

# Southport College

Inspection report

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Provider reference	130491
Published date	January 2008

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Audience	Post-sixteen
Published date	January 2008
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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 on ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](http://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 care and public services; construction, engineering and manufacturing technologies; information and communication technology (ICT); arts, media and publishing, and foundations for learning and life.
- An additional inspector inspected learndirect provision. Findings are incorporated into provision for ICT and foundations for learning and life.

## Description of the provider

1. Southport College operates from a main site near Southport town centre, a purpose built building in Formby and a site leased from Sefton Council in South Sefton. In 2006/07, 6% of courses were offered in the community and 6% by franchise partners. For 2007/08, community provision is to be further reduced. In 2006/07, there were 6,638 enrolments of which 1,841 were for learners aged 16 to 18 and 4,797 were for learners aged 19 or over. The number of 16 to 18 year old learners at the college has increased since 2005.
2. Southport is a seaside town of around 100,000, in the metropolitan borough of Sefton. There are five colleges in the area and a residential college for students with severe or complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are 12 schools for 11 to 18 year olds and two special schools, with students over 16-years-old.
3. The unemployment rate in Sefton at 5.8% broadly compares with the regional average. In September 2007, approximately 80% of 16 to 18 year olds continued in full-time education or training and 9.3% were not in education or training.
4. The area has mainly service industries, including tourism and caring occupations. Other large employment sectors are retail, public administration, and health and social care. The college employs approximately 350 staff and is one of the largest local employers.
5. The college offers courses in all sector subject areas. From September 2007, it no longer offered full-time GCE A level provision. Vocational courses for full time learners are offered from entry level to level 4. Higher education is franchised through local universities. The college collaborates extensively with local schools. Activities to engage employers are a high priority, with a "SkillWorks" contract to deliver employer training across Merseyside. Employers are actively involved in the college's health and social care Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE).
6. The college aims to address community needs through learning opportunities and skills training. The college's mission is to work in partnership to provide high quality education and training for individuals and employers.

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

### Sector subject areas

Health, care and public services	Outstanding: Grade 1
Construction	Satisfactory : Grade 3
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Satisfactory : Grade 3
Information and communication technology	Good: Grade 2
Arts, media and publishing	Good: Grade 2
Foundations for learning and life	Satisfactory : Grade 3

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

7. Southport College provides good quality education and support for its learners. Achievement and standards are good with rising trends in success rates over a number of years. Success rates for adult learners are particularly high and there are good improvements for 16 to 18 year old students at level 2 on long courses. Success rates on key skills courses and for learners aged 14 to 16 are very high. Students with a learning difficulty or a learning disability achieve well. Short course success rates are low but improving.
8. Teaching and learning are good and arrangements to assure its quality are effective. Teaching in practical lessons effectively encourages successful skills development and good progress. Assessment practice and procedures for initial assessment are robust. Targeted support for learners at risk of leaving their programme is very effective. The quality of target setting for some learners is weak and not all teachers attend sufficiently to individual learning needs. Learning resources and the use of information learning technology (ILT) are good. Key skills provision and programmes for learners aged 14 to 16 are particularly good in many vocational areas. Support and guidance for learners are good.
9. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. Links with local schools are exceptionally strong and with employers they are continuing to improve. The CoVE in health and social care is highly successful.
10. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good and each individual learner is respected and valued. The curriculum offers good opportunities for progression. Successful action is taken to address barriers to learning. Many learners, including those with specific learning difficulties or disabilities, achieve well. The college is completely accessible to learners with physical disabilities. It engages many vulnerable learners, including young offenders and older isolated members within local communities.
11. Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders and governors set a clear strategic direction for the college. Managers have implemented many effective quality improvements and are particularly successful in sustaining improvements in success rates. They have maintained a strong financial position and invested in significant improvements to the college learning environment. The curriculum now focuses on meeting regional and national priorities. The college has met its challenging targets to increase the recruitment of students aged 16 to 18.

## Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

12. The college demonstrates a good capacity to improve. Leadership and governance are strong. Success rates have improved consistently since the last inspection and are particularly high for adult learners and in key skills, although improvement rates vary across curriculum areas particularly for students aged 16 to 18. Staff development focuses strongly on measures to improve learning. The curriculum is strongly vocational and successfully meets local and regional priorities. Strong financial health has supported significant investment in improvements to accommodation and learning resources. The college's annual self-assessment arrangements are rigorous and enable managers to support quality improvement measures across all areas of the college. The report is broadly accurate but failed to identify some areas for improvement such as the setting and monitoring of course targets.

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

13. The college has made good progress in addressing many areas for improvement since the last inspection. The quality of provision in two curriculum areas has improved as has leadership and management. The quality of the learning environment and the use of management information throughout the college have improved considerably. Shortcomings in literacy and numeracy have been addressed. The quality of inclusion is outstanding.

## Key strengths

- consistently high success rates for adult learners
- good measures to improve students' confidence and aspirations
- improvements in key skills
- outstanding educational and social inclusion
- effective collaboration with schools and other educational providers
- very good tutorial support for full-time students
- effective leadership and governance
- successful remodelling of the curriculum
- strong and sustained financial health.

## Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- success rates on short courses
- the use of individual learner targets in some areas
- arrangements for setting and monitoring course targets
- shortcomings in the range of enrichment opportunities
- employer links in a few areas.

## Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grades:*

*Students aged 16 to 18*

*Learndirect*

*Satisfactory: Grade 3*

*Satisfactory: Grade 3*

14. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that achievement and standards are good. Success rates for over 70% of students on long level courses are high, particularly for adult learners. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on long courses have steadily improved since 2005/06, particularly at level 2, and none is below the national average for 2005/06. Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 are particularly good in hairdressing and motor vehicle programmes. The success rates of the small number of learners from minority ethnic groups are below college averages. Short course success rates are low but improving. Key skills success rates are good and well above the low national average particularly in application of number and communications. Achievement in health, social and childcare, engineering and for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. They are good for adult learners in ICT. They are more mixed and broadly satisfactory in construction, arts media and performing arts, and foundations for learning and life.
15. Students produce accomplished practical work in performing arts, and art and design particularly at level 2. There is good progression from level 2 to level 3 and to higher education by health, public services, social care and arts learners. Learners on Skills for Life programmes grow in confidence and are able to apply new skills effectively. Their attendance and punctuality are particularly good. Overall attendance is generally good including for part-time adult learners. The achievement of learners on learndirect programmes are satisfactory and improving.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

16. Inspectors agreed with the college's own judgement that teaching and learning are good. Through rigorous systems the college has an accurate view of the quality of its teaching and learning. Teaching and learning advisers are used well to support improvements in teaching. The lesson observation system helps teachers hone their skills and encourages better sharing of good practice. Observers are well trained to moderate judgements and grades. Inspectors agreed with the summary judgements of college observers in joint observations carried out during the inspection.
17. Most lessons employ a range of activities to meet the differing needs of learners. There is good provision for learners aged 14 to 16 in many vocational areas. Students enjoy their lessons and make good progress. Resources to support learning are good in many areas and outstanding in



