

Milton Keynes 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: science, mathematics and psychology; engineering; information communication technology (ICT); hairdressing and beauty therapy; literacy and numeracy; business, administration and law.

Description of the provider

1. Milton Keynes College is located in the fast growing city of Milton Keynes. It is in an economically buoyant area but there are localised areas of deprivation.
2. Most students come from Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. The proportion of 16- to 18-year-old students has increased by 40% since 2005/06. There are 2,377 full-time and 1,031 part-time 16- to 18-year-old students and 1,095 full-time and 11,298 part-time students aged 19

plus. The proportion of students of minority ethnic heritage at college, at 27%, is much higher than the 15% in the local population. The largest minority ethnic group are students of Black British/African heritage who make up 5% of 16- to 18-year-old students and 7% of adult students.

3. Milton Keynes has 12 secondary schools and all of them have sixth forms. In 2006, the attainment rate by pupils of more than five General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects, at grades A* to C, was 10% below the national average. Approximately a quarter of the local population have poor literacy and numeracy skills.
4. The college provides courses in 14 sector subject areas, the largest being preparation for life and work. The college has five Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs). It leads on information and communication technology (ICT) and logistics and freight management and has partner CoVEs in construction, motorsport and performance engineering, and management. There are approximately 500 learners taking advanced apprenticeship and apprenticeship programmes in eight sector subject areas. The college provides courses for 330 14- to 16-year-old school pupils through the Increased Flexibility Programme as well as an alternative curriculum for pupils not attending school. It also provides education in five prisons. The college's annual budget is £40m.
5. The college's vision statement is "Our vision is for a college where all learners achieve and progress. The core strategy for realising our vision is to achieve excellence in teaching and learning."

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	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: Contributory grade 3</i>

Sector subject areas

Science, mathematics and psychology	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Engineering	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Information communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates have improved markedly and are around the national average. There is variation in the success rates of different curriculum areas. The success rates of students of black and minority ethnic heritage have improved well overall but they are lower than the mean for the college. The success rates of male and female students are closely aligned. Students generally produce work of a satisfactory standard.
7. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The proportion of good or better lessons has improved well since the last inspection and the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons has declined. There is still a high proportion of lessons where teaching and learning are no better than satisfactory. Internal lesson observations generally provide accurate and helpful feedback to teachers. Support for students' additional learning needs is good. Assessment is appropriate and feedback on students' work is satisfactory, but target setting is of variable quality.
8. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students is good. There is a broad and flexible curriculum overall. ICT provision in the community is insufficient. Curriculum enrichment is extensive with a high take-up by students. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. Strategies to widen participation are successful. The college attracts many adult students as well as those from hard to reach groups.
9. Students receive good support and guidance and have good access to a comprehensive range of services. Pastoral and additional learning support are good and help individual students to succeed in their qualifications. Tutorial support overall is good. It is well structured and purposeful and it contributes effectively to the coverage of Every Child Matters themes. Individual student reviews with personal tutors are not always of consistently good quality.
10. Leadership and management are good. The college has improved success rates significantly and rapidly, from a very low base. Quality assurance procedures are systematic and thorough. Strategic priorities are appropriate and built on strong links and partnerships. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The analysis of data for equal opportunities requires further development. Financial management is good. Accommodation and facilities are at least satisfactory and much is good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

11. The capacity of the college to make further improvements is good. The college's agenda for development is clear and it has a good recent record of securing improvement. It has made rapid and significant improvements in success rates since the last inspection. Frequent performance monitoring allows

close scrutiny of the college's provision. Monthly key performance indicator meetings are rigorous. Courses are reviewed three times a year. These measures provide a strong framework for improvement. The college acts swiftly where provision is poor. Internal quality audits in construction and engineering have brought about significant improvements. Quality assurance procedures are thorough, embracing all aspects of the college's work. Self-assessment is broadly accurate. The college has a robust picture of the quality of teaching and learning and has significantly improved the proportion of good and better teaching. Self-assessment of work-based learning and literacy and numeracy is not detailed enough. A minority of self-assessment reports and course reviews lack sufficient depth.

