



Blackpool and The Fylde 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. Blackpool and The Fylde College is a large general further education college (GFE) serving the town of Blackpool and the Fylde coast area, covering the boroughs of Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre. The area is dominated by the tourist industry, which is suffering decline due to changing tastes and uncompetitive local businesses. The area includes prosperous areas in the south and rural towns in the east and north. It also includes areas of extreme deprivation, notably in central Blackpool and Fleetwood. The indices of deprivation 2004 shows Blackpool contains areas of significant deprivation. Some 40% of the population live in the most deprived areas of England. The Blackpool district contains a very low proportion of minority ethnic residents, significantly lower than the LSC Lancashire area and England as a whole.
2. In 2007, GCSE attainment in Blackpool was below the national average at 52.6%. In 2006, achievement of level 2 qualifications for 19-year-olds in Blackpool was 60.6% compared with 70.2% nationally. Achievement of level 3 for 19-year-olds in Blackpool in 2006 was 33%, compared with 47% nationally.
3. In 2006/07, the college offered provision in all 15 sector subject areas. The total number of learners enrolled was 21,000 (LSC-funded = 8,402), of whom 2,734 were full-time learners aged 16 to 18. The gender profile showed that just under 51% of learners aged 16 to 18 were female; 11% including "other" category of the college's learners were from minority ethnic backgrounds. Some 69% of learner enrolments were on part-time courses. The average number of work-based learners in training was 312. The college employed approximately 1,351 staff throughout the year.
4. The college has Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in automotive manufacturing, customer services quality for resort tourism and building services.

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	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: Contributory Grade 1</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. Overall effectiveness is good. Success rates in many areas have been just above the national average since the last inspection and there has been a general trend of steady improvement in most areas. College data for 2006/07 shows improvement in some areas and slight decline in others. Adult level 3 provision improved significantly. Success rates are particularly low in a few sector subject areas (SSAs).
6. Teaching and learning are rigorously monitored and are good. Learners can choose from a wide range of vocational courses at all levels. Their studies are supplemented by an extensive range of enrichment opportunities. Learners receive outstanding support and the promotion of equality of opportunity is excellent with some particularly good examples of equality and diversity in the classroom.
7. Leadership and management are good. Governance is particularly good and leadership is outstanding. The college knows its community very well and provides a particularly good service to it. The college is strong financially and provides outstanding value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

8. The college's capacity to improve is good. It sets itself demanding targets for improvement and has succeeded in improving its performance steadily over recent years. However, improvements, particularly in achievement and standards, are not consistent across all areas of the college. Quality assurance procedures are operated rigorously. Management information is accurate, readily accessible and useful but not always used well in a minority of SSAs. Most managers have a good understanding of the college's strengths and areas for improvement. Most areas for improvement identified by inspectors had already been recognised and targeted by college managers. There are shortcomings in some SSA self-assessment reports (SAR).

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

9. Outstanding progress has been made in improving the areas for development identified at the last inspection and in developing the college provision to better meet local, regional and national priorities. Significant improvements to the accommodation and resources have made a significant contribution to the excellent learning environment now enjoyed by the learners. The college has carefully listened to its learners and has brought about improvements after

consultation with them. Accuracy and timeliness of management data has improved. The college has not rested on its excellent reputation for equality and diversity. Staff and managers, led personally by the principal, have continued to forge productive links with the community and business as well as developing the approach to equality and diversity in the classroom. In response to funding bodies the numbers of adult learners has been carefully reduced. At the same time, the college has recruited significantly more 16 to 18-year-olds, many of whom have been recruited from disaffected groups and areas of deprivation.

