Wiltshire College

Inspection report

Provider reference	132779
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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 achievements 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.   Wiltshire College was created in 2000 by the merger of two general further education colleges and a specialist land-based college. The college has three large campuses at Chippenham, Lackham and Trowbridge and local centres in most of the main towns in the surrounding area. The college's mission is to enable their learners to succeed.

2.   Wiltshire is generally an affluent county but a few areas served by the college are considerably less prosperous. The proportion of school leavers in Wiltshire with five or more GCSEs at A* to C is above the national average. Almost all schools in the area have sixth forms. The college no longer offers general certificate of education (GCE) AS or A levels to full-time students.

3.   Wiltshire College offers programmes in all 15 sector subject areas (SSAs) to over 2,300 full-time learners aged 16-18, over 400 full-time adult learners and to over 4,000 part-time learners. Just over half of full-time equivalent learners aged 16-18 and around one third of adults take courses at level 3. There are almost 400 full-time equivalent higher education learners through partnership arrangements.

4.   The college also holds a large contract to deliver personal and community development learning (PCDL) to over 3,000 learners. The college manages local work-based learning apprenticeships in addition to contracts with the army. In 2005/06, there were over 500 learners on apprenticeships and over 100 learners in entry to employment (E2E). The college provides education to about 100 learners aged 14-16 on a full-time basis at its main campuses and offers vocational provision, including young apprenticeships, to learners aged 14-16 who are at school. The proportion of learners from black and minority ethnic groups is higher than in the local community.

5.   The college has a Beacon Award for work with the Royal Armoured Corps across the UK and Europe and Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in digital and broadcast media, plumbing and gas safety, and engineering.

6.   Wiltshire College has been selected as the preferred merger partner of Salisbury College, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory : Grade 3

Capacity to improve	Satisfactory : Grade 3

Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2

Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity	*Good: Contributory grade 2*

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision   **Satisfactory: Grade 3**

7.   This is a satisfactory college with a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Achievement and standards are also satisfactory. There is strong development of personal, practical and work-related skills and high progression rates for most learners. Learners' attendance is satisfactory. Success rates for apprentices in work-based learning are high. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 at level 3 are below national average, accounting for just over half of all learners in this age group. There is too much variation in success rates across the range of the college's work. Target setting for students is not yet sufficiently rigorous to enable them to make good or better progress.

8.   The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A significant proportion of lessons are less than good. The lesson observation process does not provide a reliable view of the quality of lessons.

9.   The extent to which the college meets the needs and interests of learners, employers and the local community is good. There is highly effective partnership working and employer engagement. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. The college enrichment programme, 'Community Campus', is outstanding and highly relevant to student needs. Guidance and support are good. Pastoral and additional learning support are highly effective.

10.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new principal, together with the governing body, has put in place a clear vision and strategic plan for the college. Equality of opportunity is well embedded and promoted. However, quality improvement strategies are as yet insufficiently effective. The self-assessment process lacks rigour and reliability. It does not currently provide a sufficient overview of the full range of the college's work.

Capacity to improve   **Satisfactory: Grade 3**

11.   The college's capacity to make further improvements is satisfactory. Target setting is now systematic and in the last year all curriculum areas have set annual targets for learners' success rates. Challenging targets for learners' success at college level have also been set. However, quality improvement lacks consistency. The college has recently introduced well considered changes to improve quality but new systems are not yet sufficiently effective. The lesson observation process does not give a reliable view of the quality of teaching and learning. The monitoring of key processes is not sufficiently rigorous. The self-assessment report does not identify a number of areas for improvement found during the inspection and grades a number of key areas optimistically. It does not provide a sufficient overview of the range of the college's work.

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

12.   The college has taken satisfactory steps to promote improvement since the last inspection. Overall learner success rates have now improved to around the national average but they are below average for the large numbers of learners aged 16-18 at level 3. Teaching and learning remain satisfactory in a significant proportion of lessons. The college has established good partnership links with many employers and schools. The curriculum meets the LSC's priority targets.

Key strengths

- good development of personal, practical and work-related skills
- high success rates for apprentices in work-based learning
- high progression rates for most learners
- well planned curriculum meeting the needs of learners
- enrichment of the students' experience through 'Community Campus' provision
- highly effective partnership working and employer engagement
- good pastoral and additional learning support
- clear vision and strategic planning
- good approach to and embedding of equality and diversity.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- success rates at level 3 for learners aged 16-18
- the variation in success rates across the range of the college's work
- learners' attendance
- the significant proportion of lessons that remain only satisfactory
- insufficiently rigorous target setting in individual learning plans
- the focus and effectiveness of quality improvement
- the rigour and reliability of self-assessment
- sharing of good practice across the college.