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

12. The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement is good. Success rates have improved significantly, albeit to around the national rates. The completion rates of apprenticeship frameworks are now satisfactory. Attendance at lessons has improved and is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is now satisfactory. Course review and self-assessment are more rigorous, although some inconsistency remains. Arrangements for the development of key skills have improved, but achievement of key skills qualifications is low. The leadership and management of the sixth form centre were judged to be good in the Ofsted inspection of November 2006.

Key strengths

- strong focus and successful actions to raise standards
- good strategic planning
- good support for students
- strong partnerships and responsiveness to employers in the community
- good financial management
- excellent contribution by students to the community.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the variation in success rates and the improvement of success rates in all areas
- the further improvement of success rates for black and minority ethnic heritage students
- unsatisfactory aspects of teaching and learning and the need to further increase the proportion of good and better lessons
- low key skills success rates.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The self-assessment report has detailed analysis of student performance data. Success rates have improved sharply and have outstripped national average improvements for similar colleges since the last inspection. They improved by 20 percentage points between 2003/04 and 2006/07. At all levels and ages they are now around the national average or better. More students study at level 1 than at any other level. Success rates for adults at level 1 improved from 23% below average in 2003/04 to around the national average in 2006/07. The success rate for students aged 16 to 18 at level 1 is above average. Success rates at level 2 are around the national average. They have improved for students aged 16 to 18 at level 3, from 9% below average in 2004/05 to around average in 2006/07 and they are above average for adults. There are marked improvements to retention rates at all levels to around average or better. Pass rates have increased well and are higher than average. Success rates on short courses are generally at the national average. There is variation in success rates between curriculum areas. Students make progress in line with expectations, based on their prior attainment.
14. Success rates for students aged 14 to 16 and the completion of frameworks by work-based learners are satisfactory. Timely completion of frameworks is low. Success rates on key skills are low but improving.
15. Students receiving additional learning support have much higher success rates than the college mean. The success rates of male and female students are closely aligned. Success rates for students of black and minority ethnic heritage improved well over the last three years but they remain lower than the college mean, particularly for adults.
16. Progression by students between levels of study is satisfactory and student destinations on leaving college are positive.
17. Most students produce work of a satisfactory standard with good work in several areas. For example, in business, administration and law, students demonstrate good understanding and application of business concepts. Work set in literacy and numeracy at the main campus is generally satisfactory or good but it is sometimes too difficult for students. Students enjoy their work at college. They develop good skills to help promote their social and economic well-being.
18. Students adopt safe practices in lessons and have good awareness of staying safe and healthy.
19. Students' average attendance is satisfactory and improving.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

20. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. The self-assessment report is used well for planning actions for improvement. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching and learning has reduced and the proportion of good or better lessons has improved well. A high proportion of lessons are still no better than satisfactory. The best lessons often incorporate information learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning and motivate students well. High levels of student engagement and good focus on individual learning are a feature of these lessons along with very good learning. Many less effective lessons have a slow pace of activity and do not involve students sufficiently or provide appropriately for their individual needs. Weaker aspects of lessons include underdeveloped questioning technique and insufficient checking of learning throughout lessons.
21. Most resources for learning are at least satisfactory and many are good.
22. Key skills are fully integrated into the curriculum in a few areas, where they are understood well by staff and students. In other areas, particularly at level 3, key skills form an additional element to a course and success rates are low. Key skills subjects and levels are not always well matched to individual student needs.
23. Formal assessment is carried out effectively. Routine marking of student work and feedback are satisfactory overall. Target setting for individual students is of variable quality. In a few areas, target setting is not sufficiently robust and targets are poorly prepared and reviewed. However, in the best areas, targets are clear and useful, helping students to improve their performance.
24. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. Curriculum provision is good. The broad range of programmes offers clear progression routes into employment or higher levels of study. However, there is insufficient ICT provision in the community. Many full-time students have insufficient work experience. There is a wide of range of provision for 14- to 16-year-old students. A high proportion of these students progress onto full-time courses at college. Enrichment activities are extensive and very popular with students. Marketing is excellent and the college has a high profile in the local community. The college works very effectively with partners and employers in the community and provides flexible provision in local communities.
25. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. Many initiatives have widened participation from under-represented groups, such as the Routes to Success programme for adults and courses in prisons across the South East and Eastern regions. Vocational courses are provided for students aged 14 to 16, young apprentices and excluded school pupils. The proportion of students from black and minority ethnic heritage has grown to 27% which is 12 percentage points higher than in the local community. Students with additional learning needs are well supported. Heavy internal doors are an encumbrance to easy access by students with mobility difficulties.

