction provided by curriculum managers. Communication is good. New staff are well supported by colleagues who act as mentors. Most accommodation and resources are of good quality. However, there is some cramped accommodation and no library facility in one of the faith schools. There are insufficient opportunities for employer engagement. The promotion of equality of opportunity and the use of management information data is satisfactory. The self-assessment report was accurate and identified most strengths and areas for improvement identified by inspectors.

Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

Context

83. The college offers literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) to adults, 16-18 learners on full time vocational programmes and the Prince's Trust, and for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are currently 353 16-18 learners and 625 adult learners. Courses are offered in college, in 20 community centres and on employers' premises.

Strengths

- good and improving success rates in entry and level 1 numeracy and literacy
- good teaching and learning
- effective planning to meet individual learning needs
- good adult Skills for Life curriculum management.

Areas for improvement

- poor attendance and punctuality
- insufficient rigour in target setting for quality improvement at course team level.

Achievement and standards

84. Success rates for entry level and level 1 literacy and numeracy are good and improving. The trend of improvement in retention is much slower, with rates below national average in these courses and in entry level and level 1 English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Success rates for the level 2 certificate in adult numeracy are low, although improved from the previous year. The standard of learners' written work is good. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and 16-18 learners make real progress in confidence and social skills. Average attendance is low at 72%. Punctuality is poor for young learners.

Quality of provision

85. Teaching and learning are good. Detailed lesson plans, individual learner profiles, accurate recording of progress and classroom organisation, impact positively on learning. In the better lessons, teachers use a good range of activities, closely linked to learners' interests, to develop literacy, numeracy and language skills. Teachers extend learning and check understanding through paired and whole group work, active questioning and discussion. Learning materials are of a high standard and relevant. Teaching is well paced. Learners are highly motivated and make good progress. In a minority of lessons teachers do not give sufficient time for learners to understand what is required. There is an over reliance on writing tasks with little use of

ILT facilities. Study skills, including work file organisation, are not consistently addressed.

86. A good range of flexible provision is available. ESOL courses cater for women and men only groups and are timed to suit the shift patterns of migrant workers.
87. Initial assessment is thorough. Learning plans identify individual learning needs and set clear targets that are reviewed regularly and help achieve good learning outcomes. Full-time learners appreciate the review of progress in one to one tutorials.
88. Additional support for young learners and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

Leadership and management

89. Curriculum management of adult Skills for Life is good. A new management team has introduced robust systems to develop a whole organisational approach to Skills for Life. Improvements in initial assessment, teaching and learning strategies, and curriculum planning and development have had a positive impact on the quality of provision. Improved communication and access to professional development has led to sharing of good practice across college based and community teams.
90. The internal observation judgements are accurate and action is effective in improving teaching. Staff are well qualified and, through appraisal, are set measurable improvement targets.
91. The self-assessment report is accurate in the judgements of the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are not fully involved in the self-assessment process. Target setting for quality improvement at course level is not sufficiently rigorous.
92. Strategies to improve retention and attendance are not implemented consistently. Managers recognise that actions to improve are at an early stage of development and it is too early to measure their success. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

Business administration and law

Good: Grade 2

Context

93. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in business, accounting and management. Vocational courses include BTEC national qualifications at levels 1 to 3, and accounting NVOs at levels 2 to 4. There are AS and A2 qualifications in accounting, law and business. Management and trade union courses are available at levels 2 and 3. There are 279 learners aged 16-18, the vast majority full-time and 482 19+ learners, the vast majority part-time.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- good use of ILT on business courses
- flexible and responsive curriculum
- good support for learners.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on key skills
- low success rates on accounting courses at levels 2 and 4
- insufficient use of data in self-assessment.

Achievement and standards

94. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates have improved on most courses for 16-18 learners. Success rates on many vocational and AS and A2 courses are high and above the benchmark. There is good value added on A2 business studies. Success rates for 19+ learners at level 2 are above the national average, but are not improving. Those at level 3 are above the national average but are decreasing, largely due to poor retention. There are declining and low success rates on accounting courses at levels 2 and 4. Learners' work is of a high standard and develops the use of their information and communication (ICT) skills. Learners are enthusiastic about their studies, participate well in class and demonstrate high level learning skills. Key skills success rates are very low across all levels and outcomes.