Main findings

Achievement and standards   Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:
WBL   *Good: Grade 2*
Learners aged 14-16   *Good: Grade 2*

13. Learners' achievement and standards overall are satisfactory but good in work-based learning and for learners aged 14-16. This does not reflect the more optimistic self-assessment judgement made by the college. At the time of the last inspection, success rates for most learners on long courses were above average. There was a decline in performance in 2002/03 and again in 2003/04, when success rates in significant areas of the college's work were below average. Since then there has been strong improvement in success rates for most learners on long courses. However, this rate of improvement is set against a national average that is rising significantly.

14. Unvalidated college data indicate that success rates for learners aged 16-18 in 2006/07 were high on level 1 courses, average at level 2 and below average at level 3. Learners at level 3 account for just over half of all learners aged 16-18. Success rates for adults were around the national average. There is too much variation in success rates across the range of the college's work in different subject areas. Target setting is not yet sufficiently rigorous and challenging for all students to enable them to make good or better progress.

15. Learners enjoy their studies and their attendance is satisfactory. The standard of their work is generally good. They work safely and develop valuable practical and work-related skills that equip them well for employment. Progression into employment or further study is good. Key skills success rates are improving and are well above average. As a result, learners are well equipped for their future social and economic wellbeing. Overall success rates in work-based learning are high. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their framework within the planned timescale is above average, but is still too low.

Quality of provision   Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:
Train to Gain   *Satisfactory: Grade 3*

16. The quality of provision is good overall but is satisfactory for learners in Train to Gain. The college's self-assessment recognises these differences. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but good in adult and community learning. The summary of lesson observations carried out by the college during 2006/07 shows a significant proportion of lessons that are satisfactory and this has remained largely unchanged since the last

inspection. Observations conducted so far in 2007/08 have yet to be moderated by the college but inspectors had insufficient confidence in the accuracy and reliability of these observations. In the majority of joint observations conducted with inspectors, college observers tended to over-grade the lessons.

17. In the better lessons, interactive learning technology is used well to help learners understand and make progress with their studies. The college's virtual learning environment, 'E-study', is readily accessible in many areas and is appropriately used by students for independent research and guided learning.

18. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. Many staff are well qualified and experienced. Specialist equipment is generally satisfactory and in some cases, for instance in media production, it is very good. Accommodation is adequate but some classrooms are cramped and are not easily adapted for flexible use. The college has taken effective steps to improve the accommodation and specialist resources used to support students in foundation studies.

19. The suitability and rigour of assessments are satisfactory. Assessments are timely and in most cases students receive constructive feedback in verbal and written form. Students are clear as to what they need to do to achieve. However, target setting in the individual learning plans is not yet rigorous and challenging for all students. Key skills provision is satisfactory. The college has recognised the previous weaknesses of this provision and has taken well considered and effective steps to improve it further.

20. The identification and provision for additional learning needs are good. Teachers use initial assessment well to inform individual learning plans. The provision of additional learning support is both timely and effective. A very high proportion of those learners identified as requiring this support take advantage of it. Their success rates are at least comparable to those of their peers. Support for learners aged 14-16 is particularly strong.

21. The extent to which the college meets the needs and interests of learners, employers and the local community is good. The college has re-modelled the curriculum for learners aged 16-18. For example, it no longer offers A levels and has introduced more one-year vocational programmes. The college is responsive to regional priorities and workforce training needs. It has good productive partnerships to support the development of 14-19 diplomas and young apprenticeships. Senior managers have worked very effectively to develop supportive links with local schools and organisations working with young people. Communication with partners is good.

22. The college enrichment programme is outstanding and highly relevant to student needs. It is fully integrated into the college curriculum through the 'Community Campus' programme and addresses Every Child Matters themes exceptionally well. Staff and students are both very actively engaged in its improvement and development. It empowers students to take an active part

in college life and the shaping of their own personal and academic development. The uptake is high.

23.   The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. The college provides a broad range of vocational programmes, especially at levels 1 and 2, that meet the needs of learners well. In many curriculum areas there are clear progression pathways from level 1 to 4. The college offers a range of training opportunities that are not available elsewhere in the area through highly effective and innovative partnerships.

24.   Guidance and support are generally good but are satisfactory in adult and community learning. The quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance to learners in relation to both their choice of course and career progression are good. Induction arrangements are thorough. Tutorial support for full-time students is good. For a significant minority of part-time learners it is less well structured. There is good monitoring of 'at risk' students who are identified at an early stage and their subsequent success rates are comparable with those of other students. Pastoral support for all students at college is good. A wide range of self-help is also offered through the 'Community Campus' programme in areas such as health and personal safety issues. Learners make good use of available financial, counselling, child care and transport services. The college has a very active student council with a large representation from all programmes. It has brought about a number of significant improvements to the college environment.

Leadership and management   Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:
Equality of opportunity   *Good: Grade 2*
Work-based learning   *Good: Grade 2*
Learners aged 14-16   *Good: Grade 2*

25.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, the college self-assessment report judged leadership and management to be good. Overall, college success rates improved in 2006/07 to around the national average but they were above average at the last inspection. Student success rates are lower than average for the high numbers of students studying at level 3. The new principal, in post for just over a year, together with the governing body, has revised the strategic direction of the college. A strong vision for improvement has been effectively shared with staff. Governors are well informed and highly committed to the college's success. College provision meets the LSC's priority targets. Communication is good and staff appreciate the approachable and consultative style of management demonstrated by the new principal and senior managers.