26. The college gives high importance to the student voice. Students are actively involved in focus groups and the governing body. High numbers of students make an excellent contribution to the community by working on community projects.
27. Guidance and support for students are good. Students receive clear initial advice and guidance about courses. Very good pastoral support is provided for social, career, health and financial issues. Additional learning support is very good. Student support needs are identified promptly. Good support is provided and communication between support staff and curriculum staff is good.
28. Tutorial support is good. A central team of specialists provides effective guidance and materials to support personal tutors. Group tutorials are structured and purposeful. Tutors adapt activities carefully to meet learners' needs whilst ensuring that tutorial themes, such as citizenship, diversity, being healthy and personal safety, are included. Punctuality and attendance are monitored well and are improving. Full-time students regularly meet individually with personal tutors to plan and review their progress. The tutorial entitlement of adults is not always met. The quality of individual progress reviews varies, although there is very good practice in several curriculum areas. Target setting with students is sometimes imprecise and narrow in scope.
29. High quality individual learning support is provided during lessons and in well resourced learning centres. Support is timely and well planned. Learning support is highly effective in building learners' confidence and ability to achieve well. Support programmes extend to students in community venues and in the workplace.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: Grade 3

30. Leadership and management are good. The college has improved success rates significantly and rapidly from a very low base. Students are well supported. The principal is an open and approachable leader, ably supported by his management team. Levels of accountability have improved greatly and are now very high. Frequent and rigorous performance monitoring ensures very close scrutiny of all aspects of the college's work. Managers promptly provide effective and incisive support for improvement. There is a shared vision of raising achievement through improving the quality of teaching and learning. Communications are very good.
31. Quality assurance procedures are systematic and thorough. They embrace all aspects of the college's work, much of which is not on college sites. Courses are robustly reviewed three times a year. Moderation of judgements is very effective. Self-assessment is largely accurate. Some self-assessment and course reviews lack sufficient depth. Resulting plans are not always sufficiently detailed. The college listens closely to the views of its students.

32. The college has a robust view of the overall quality of teaching and learning. Training for observers and moderation of judgements are thorough. There are strong links between lesson observation, appraisal and the planning of staff development. There is room for further analysis of teaching and learning in self-assessment. Prompt intervention is effective at improving unsatisfactory provision.
33. Strategic priorities are appropriate, built on strong links and partnerships, and clearly articulated in the strategic plan. The annual development plan turns aspiration into action. It allows managers and governors to monitor the college's progress towards its goals. Resources are used well to support priorities. Financial management is good. Management information is accurate and well used.
34. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. A single document embraces race, gender and disability equality schemes and action plans. The response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 is satisfactory. The college has held a range of events to raise awareness of race issues. However, success rates for adults from black and minority ethnic groups are below the college mean. Child protection procedures and those for vulnerable adults are satisfactory and all staff and governors have received appropriate training. The college is accessible for those with restricted mobility, but not always easily so. The analysis of data for equal opportunities requires further development. There has been much recent training in equal opportunities but this was not mandatory for all staff.
35. Development appraisal review is effective and linked to a good range of appropriate staff development. Accommodation and facilities are at least satisfactory and much is good. Arrangements for the management of health and safety are generally good, but there are shortcomings in monitoring compliance with portable appliance testing procedures.
36. Governors know the college well and monitor its work closely. They contribute well to strategic planning and challenge, when needed. The composition of the board does not yet reflect the student body. With broadly satisfactory success rates, the college offers satisfactory value for money.