Key strengths

- generally good achievement and standards
- good teaching and learning
- outstanding social and educational inclusion
- excellent contribution to the community and employer engagement
- outstanding support for learners
- highly effective response to learners' comments
- outstanding leadership and vision
- exemplary approach to equality and diversity
- highly effective governance
- outstanding resources and accommodation
- outstanding financial management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- some aspects of self-assessment
- unsatisfactory success rates in some areas.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

10. Achievement and standards are good. On long courses at level 1 for 16 to 18 year olds, the success rate in 2005/06 was significantly above the national average and in the top quartile of similar colleges. In the period up to 2005/06 there has been significant year on year improvement. At level 2 in 2005/06 the success rate was above the national average and just in the top quartile of similar colleges. There has been year on year improvement, significant at 10% in 2005/06. At level 3, the success rate for 16 to 18-year-olds was significantly below the national average in 2005/06. There have been modest improvements year on year but success rates have remained consistently below the national average. College data for 2006/07 shows that the high success rate of 78% at level 1 has been maintained, a slight decline of 1% at level 2 and a 7% improvement at level 3 that brings the rate to the same as the national average for 2005/06.
11. The success rate for adults at level 1 in 2005/06 was significantly above the national average. The rate declined in 2004/05 and has been losing ground against the national average. College data for 2006/07 shows a significant decline of 8%, leaving the rate 2% above the 2005/06 national average. The success rate at level 2 was marginally above the national average in 2005/06. There has been steady improvement, maintaining the position in relation to the national average over the last three years and improving at the same rate. The improvement has continued into 2006/07. At level 3 the success rate is above the national average and in the top quartile of similar colleges. Following two years where this success rate was below the national average, a significant improvement of 13% in 2005/06 brought the rate to 5% above the national average. Improvement has continued with a 4% increase in 2006/07. Retention has been high for a number of years at level 1 but has declined by 3% for adults. The retention rate for adults at levels 2 and 3 has improved by 3% and 5% respectively.
12. Success rates in some SSAs are particularly low, mainly those concentrated in the school of academic studies. Work-based learning success rates continue to improve but overall remain below the national average. The framework success rate for advanced apprentices of 61% is currently 5% above the national average while the rate for apprentices is particularly low.
13. Learners generally enjoy their work and develop useful occupational and life skills. The cross-college self assessment gives a good overall account of achievement and standards but misses some areas for improvement and over emphasises the significance of some improvements.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

14. Inspectors agreed with the college self-assessment that the quality of provision overall is outstanding and that teaching and learning are good. The college has invested heavily in providing computer based resources and training for staff in using them. Good use is made of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons. The promotion of equality and diversity in the classroom is particularly good. Vocational staff have good links with industry and maintain the currency of their occupational knowledge. Assessment practices are good and the college is rated as low risk by awarding bodies.
15. Additional support in the classrooms and workshops is particularly good. Diagnostic assessments are timely and comprehensive and follow-up support is quickly available and generally effective. Observation of teaching and learning is well established. A team of trained observers maintain an effective schedule of observations. The process has not sufficiently rectified under-performance in a small number of curriculum areas. The college recognises the need to increase the focus of teaching on meeting individual needs in order to better impact on value added and distance travelled performance.
16. Inspectors agreed with the SAR that the arrangements to meet learner and local community needs are outstanding. Managers and staff at all levels have forged outstanding links with major industries including aviation, shipping and motor vehicle trades and with local schools. Successful (CoVEs) have been established in three vocational areas and the college manages a successful specialist nautical training centre. The college carefully listens to the views of its learners and responds very effectively to bring about improvements. Enrichment activities provide learners with many opportunities to enhance their learning experience.
17. The guidance and support provided at the college are outstanding. An extensive range of learning, pastoral and welfare support is integrated into all aspects of the college provision. The systems to identify and provide for learning support are robust and highly effective contributing to raised levels and both retention and achievement for the learners who receive it. The arrangements for safeguarding young people are robust.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grades:**Equality of opportunity**Outstanding: Grade 1*

18. Leadership and management are good. Governors, the principal and senior management team have set a clear vision and strategic direction that is well articulated and shared by staff. Leadership is outstanding. A large proportion of college income is derived from full cost recovery courses and re-invested to the

benefit of all its learners. The college knows its community well and provides an outstanding service particularly in encouraging and stimulating aspiration within areas of high deprivation. Governance is particularly good. Governors have a wide range of skills and an excellent range of contacts in the community, local business and higher education and carefully monitor key aspects of college performance.