Quality of provision

95. Teaching and learning are good. In the better lessons learners are actively engaged in their learning and respond well to questions. Teachers prepare imaginative lessons which engage learners in stimulating activities and provide good vocational preparation. Key skills are now incorporated effectively into many lessons. In the poorer lessons the learning environment is not well managed and learners do not make effective use of their time. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress are good. Computer resources in classrooms are good and ILT is used well to improve learners'

assessed work. The programme and activities meet the needs and interests of learners appropriately. There are good progression routes for learners on BTEC programmes and accountancy courses. Work experience is not fully embedded in 16-18 courses. Guidance and support for learners are good. Learners value highly the opportunities for flexible learning offered by the virtual learning environment (VLE), individual support from the tutors and the support in revision activities. Tutorial mechanisms encourage realistic self-evaluation and target setting by learners. There are good mechanisms in AS and A2 provision for subject tutors to identify learners' strengths, weaknesses and provide help.

Leadership and management

96. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum has been frequently changed to improve learners' achievement and meet their needs. Some of the issues identified in the previous inspection report, such as use of ILT, have been satisfactorily resolved. Equality of opportunity is good. Adult learners are positive about their return to learning, and over 20% of full-time learners are from minority ethnic groups. Processes and systems for recording and tracking quality improvement plans are not well developed. The self-assessment report (SAR) is broadly accurate, but judgements are not adequately supported by the use of data.

Learner's 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	1574	59	65	-6	3483	44	62	-18
	05/06	1752	68	69	-1	2920	52	65	-13
	06/07	1639	71			2196	68		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	22	68	68	0	3	67	64	3
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	75	77	68	9	22	55	66	-11
	05/06	85	74	72	2	103	66	74	-8
	06/07	95	78			109	54		
Other	04/05	1477	58	64	-6	3461	44	62	-18
	05/06	1667	67	69	-2	2817	52	65	-13
	06/07	1544	70			2087	68		

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	1622	60	61	-1	5218	64	60	4
	05/06	1334	61	66	-5	5528	68	66	2
	06/07	1360	70			4604	71		
GCSEs	04/05	506	66	64	2	424	56	63	-7
	05/06	326	56	68	-12	474	61	67	-6
	06/07	289	60			346	60		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	37	62	67	-5	8	13	75	-62
	05/06	10	80	69	11	1	0	68	-68
	06/07	...	...			...	...
NVQs	04/05	281	56	57	-1	2723	71	60	11
	05/06	370	56	65	-9	3457	71	67	4
	06/07	323	72			2405	72		
Other	04/05	798	58	61	-3	2063	57	59	-2
	05/06	628	67	66	1	1596	63	65	-2
	06/07	748	73			1844	73		

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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	04/05	3154	66	68	-2	1728	56	58	-2
	05/06	2987	69	70	-1	1747	59	63	-4
	06/07	3013	68			1754	61		
A/A2 Levels	04/05	775	88	86	2	88	74	69	5
	05/06	624	87	87	0	70	73	72	1
	06/07	677	84			49	90		
AS Levels	04/05	1128	63	66	-3	93	44	52	-8
	05/06	1112	66	67	-1	111	62	55	7
	06/07	1144	65			75	48		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	99	46	61	-15	6	33	54	-21
	05/06	46	80	66	14	2	100	57	43
	06/07	...	...			...	...
NVQs	04/05	40	60	63	-3	351	66	56	10
	05/06	61	64	71	-7	571	61	63	-2
	06/07	53	66			720	62		
Other	04/05	1112	54	60	-6	1190	52	59	-7
	05/06	1054	63	65	-2	993	56	64	-8
	06/07	1139	61			730	59		

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	79	48	48	23	34
		timely	84	32	31	12	22
	05/06	overall	88	57	53	36	44
		timely	81	42	34	31	28
	06/07	overall	129	43	64	29	56
		timely	136	27	41	17	35
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	173	54	51	42	51
		timely	181	24	29	19	22
	05/06	overall	307	53	58	47	58
		timely	303	13	38	11	34
	06/07	overall	242	58	65	55	65
		timely	240	31	45	30	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'

*** Adult training (long courses) includes 'Train to Gain' provision, but not 'Skills for Life'