Sector subject area

Science, mathematics and psychology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

37. The college offers General Certificate of Education (GCE) AS and A level courses in chemistry, physics, biology, psychology and mathematics; GCSE courses in mathematics, psychology, and science; and a national diploma in applied science. There are 164 full-time and 7 part-time 16- to 18-year-old students and 25 full-time and 22 part-time students aged 19 plus.

Strengths

- high success rates in 2006/07 on full-time courses in A-level mathematics and physics, and AS psychology
- wide range of teaching and learning activities in most lessons
- good target setting, action planning and reviewing progress with students
- good course review and self-evaluation.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on AS physics, mathematics, and chemistry
- slow pace and inappropriate questioning technique in a minority of lessons
- lack of vocational provision at level 2.

Achievement and standards

38. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall, success, retention, and achievement rates for GCE and GCSE courses improved in 2006/07 and are now around the national averages. Success rates for A-level mathematics and physics, and AS level psychology courses were high in 2006/07. However, success rates for AS level courses in chemistry, mathematics and physics remain below the national average and retention rates are low. Pass rates for all courses apart from AS level physics were around, or above, the national average. A high proportion of students continue onto A level. Many students demonstrate good understanding of subjects and good evaluative skills during group discussions of topics. Overall attendance has improved and is now satisfactory.

Quality of provision

39. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most lessons comprise a variety of activities which promote students' understanding and interest. ILT is used well to support learning. Schemes of work and lesson plans are comprehensive and well thought out, although the meeting of individual learning needs is variable. In many lessons, the pace is good and students make good progress; questioning is well focused and challenging, with students participating effectively in discussion and small group activities. In a few lessons, the pace is slow and students lose concentration. Questions are not always appropriately

directed and students' understanding is not assessed sufficiently well. Attention to students' health and safety is good.

40. The range of courses is satisfactory overall. Whilst the national diploma in applied science provides an alternative to the GCE programme, there is no vocational provision at level 2. The broad programme of subject-based enrichment activities complements the cross-college provision. Participation is high and students speak positively of the benefits the activities make to their learning.
41. Support and guidance for students are good. Initial advice and guidance are good. Students follow courses appropriate to their needs and abilities. Students are set challenging targets which are reviewed regularly with effective actions for improvement. Additional learning support needs are identified early and effective support is provided.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are good. Actions to improve student achievement over the last two years have been successful and success rates have improved to the national average. The lesson observation scheme is accurate. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. A formal process for sharing good practice is not yet in place. Course review is robust and effective targets for improvement are set with course teams. Self-assessment is accurate and equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Engineering

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

43. The college offers a range of full- and part-time courses from levels 1 to 3 in performing engineering operations, electrical and electronic engineering, computer-aided drawing and motor vehicle engineering. Adults generally attend courses alongside younger students. Computer-aided drawing is offered in the evening and attracts predominantly adult learners. Engineering qualifications are offered for 65 school link pupils at level 1. There are 214 full-time and 37 part-time 16- to 18-year-old students and 43 full-time and 169 part-time adult students. There are 60 apprentices and 59 advanced apprentices on engineering and motor vehicle work-based learning programmes.