- performing arts. Teachers and learners make good use of information and learning technology and virtual learning environments. In the best lessons teachers use questioning techniques effectively and students respond well to challenging tasks. Some teachers fail to plan sufficiently for learners' individual needs and targets, and check that all learners understand in group sessions.
18. The provision for key skills has greatly improved since the last inspection and specialist key skills staff are based in faculties. Learners understand the relevance of key skills assignments to their main vocational studies.
  19. Assessment practice is good. Well considered policies and procedures inform assessment practice, standardisation, internal verification and moderation. Regular checks are used to maintain high quality practice. Strong performance is praised by senior managers. Written and verbal feedback helps learners improve their work effectively. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress.
  20. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. The curriculum offers good progression opportunities in most areas and is highly responsive to national and regional priorities. A wide range of courses is offered from pre-entry level through to level 4. The college has successful young apprenticeship programmes in engineering and hospitality but recognises the need to develop further its apprenticeship programme. Learners receive good pre-course information and this is often presented in a lively and imaginative way.
  21. The college is trusted by its partners and links with community groups, training organisations and local schools are excellent. Over 300 students aged 14 to 16 take courses across eight vocational areas. Progression to full-time education is good. The schools are confident that their pupils get good teaching and support. The college has a lead role in preparing for the introduction of new diploma qualification.
  22. The college responds well to the needs of local employers through Train to Gain and its "SkillsWorks" contract. Employer engagement is well developed in health and social care but underdeveloped in engineering and construction. Employers appreciate the flexible response to their needs and the high quality training provided. The number of work placements for learners has increased by 40% in 2007/08 but the college recognises the need for further improvement.
  23. The cross-college enrichment programme includes sporting activities and opportunities to contribute to community development through fundraising and voluntary work. There are too few opportunities in drama. The range of enrichment activities is good in many but not all curriculum areas.
  24. Learners receive good guidance and support for their personal development and their studies. The college, in partnership with Connexions and outside agencies, provides comprehensive and accessible support both at the main

site and in community venues. All learners speak warmly of the prompt and sensitive help in dealing with personal issues.

25. Additional learning support is promoted strongly and procedures for identifying and assessing needs are thorough. The college currently supports over 400 learners, including 130 who receive in-class support. There are 110 students with dyslexia who receive specialist support. Very few students fail to take up support but there are occasional delays in informing subject tutors of support requirements. In 2006/07, 88% of learners receiving support successfully completed their courses, which is above the college average.
26. Tutorial support for full-time learners is outstanding and pastoral tutors are exceptionally well trained. The tutorial programme promotes a healthy lifestyle, and helps students make career choices. Specific programmes for adult learners have been developed. Over 300 learners in the autumn term have participated in an "Eat the Frog" activity helping them achieve their short term goals. This is an imaginative Aim Higher activity designed to encourage learners to complete a task that they have to but do not want to do. The monitoring of learners' progress through individual tutorials is thorough. Case conferences successfully help at-risk learners stay on track. Most learners prepare carefully for these reviews by identifying where they need to improve.

## Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grades:**Equality of opportunity**Good: Grade 2**Learners aged 14 to 16**Outstanding: Grade 1*

27. Leadership and management are good. Strong senior leadership and governance provide a clear strategic direction for the college. Improving the quality of the learners' experience is at the heart of decision-making processes. A well established culture supports staff in recognising their contribution to the college's success. The curriculum has been remodelled to meet local, regional and national priorities. Effective collaboration, particularly with local schools and voluntary agencies, ensures the provision is responsive to the needs of diverse communities. The college exceeds challenging targets in the recruitment of students aged 16 to 18. There are sustained improvements in success rates at all levels. Good progress has been made in addressing areas for improvement from the last inspection. Governance, a strength at the last inspection, has continued to improve. Governors monitor the performance of the college very well.
28. Arrangements for quality assurance are successful in securing improvements. Management information is accurate and used well by staff to monitor students' performance. Strategies to address poorly performing courses, including a system of 'Red Flagging', help to improve success rates. However, targets to improve success rates and arrangements for monitoring at-risk courses are not always established early enough. The college's self-assessment report is broadly accurate although in a few areas it is not sufficiently self-critical. Curriculum management is satisfactory or better. Management structures have been reorganised to support new developments in the curriculum but it is too early to assess the full impact of the changes.
29. Staff are well qualified and take up extensive opportunities to further develop their skills. Staff development programmes focus on issues such as improving the quality of teaching and learning and helping students understand others. Teachers spend time in industry updating their vocational skills. Throughout the college there is very good up-to-date ILT equipment. The college provides a safe and welcoming environment for students, staff and visitors.
30. The college's commitment to and the promotion of equality and diversity is good. It works hard to attract students from diverse groups and to provide services which help them to achieve their aims. Appropriate policies are implemented effectively. Reports to governors on the performance of different student groups are very thorough. Learners' views about the quality of provision are acted upon. Arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are robust. Vetting of staff is carried out rigorously. The college has responded effectively to the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002.