19. Arrangements for quality improvement are effective in most areas. The accuracy and timeliness of management information data has improved since the last inspection. Managers now have much better access to data but not all managers use data effectively to monitor quality and improve their provision.
20. The current SAR is, in the main, comprehensive and accurate in many cross college aspects but there are shortcomings in some SSA self assessments. The use of data in these SSA reports is unsatisfactory and does not accurately reflect the overall situation or adequately support the grades awarded.
21. The college's approach to equality of opportunity is outstanding. Effective staff development in equality and diversity ensures that staff have a thorough and intimate knowledge of the locality, its diverse community and the issues that it faces. Blackpool has the third largest lesbian, gay and bisexual community in the country. The college works effectively with this community to raise awareness of sexuality, challenge homophobia and raise the expectations and aspirations of community members. Staff at all levels from governors to receptionists are trained by a specialist external provider and the college now sends its own trained staff to help other colleges. The college works well to serve the large transient population in the area, engaging in dialogue with its members, appreciating their position and working with them to further their education. Specialist programmes of study have been developed for looked after children or learners categorised as not in education, employment or training (NEET). The college works effectively with external partners in reducing numbers of young learners in this category. A number of successful research projects have successfully improved the results of some groups of learners, such as under achieving young males at level 1. The college has worked successfully to help the families of its overseas learners become part of the local community. The outstanding approach to equality and diversity is present in the classroom with some teachers engaging entry level learners in high level discussions on equality and diversity.
22. Excellent accommodation and resources are used effectively and efficiently to support learning. The college complies with legislation relating to race, disability and child protection. Value for money is outstanding.

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	1322	70	65	5	2079	65	62	3
	05-06	1476	78	69	9	1639	74	65	9
	06-07	1749	78	...		1192	67	...	
GNVQs	04-05	61	62	68	-6	1	0	64	-64
	05-06	55	60	72	-12	2	50
	06-07	26	61	
NVQs	04-05	313	81	68	13	116	63	66	-3
	05-06	444	84	72	12	115	77	74	3
	06-07	276	83	...		58	66	...	
Other	04-05	948	66	64	2	1962	66	62	4
	05-06	977	76	69	7	1522	74	65	9
	06-07	1447	77	...		1134	67	...	

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	1473	61	61	0	2233	63	60	3
	05-06	1595	71	66	5	2135	69	66	3
	06-07	1971	70			1900	73	...	
GCSEs	04-05	639	64	64	0	478	54	63	-9
	05-06	612	64	68	-4	361	62	67	-5
	06-07	620	65	...		545	67	...	
GNVQs	04-05	81	68	67	1	6	67	75	-8
	05-06	107	79	69	10	3	67	68	-1
	06-07	57	61	...		8	75	...	
NVQs	04-05	236	46	57	-11	642	55	60	-5
	05-06	219	75	65	10	643	72	67	5
	06-07	304	77	...		498	73	...	
Other	04-05	517	65	61	4	1107	71	59	12
	05-06	657	75	66	9	1128	70	65	5
	06-07	990	71	...		849	76	...	

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	1427	59	68	-9	1539	56	58	-2
	05-06	1624	63	70	-7	1537	69	63	6
	06-07	1592	70	...		1449	76	...	
A/A2 Levels	04-05	158	81	86	-5	69	78	69	9
	05-06	185	89	87	2	41	68	72	-4
	06-07	159	82	...		39	90	...	
AS Levels	04-05	586	52	66	-14	86	47	52	-5
	05-06	574	56	67	-11	61	57	55	2
	06-07	510	59			105	41		
GNVQs	04-05	113	46	61	-15	31	52	54	-2
	05-06	35	77	66	11	32	50	57	-7
	06-07	19	53	...		5	80	...	
NVQs	04-05	51	67	63	4	497	48	56	-8
	05-06	61	69	71	-2	240	77	63	14
	06-07	66	77	...		262	81	...	
Other	04-05	519	64	60	4	856	60	59	1
	05-06	769	62	65	-3	1163	68	64	4
	06-07	838	73	...		1038	77	...	

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