Strengths

- high standards of student work in performing engineering operations, electrical and electronic engineering
- good use of ILT in many lessons
- good learning support
- effective measures to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- slow achievement of apprenticeship frameworks
- low pass rates on level 1 progression award in automotive principles and level 2 certificate in vehicle maintenance
- insufficient meeting of individual learners' needs in many lessons
- ineffective setting and monitoring of targets.

Achievement and standards

44. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for engineering programmes are around the national averages. Pass rates on some motor vehicle courses are low at levels 1 and 2. The standard of students' work is high with the exception of motor vehicle courses where it is satisfactory. Students enjoy practical lessons and work efficiently and accurately. The development of health and safety practices is good. Pass rates for key skills are at the national rate. There are some good training opportunities for apprentices. Completion rates have increased over the last three years but there is slow achievement of frameworks and they remain below national rates.

Quality of provision

45. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the more effective lessons, teachers use ILT to good effect. Interactive training materials, animated software packages and training materials from the Internet enthuse and motivate students. In many less effective lessons, teachers are unaware of individual students' abilities. Teachers talk too much and fail to check students' progress and understanding regularly within lessons. Assessment is fair and meets the

needs of the respective awarding bodies, but target grade setting is underdeveloped. Internal verification is rigorous.

46. Resources are generally satisfactory and there are some well appointed classrooms and workshops. The range of programmes is satisfactory.
47. Support and guidance for students are good. Initial assessment is rigorous and identifies individual need. Support is quickly in place and students are set incremental targets for development. Induction has been extended to ensure students are on courses at the correct level. Poor use is made of target setting in reviews and tutorials. Targets are imprecise and progress is not monitored and reviewed. Many individual tutorials have not taken place.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The team is new and has identified clear individual roles and responsibilities. Communication is good. Self-assessment is rigorous. Performance data are analysed closely. Teaching and learning observations are accurate in their grading and judgement and inform appraisal and staff development. Weak teaching is confronted and well supported. Internal verification is improving the quality of assessment. Some weaknesses identified at the last inspection still exist. Coordination of on and off the job training for apprentices is inconsistent. Health and safety and equality of opportunity are not fully monitored during work-based learning reviews. The promotion of equality of opportunity overall is satisfactory.

Information communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

49. Full-time ICT courses include the introductory diploma for IT at work at level 1; the first diploma for ICT practitioners at level 2; and a national diploma for ICT practitioners, with systems support, software development and general options. A range of specialist part-time and short courses in networking and web design are taken by adults through the college's CoVE in ICT. There are 235 full-time and 4 part-time students aged 16 to 18 and 51 full-time and 119 part-time students aged 19 plus. There are 7 students on apprenticeship programmes.

Strengths

- high retention on the national diploma in 2006/07
- excellent use of ICT in teaching and learning
- very good tutorial support
- good resources for learning.

Areas for improvement

- low retention on level 1 and 2 courses for 16-18 year olds
- insufficient vocational focus in teaching and learning
- slow pace of lessons
- insufficient breadth of curriculum.

Achievement and standards

50. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are satisfactory. Retention on the national diploma has improved significantly over the last three years and is well above the national average. Retention rates on level 1 and 2 full-time courses have been low for the past three years. Students have well developed practical skills and they talk confidently about ICT. Students are punctual and lessons start on time. Attendance at lessons is very high and there are good processes in place to follow up on students' absences.

Quality of provision

51. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In one of the better lessons, the teacher provided a range of activities including practical, theory and an on-line multi-choice test to maintain motivation. In too many lessons, students are insufficiently challenged and involved and the pace is slow. Teachers make highly effective use of ICT during whole class presentations and by providing on-line teaching and learning materials. There is insufficient vocational focus in lessons. Most student assignments rely on simulations and teachers seldom mention the real applications of ICT to industry or business in lessons.
52. The curriculum is insufficiently broad. The college has withdrawn much of its short course provision this term due to concerns about its quality. The college plans to reintroduce a restructured curriculum from January 2008. The

department is very successful in tailoring courses to meet the needs of local businesses. Courses are run at flexible times on employers' premises to suit shift patterns. On full-time courses for 16 to 18 year old students, there is limited contact with employers and too few opportunities to engage students with real life work experiences.