31. Outstanding financial health has supported substantial strategic investment in accommodation and learning resources and reorganisation of the curriculum. Senior managers monitor closely expenditure, staff and room utilisation. Success rates have improved consistently. The college offers outstanding value for money.

## Sector subject area

Health, public services and care

Outstanding: Grade 1

## Context

32. Of the 798 learners, 21% are male and 2% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. About 50% attend full-time and 48% are aged 16 to 18. A wide range of programmes is offered in health, social care and public services. Full-time programmes include the national diplomas in early years and public services, and a nursing cadet scheme. Part-time courses include counselling, reflexology, health and safety. 481 learners are taking NVQ programmes.

## Strengths

- very high success rates
- outstanding progression
- very good development of professional practice skills
- consistently good teaching
- very good employer engagement
- excellent curriculum management.

## Areas for improvement

- there are no areas for improvement.

## Achievement and standards

33. Success rates on long and short programmes are very high at all levels and have continued to improve, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Success rates on level 1 food hygiene courses are above 90% and there are similar trends on level 2 and level 3 courses. The attendance of learners is very good.
34. Health care, early years and public services learners develop very good professional skills and apply them to their work. They acquire good communication, number and IT key skills. Their written work is of a high standard.
35. A significant majority of full-time learners progress from level 2 to level 3 programmes. Progression to degrees from the nursing cadet scheme and the access to caring professions award is outstanding. Early years learners progress to higher education. Large numbers of public service learners on the national diploma find employment in the profession.

## Quality of provision

36. Learners benefit from consistently good teaching and learning. Teachers set challenging learning goals that encourage learners to achieve. Teachers plan

well for students' individual learning needs with good support for less able learners and activities that stretch the more able. Teachers display good contemporary vocational knowledge and make good use of ILT. Learners enjoy good access to specialist resources including IT, set texts and specialised health care equipment. Learners enjoy a healthy environment, with access to fresh drinking water and good advice about staying safe. Parents are kept well informed of students' progress. Assessment practice is robust and good use is made of a wide range of assessment tools. Learners receive good advice on how to improve their work.

37. The programme effectively meets the needs and interests of learners. Employers are actively engaged in programmes and asked to identify areas for improvement. Learners enjoy good quality work placements. Learners benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities such as additional qualifications in paediatric first aid, the Duke of Edinburgh award, and visits to the slavery museum.
38. Learners are effectively supported and the on-line progress review system works well. Group tutorials cover key features of the children act, including financial issues and bullying. Additional learning support is well established in the classroom.

#### Leadership and management

39. The management of the large and complex curriculum is excellent. Improvement measures are effective. Minimum target grades for learners were successfully introduced to raise the low value added to learners' achievement in some programmes. Staff competently monitor learner attendance and performance and identify at-risk learners. Large numbers of staff attend relevant short courses to maintain their professional knowledge.
40. The sharing of good practice is actively supported by a subject learning coach. Equality and diversity is strongly promoted and learners have a good understanding of relevant legislation. The self-assessment report is accurate and well informed by learner views but not those of employers. Quality systems are robust.

## Construction

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

41. There are 450 students. Of these seven are female, 85% are on full-time courses and 57% are aged 16 to 18. The college provides full- and part-time courses in construction crafts at foundation and intermediate levels and in building services to advanced level. Courses include bricklaying, painting and decorating, plumbing, gas installation and electrical installation. The college franchises some construction NVQ qualifications to a work-based learning provider. Nine 14 to 16 year olds from local schools take a foundation programme in construction.

### Strengths

- outstanding success rates on gas installation programmes
- good practical skills development
- good provision in gas installation and painting and decorating.