26.   New actions to raise standards have been implemented over the last year. These include changes to the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of learners more appropriately. Entry requirements are now adhered to more

consistently and support for learners at risk of leaving their courses early is strong. The number of advanced practitioners has been increased and there are opportunities for teachers to share good practice although in a minority of areas this is under-developed. The management of work-based learning and the provision for learners aged 14-16 is good.

27.   Target setting is now systematic and in the last year all curriculum areas have set annual targets for learner success rates. Challenging targets for learner success at college level have also been set. Reliable management information is now available to staff and managers through a new electronic reporting system. The equality and diversity committee has a well informed overview of the performance of particular groups of learners, such as those receiving additional learning support, or of minority ethnic heritage. However, there is no similar analysis completed at curriculum level.

28.   Equality of opportunity is good. The response of the college to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, child protection legislation and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 is good. Staff and students are trained in all aspects of equality of opportunity. Student performance and feedback are monitored effectively. Actions are put in place to address issues identified and governors receive regular reports on progress. All staff are trained in child protection issues.

29.   However, the focus and effectiveness of quality improvement are inconsistent. The college has recently introduced well considered changes to improve quality but new systems are not yet sufficiently effective. The sharing of good practice across the college is underdeveloped. The lesson observation process does not give a reliable view of the quality of teaching and learning. Areas for improvement are not always identified effectively. The re-observation of teachers of weaker lessons is inconsistently managed. The monitoring of key processes is not sufficiently rigorous. The self-assessment report does not identify a number of areas for improvement found during the inspection and grades a number of key areas optimistically. It does not provide a sufficient overview of the range of the college's work.

30.   Most accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory but there are some cramped and unsuitable classrooms. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Learners' achievements *

Table 1

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

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	*Diff*	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	*Diff*
1 Long	04/05	1675	57	65	-8	3123	57	62	-5
	05/06	1466	72	69	3	2597	62	65	-3
	06/07	1932	79			2330	67		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05								
	05/06								
	06/07								
NVQs	04/05	172	68	68	0	30	60	66	-6
	05/06	166	78	72	6	27	59	74	-15
	06/07	133	74						
Other	04/05	1483	56	64	-8	3093	57	62	-5
	05/06	1296	71	69	2	2568	62	65	-3
	06/07	1799	80			2321	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.

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	*Diff*	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	*Diff*
2 long	04/05	1779	62	61	1	1804	62	60	2
	05/06	1676	65	66	-1	1652	65	66	-1
	06/07	2137	70			1438	66		0
GCSEs	04/05	221	60	64	-4	308	63	63	0
	05/06	171	58	68	-10	233	69	67	2
	06/07	161	50			286	59		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05								
	05/06								
	06/07								
NVQs	04/05	312	57	57	0	185	57	60	-3
	05/06	222	67	65	2	272	62	67	-5
	06/07	337	68			186	56		
Other	04/05	1203	63	61	2	1310	63	59	4
	05/06	1268	65	66	-1	1146	66	65	1
	06/07	1626	73			962	71		

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.

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	04/05	1344	58	68	-10	1096	59	58	1
	05/06	1127	65	70	-5	1023	60	63	-3
	06/07	1267	66			908	66		
A/A2 Levels	04/05	67	90	86	4	39	77	69	8
	05/06	73	79	87	-8	16	56	72	-16
	06/07								
AS Levels	04/05	233	55	66	-11	77	53	52	1
	05/06	99	35	67	-32	76	53	55	-2
	06/07	65	32			36	58		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	114	55	61	-6				
	05/06	77	70	66	4				
	06/07								
NVQs	04/05	38	68	63	5	227	52	56	-4
	05/06	76	45	71	-26	208	55	63	-8
	06/07	114	64			234	63		
Other	04/05	892	57	60	-3	731	61	59	2
	05/06	802	68	65	3	720	62	64	-2
	06/07	1059	69			630	67		

* note to the achievement tables: qualification types with low numbers or that have been discontinued have been omitted from the table for the benefit of clarity.

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	61	51	48	36	34
		timely	70	47	31	31	21
	05/06	overall	120	78	54	59	44
		timely	124	57	34	41	27
	06/07	overall	58	84	64	69	56
		timely	86	47	41	41	35
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	623	76	50	69	38
		timely	644	34	29	29	22
	05/06	overall	965	78	58	72	53
		timely	889	57	38	45	33
	06/07	overall	127	81	65	70	60
		timely	114	52	45	45	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'

LSC data for 2006/07 has yet to be validated

Table 5

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

Year	Number of starts in year	Achieved Objectives *	Progression **	Still in learning
04/05	251	172	133	0
05/06	213	132	108	2
06/07	212	133	100	72

> *   These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme
>
> **   Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period

LSC data for 2006/07 has yet to be validated