53. Guidance and support for students are good and tutorials are very good. There is effective monitoring of students' progress and swift action is taken to ensure they do not fall behind. Students appreciate and talk confidently about the tutorial programme and the positive effect it has on achieving target grades.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly created team are aware of the limited progress made since the last inspection and have an accurate view of their strengths and weaknesses. They are well motivated and are making progress against a development plan. Some new courses are in preparation and new employer links are being made. There is much new equipment and rooms are well designed for practical, workshop and whole class teaching and learning. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

55. Full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic therapy are provided. These include national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3 in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. A national diploma is offered in beauty therapy and there are diplomas in theatrical and media make-up and holistic therapy. There are 289 full-time and 15 part-time students aged 16 to 18 and 106 full-time and 113 part-time adult students. Work-based learning provides training for 78 apprentices and 16 advanced apprentices in hairdressing. Fifty-eight school pupils aged 14 to 16 study hairdressing and beauty at level 1.

Strengths

- high success rates on theatrical and media make-up and holistic therapy courses
- high framework completion rates on the hairdressing apprenticeship programme
- very good learning support
- wide range of enrichment activities.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on level 2 hairdressing and level 3 beauty therapy courses
- insufficient attention to aspects of health and safety.

Achievement and standards

56. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are high on theatrical and media make-up and holistic therapy diploma courses. Success and retention rates on hairdressing level 2 and beauty therapy level 3 programmes are much lower than the national average. Success rates are improving in hairdressing level 2 but they are declining in level 3 beauty therapy. For level 2 beauty therapy they are above the national average. Success rates are generally satisfactory at level 1 in both hair and beauty. Students' retention is improving.
57. Framework completions are high on hairdressing apprenticeship programmes in 2006/07.
58. Most students have good appearance and a professional attitude towards their work. Students make satisfactory progress. Their written work demonstrates satisfactory knowledge and understanding. Practical skills are satisfactory overall but good in theatrical make-up and holistic therapy. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

59. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned but meeting individual student needs is not always considered effectively. In the better theory lessons, students work effectively in groups to research or discuss issues. In a practical lesson, theatrical and media students applied make-up to a good standard. Teachers provide constructive feedback on students' written and practical work, which helps students to improve. Assessment, internal verification and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory and have an appropriate focus on the standards of practical skills.
60. The hairdressing and beauty salons are satisfactory and most provide a realistic working environment. Attention to aspects of health and safety is insufficient. The routine testing of electrical equipment is not completed on time and cramped accommodation in one hair salon impedes the teacher's vision of student activities.
61. The range of courses is satisfactory. A very wide range of curriculum enrichment and general enrichment activities enhances students' experience of college and their personal development.
62. Advice and guidance for students are good. Student additional learning support is very good. All students receiving additional learning support were successful in gaining their qualification last year. Additional financial support is available to those in need. Students are well supported by the curriculum team through regular tutorials.

Leadership and management

63. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Changes have been made to improve the provision but it is too early to judge the overall effectiveness of all of these. Teachers are enthusiastic and contribute effectively to the development of the curriculum. The management of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The self-assessment report is wide ranging and identifies many of the areas for improvement noted by inspectors.

Literacy and numeracy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

64. The college offers literacy and numeracy across the campus, in community centres and on employer and partner premises. There are 524 students enrolled. The numbers of 16- to 18-year-old students enrolling on key skills courses is around 1,000.

Strengths

- high success rates in literacy and numeracy at level 2
- high success rates for students receiving additional support
- good personal support for students
- good partnerships in the community to respond to local needs.

Areas for improvement

- poor standards of work in discrete literacy and numeracy lessons on the main campus
- unsatisfactory aspects of teaching and learning
- insufficiently detailed individual learning plans
- insufficiently rigorous teaching observations.