### Areas for improvement

- poor success rates on electrical installation
- inadequate arrangements for bricklaying, plumbing and electrical installation students to acquire industry recognised qualifications
- poor accommodation for practical activities in brickwork and plumbing.

### Achievement and standards

42. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are outstanding on gas installation NVQs, and satisfactory on the foundation construction award in trowel occupations and the certificate in basic plumbing skills courses. Success rates on electrical installation courses are poor. Students participate well in learning activities and develop good practical skills. In gas installation and decorative occupations, learners produce high standards of work and make good progress towards their learning and qualification goals. Attendance rates are satisfactory.

### Quality of provision

43. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching is good in gas installation, and painting and decorating. Learning and assessment activities in these areas are well planned and students know what they need to do to achieve their learning goals. Teaching in brickwork, electrical installation and plumbing is satisfactory but learning outcomes for students are not always sufficiently measurable. Assessment and the quality of verbal feedback against vocational competencies are satisfactory in brickwork, electrical installation and plumbing, and good in gas installation and painting and decorating. Not all written feedback provides students with enough guidance on how to improve their work.

44. Programmes and activities satisfactorily meet the needs and interests of learners. Gas installation students understand the structure of their course and how it will lead to an industry recognised licence to practice. However, in brickwork, plumbing and electrical installation, programmes are limited to technical certificates up to level 2. There are no programmes which enable students to undertake apprenticeships, or the NVQ qualifications necessary for a transition into employment, although these are part of future plans. Some students have progressed between college programmes at the same level. Construction learners do not participate regularly in college enrichment activities.
45. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Pastoral support is good and pastoral tutors work closely with vocational tutors. Advice to students about their vocational programmes is satisfactory, although some students are not aware that they are working towards technical certificates rather than NVQ programmes.

### Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is satisfactory promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity. There is a comprehensive and well defined strategy for the continued growth and development of the construction provision. Significant investments have been made in premises and staffing to support planned growth. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Observations enable teachers to have a clear picture of how they can improve their teaching and this contributes to the staff performance and review process. New teachers are mentored appropriately and directed to undertake relevant teaching qualifications.
47. The current workshop for brickwork and plumbing is inadequate for the existing student numbers. Overcrowding restricts the range of learning opportunities and in some cases presents potential health and safety issues. There is excessive noise transfer between the two workshops which disrupts learning. The self-assessment identifies strengths of the provision but does not recognise some areas requiring improvement.



## Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Context

48. The college offers courses in mechanical and electrical engineering, welding and fabrication and automotive studies. There are 407 learners studying from pre-entry level to level 3. Of these, 21 are female, 274 are aged 16 to 18 and 133 aged 19 and over. Of these learners, 321 attend full-time courses and 86 attend part-time courses. Seventy-four pupils aged 14 to 16 come from 16 local schools attend day release programmes each week.

## Strengths

- high success rates on many courses
- good monitoring of learners' progress in practical lessons
- good use of ILT to enhance learning
- highly effective school links.

## Areas for improvement

- insufficient checks on individual learning in theory lessons
- narrow range of provision
- insufficient links with employers
- insufficient work placements for full-time students.

## Achievement and standards

49. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high and most have been consistently above national average for the last three years. The standard of learners' work in practical sessions is often high. In motor vehicle, learners develop good practical skills and demonstrate high levels of technical competency.

## Quality of provision

50. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. There is good use of ILT with well designed presentations and animations. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to demonstrate difficult concepts. Most teachers plan frequent changes of activity to maintain learners' interest. In theory lessons teachers rely too much on undirected questioning and checks on individual learning are ineffective. Some learners are not sufficiently stretched by the tasks they are given; they are often too slow and do not sufficiently stretch all learners. Learners work well and independently in practical sessions on the production and testing of welding joints and the repair and maintenance of vehicles. Assessment practice is robust.
51. Learning resources are satisfactory. In engineering, workshop equipment is dated but fit for purpose. However, the only computer numerical control machine is not used and no other machines are fitted with digital readouts. Motor vehicle workshops are satisfactory with some new equipment but

mostly old vehicle stock. Students have opportunities to practise on more recent staff cars and vehicles provided by the police. Classrooms are well equipped with ILT but some classes are disturbed by noise from adjacent workshops.

52. As in the previous inspection, the range of provision is narrow with few part-time or evening courses. The college has recently introduced young apprenticeships in motor vehicle but there are no other apprenticeships. The college recognises the need to improve progression opportunities and employer and community links.
53. Support for learners is satisfactory. The recording and monitoring of learners' progress is particularly effective in practical sessions.
54. As in the last inspection, there are no arrangements for full-time students to obtain realistic work experience through work placements.

#### Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management and the promotion of equality are satisfactory. Although many staff are recently appointed, they clearly understand their responsibilities. Recruitment to courses has increased steadily over the past three years. Through good school links nine schools send pupils to the college and many pupils progress to full-time college programmes. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the report is mostly accurate.

## Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

## Context

56. Of the 609 learners, 135 are aged 16 to 18, 126 attend full-time courses and there are a further 36 on learndirect provision. A wide range of courses with progression opportunities from levels 1 to 4 are offered flexibly at three learning centres. Full-time courses include diplomas in IT at work and for IT practitioners, and learners can progress to a foundation degree. There are part-time courses in basic IT applications, PC maintenance, CISCO, visual basic, web design, and the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). The first certificate is offered in collaboration with four local sixth form colleges.

## Strengths

- very high success rates for adult learners on long level 1 and 2 courses
- particularly good teaching for adult learners
- good support for students aged 16 to 18
- particularly responsive management of IT resources.

## Areas for improvement

- poor value added to learners' achievement on level 3 full-time programmes
- underdeveloped links with industry for full time students.

## Achievement and standards

57. Achievement and standards on most courses are good with particularly high success rates for adult learners on long level 1 and 2 courses. Success rates are low and declining on the full-time first diploma course for students aged 16 to 18. Students on level 3 full-time programmes do not benefit sufficiently from their learning programmes to achieve better than they might have expected to when they joined courses.
58. Most learners develop good practical IT skills and are able to use software confidently. The standard of their assignment work is satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

59. Teaching and learning are good, particularly for adult learners. In all lessons teachers use good questioning techniques to check that learners understand and lessons offer a good mix of group work and independent study. Different learning materials and approaches are used well by teachers to support learners with little previous experience or knowledge of IT. Teachers give clear instructions on tasks and learners make good progress. For some advanced students aged 16 to 18 the teaching is insufficiently challenging and the more able are not given sufficient opportunities to extend their skills.

60. The provision in learndirect is good and learners appreciate the flexible opportunities to study at times that suit their home and work commitments. Sixth form students from local schools can study for additional qualifications through the good collaboration with the college. Full time students have insufficient opportunities for work experience to see IT used in a commercial environment.
61. Guidance and support are good. Support workers provide good support in classes for full-time students. Learners are given good opportunities to extend their employability skills in weekly lessons and these help them learn to study independently. Tutorials are effective in helping students monitor their own progress. Staff and teaching rooms have been brought together into an IT zone and this makes it easier for teachers to monitor students' progress informally. Students praise their teachers' willingness to adapt lessons to suit their preferred learning styles.

### Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are good and managers are supportive to staff. The well organised lesson observation system has led to improvements in teaching. Classrooms in all centres are well equipped with good IT facilities. Specialist facilities are managed efficiently, there is a good IT network and technical support is provided promptly. Arrangements to provide required specialist resources and software are good. New adaptive technology for students with particular needs is purchased quickly to allow learners to start courses promptly. There is good promotion of equality of opportunity. Staff use management information well and verification procedures are rigorous. The self- assessment report is mostly accurate.