Achievement and standards

65. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates across all aspects of the curriculum have improved over the past three years. Success rates for literacy and numeracy at level 2 have been high for the past two years. Success rates for literacy and numeracy level 1, and key skills application of number and communications at levels 1 and 2, are now around the national average. Students who receive additional learning support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills achieve well, with rates averaging 10% above other students.

66. Standards of work are satisfactory or better in much of the externally-based community provision but at the main campus standards are often poor, with work set and reading levels too difficult for students to complete satisfactorily.

Quality of provision

67. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers are sensitive to individual learning needs, allow students time to absorb new information and provide contexts for learning that are meaningful. In weaker lessons, teachers do not ensure that learning is taking place, and rely too heavily on worksheets. The approach is too conceptually demanding, with insufficient practical application or relevance and over reliance on interventions from learning support assistants. Insufficient opportunity is provided for students to consolidate and demonstrate skills learnt. Resources are satisfactory overall. ICT equipment is available, but is not always used effectively.

68. Individual learning plans are insufficiently detailed, with too much emphasis on general examination-driven targets and insufficient focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Those developed in the community are more effective.
69. Students' assessment is satisfactory. Students have an initial assessment and may also have an on-line diagnostic assessment. Records of progress for those in receipt of individual learning support are comprehensively completed. Students' work is not always marked in good time.
70. The range of provision is satisfactory. It is very flexible in the community, with extensive partnerships, meeting a wide range of needs. However, discrete literacy and numeracy provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is insufficient.
71. Advice and guidance for students are good. Personal support for students is good. Students across all aspects of the provision are clear where they can find help and make good use of the learner support services.

Leadership and management

72. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications have improved and staff work more closely together. Staff have good access to training and development but most have not had recent equalities training. Overall, equality of opportunity is satisfactory.
73. The college has very productive external partnerships and plans the community provision well with other local providers.
74. The teaching observation scheme is insufficiently rigorous in identifying unsatisfactory aspects of teaching and learning. The self-assessment report does not adequately identify areas for improvement. The Skills for Life policy is very new and has yet to be implemented.

Business, administration and law

Good: Grade 2

Context

75. The college offers full- and part-time courses from levels 1 to 3 in business and management studies, accountancy, law and business administration. Students work towards a range of qualifications, including NVQs in accounting, introductory, first and national diplomas, GCE AS and A levels, and certificates in bookkeeping, management and marketing. Apprenticeship programmes are offered in accounting, administration and customer service. There are 357 full-time and 39 part-time students aged 16 to 18 and 90 full-time and 606 part-time students aged 19 plus. There are 93 learners on apprenticeship programmes.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses in 2006/07
- high timely success rates on apprenticeship frameworks
- good teaching and learning which meet individual students' needs
- good support for students
- good curriculum management.

Areas for improvement

- poor retention on national diploma course
- poor achievement of full-time learners on the foundation certificate in accounting
- underdeveloped employer links to support full-time provision.

Achievement and standards

76. Achievement and standards are good. Overall success rates on long courses have increased to a level significantly above national averages. Success rates are high on most courses and for the timely achievement of full framework apprenticeships. However, retention is poor on the national diploma in business, as is achievement for full-time students on the foundation certificate in accounting.

77. The standard of students' work is good. Written work demonstrates good understanding of business concepts and the ability to apply them in practical situations. Students have good skills of research and analysis. In lessons they articulate their ideas confidently and well.

Quality of provision

78. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned with clear learning outcomes identified. These are explained fully to students. Teachers use a range of well designed activities to meet students' needs and enable them to develop and demonstrate their learning. Questioning to check and extend students' knowledge and understanding is good. Although there is some

effective integration of ILT, its wider use is underdeveloped. Vocational enrichment activities are well planned and linked effectively to assessment and skills development. Arrangements to provide work experience for full-time students are not sufficiently systematic and comprehensive.