## Arts, media and publishing

Good: Grade 2

### Context

63. The college offers vocational art, design, and media and performing arts courses at levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. The considerable majority of students are enrolled on visual arts courses. Of the 576 students, 282 are aged 16 to 18 and 294 are 19 and over. Of these 576 students, 310 study full-time. All of the full-time provision is located on the main site.

### Strengths

- good progression to advanced course and higher education
- good standard of student work
- challenging and stimulating teaching
- outstanding accommodation and facilities in performing arts
- good curriculum management.

### Areas for improvement

- low retention on some courses
- inadequate enrichment provision in performing arts.

### Achievement and standards

64. Success rates are mainly satisfactory, with some very good pass rates, but low retention rates on some courses. College figures for 2007/08 show a significant improvement in retention for students who started in 2006/07. Progression rates between level 2 and level 3 college courses, and to higher education, are particularly high. Students are often accepted by universities with prestigious reputations for their specialist arts courses. Practical work is of a high standard especially in musical theatre, and outstanding in the new BTEC national diploma in photography. Attendance and punctuality are good.

### Quality of provision

65. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have high expectations and students respond well to these challenging demands. Teachers apply rigorous industry standards to their vocational practice. Teachers ensure that students clearly understand the context of lessons and their learning objectives. Most teaching encourages active learning, though in a minority of classes a few students are not fully engaged in the task. Assignments are challenging and have strict deadlines. Verbal and written feedback is precise and offers clear guidance on areas for improvement. Students are able to manage their own learning, to work collaboratively and to take responsibility for their own development. Accommodation and facilities are outstanding in performing arts and of a satisfactory standard in art, design and media. Learners have easy access to ILT resources.

66. There is a wide range of courses. Students enjoy good opportunities to progress from levels 1 to 3 and to degree provision within the college. School links are effective. Visual arts students benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities. However, in performing arts, students' further development is hindered by the lack of enrichment opportunities.
67. Guidance and support for students are good. Students with additional learning needs receive prompt support when they start their courses. Tutorials are particularly effective in helping teachers and students understand barriers to successful learning and the action needed to address these.

### Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are good. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Effective improvement measures are in place and teachers appreciate the extra support they get when they have difficulties with their teaching. Course teams work collaboratively on the development of timetables to ensure they met the needs of students who are required to work across several disciplines. Teachers ask students for their views and try to act upon suggestions for ways of improving courses. There is good promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum. Communication with teachers is good. Many staff have current industry experience. The self-assessment report is mainly accurate apart from a few areas for improvement which are omitted from the report.

## Foundations for learning and life

Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Context

69. The college offers a range of part-time and full-time foundation level programmes. There are progression routes to most vocational areas and pathways leading to open college entry level certificates.
70. The essential skills programme for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities includes a core programme leading to further life skills or skills for working life qualifications. Of the 116 learners on essential skills courses, 58 are full-time. About half of the 285 literacy and numeracy learners study in community venues. There are 66 learners who take literacy and 131 take numeracy courses at entry level. Learners aged 16 to 18 mainly take key skills. The college provides additional literacy and numeracy support for 100 learners on vocational courses. There are 105 learndirect learners.

## Strengths

- outstanding success in key skills at level 1
- good achievement in essential skills
- good development of students' confidence and skills
- strong support for learndirect learners
- good accommodation and resources including ILT.

## Areas for improvement

- poor success rates in entry level adult literacy and adult numeracy in 2006/07
- weak target setting
- insufficiently detailed planning to meet the needs of individual learners.

## Achievement and standards

71. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners develop sufficient confidence and skills to undertake challenging tasks. Learners work hard in lessons and enjoy their studies. Standards of work in most portfolios are good and show the progress they make. Many who have not used computers before develop new skills that improve their employment opportunities. Essential skills learners produce artefacts of a high standard particularly in art and horticulture. There are outstanding success rates in key skills at level 1 and good success rates in essential skills. Learndirect learners with disabilities achieve high success rates. However, success rates for the large numbers of learners on entry level adult numeracy and literacy courses were particularly poor in 2006/07.