79. Assessment and the monitoring of students' progress are good. Verification is rigorous. Teachers monitor students' progress regularly and give clear and constructive feedback on how to improve their work.
80. The range of provision meets the needs and interests of students effectively. Progression opportunities are good and links with the employers of apprentices are productive. There are insufficient links with employers to inform the design of the curriculum, its delivery and the assessment of full-time students.
81. Guidance and support for students are good. Students value the tutorial programme. Individual tutorials have a clear focus on students' performance, with effective joint problem solving and target setting. They contribute very well to students' motivation to succeed. Teachers provide high levels of support, both academic and pastoral, on an informal basis outside lessons.

Leadership and management

82. Leadership and management are good. Curriculum managers focus well on improving the educational and social experience of students. Lesson observations are used effectively to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Course teams work together well to raise the quality of provision. There is effective sharing of good practice. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Teachers make good use of staff development opportunities to enhance their practice. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with 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>
1 Long	04/05	856	61	65	-4	3325	46	62	-16
	05/06	1022	68	69	-1	2784	51	65	-14
	06/07	1236	76			1722	67		
GNVQs	04/05	21	67	68	-1	1	0	64	-64
	05/06	23	74	72	2	1	0
	06/07	9	67			2	100		
NVQs	04/05	58	52	68	-16	108	66	66	
	05/06	60	72	72		19	63	74	-11
	06/07	97	76			34	100		
Other	04/05	777	61	64	-3	3216	45	62	-17
	05/06	939	68	69	-1	2764	51	65	-14
	06/07	1130	77			1686	65		

Table 2

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 long	04/05	1091	60	61	-1	2718	53	60	-7
	05/06	1061	64	66	-2	2043	60	66	-6
	06/07	1113	72			1707	69		
GCSEs	04/05	400	61	64	-3	154	53	63	-10
	05/06	296	66	68	-2	95	61	67	-6
	06/07	199	70			22	59		
GNVQs	04/05	75	67	67		12	58	75	-17
	05/06	56	73	69	4	2	100	68	32
	06/07	19	95			5	80		
NVQs	04/05	233	58	57	1	1043	59	60	-1
	05/06	258	51	65	-14	597	59	67	-8
	06/07	242	62			666	67		
Other	04/05	383	57	61	-4	1509	49	59	-10
	05/06	451	70	66	4	1349	60	65	-5
	06/07	653	76			1014	71		

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with 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	1312	59	68	-9	1434	60	58	2
	05/06	1116	67	70	-3	1036	64	63	1
	06/07	1084	72			1092	69		
A/A2 Levels	04/05	236	62	86	-24	121	55	69	-14
	05/06	192	82	87	-5	73	56	72	-16
	06/07	164	88			55	84		
AS Levels	04/05	564	53	66	-13	142	37	52	-15
	05/06	447	58	67	-9	91	44	55	-11
	06/07	363	71			58	62		
GNVQs	04/05	67	70	61	9	40	73	54	19
	05/06	14	64	66	-2	25	72	57	15
	06/07	2	50			14	50		
NVQs	04/05	42	55	63	-8	574	54	56	-2
	05/06	44	61	71	-10	434	64	63	1
	06/07	77	65			519	64		
Other	04/05	403	63	60	3	557	71	59	12
	05/06	419	69	65	4	413	68	64	4
	06/07	478	67			309	74		

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	119	39	48	29	34
		timely	120	22	31	14	22
	05/06	overall	84	52	53	35	44
		timely	87	30	34	20	28
	06/07	overall	68	69	64	63	56
		timely	57	42	41	40	35
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	187	42	51	20	39
		timely	155	10	29	5	22
	05/06	overall	223	55	58	48	52
		timely	229	29	38	24	34
	06/07	overall	231	65	65	57	60
		timely	210	32	45	28	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/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

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