## Quality of provision

72. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers give good practical support and help learners to manage their own learning. Teachers give constructive and sensitive feedback. Accommodation and learning resources are of a high

standard and there is good use of interactive whiteboards and ILT. Good on-line resources are available for learndirect courses. In the best lessons teachers set high standards and use relevant activities to motivate learners. However, target setting is weak. Although the diagnostic assessment of learners' basic skills needs is comprehensive the results are not always used to set adequate targets. Targets are not sufficiently integrated into lesson plans. Progress reviews for learndirect learners are not routinely carried out. Although key skills are often fully integrated with vocational assignments this is not carried out in some vocational areas.

73. The college satisfactorily meets the needs of learners. Learndirect learners value the flexible opportunities to study at times that suit them and the provision meets the needs of those who are reluctant to attend a class. Enrichment and work experience opportunities are good for essential skills learners.
74. Support for learners is satisfactory. There is good in-class personal support. Learners with specific needs are routinely assigned a support worker.

#### Leadership and management

75. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers use data effectively to address areas of poor performance. Team meetings focus effectively on quality improvement. Courses are evaluated rigorously. A significant number of staff have gained specialist qualifications. Full-time staff are appraised annually but part time staff have to request an appraisal. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. There is good promotion of learndirect to encourage non-traditional groups into learning. Social inclusion, equality and diversity are actively promoted.



## Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004/05 to 2006/07, 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	1177	64	65	-1	1334	75	62	13
	05-06	1089	76	69	7	1539	74	65	9
	06-07	706	74	-	-	927	76	-	-
GNVQs	04-05	13	46	68	-22	...	...	...	...
	05-06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06-07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NVQs	04-05	231	85	68	17	18	94	66	28
	05-06	260	83	72	11	18	83	74	9
	06-07	231	76	-	-	15	93	-	-
Other	04-05	933	59	64	-5	1316	75	62	13
	05-06	829	73	69	4	1521	74	65	9
	06-07	475	73	-	-	912	76	-	-

\* Figures for 2006-07 are from College data

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004/05 to 2006/07, 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	1047	57	61	-4	1428	72	60	12
	05-06	1249	62	66	-4	1326	71	66	5
	06-07	714	73	-	-	1235	78	-	-
GCSEs	04-05	134	53	64	-11	319	65	63	2
	05-06	148	59	68	-9	252	60	67	-7
	06-07	76	55	-	-	228	70	-	-
GNVQs	04-05	18	67	67	0	1	100	75	25
	05-06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06-07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NVQs	04-05	114	73	57	16	173	83	60	23
	05-06	201	69	65	4	189	69	67	2
	06-07	263	84	-	-	237	78	-	-
Other	04-05	781	55	61	-6	935	73	59	14
	05-06	900	61	66	-5	885	75	65	10
	06-07	375	69	-	-	770	80	-	-

\* Figures for 2006-07 are from College data

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004/05 to 2006/07, 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	1038	64	68	-4	512	64	58	6
	05-06	943	75	70	5	617	69	63	6
	06-07	808	73	-	-	676	73	-	-
A/A2 Levels	04-05	116	74	86	-12	33	73	69	4
	05-06	118	91	87	4	31	84	72	12
	06-07	128	85	-	-	51	75	-	-
AS Levels	04-05	383	61	66	-5	112	54	52	2
	05-06	342	74	67	7	88	56	55	1
	06-07	156	71	-	-	83	57	-	-
GNVQs	04-05	45	40	61	-21	5	60	54	6
	05-06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06-07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NVQs	04-05	33	58	63	-5	101	77	56	21
	05-06	55	71	71	0	97	58	63	-5
	06-07	43	86	-	-	190	79	-	-
Other	04-05	461	66	60	6	261	62	59	3
	05-06	428	71	65	6	401	73	64	9
	06-07	481	69	-	-	352	74	-	-

\* Figures for 2006-07 are from College data