

Capel Manor College

Inspection report

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. Capel Manor College is a specialist land-based college. Its main campus is in the London Borough of Enfield and there are five additional centres across London. This network of centres provides land-based provision across a broad geographical area. Courses are also offered at Edmonton Green in partnership with Enfield College and Southgate College. The main campus is set in an estate and gardens of 12.5 hectares. The gardens are open to the public and attract 80,000 visitors annually. The college also has tenancy of a 73 hectare farm situated a mile from the main campus and owns a further 7 hectares of adjacent land. Unlike many other land-based colleges, Capel Manor provides little residential accommodation for students. Instead, additional financial support is made available for travel.

2. Full- and part-time courses are offered in horticulture, landscaping, garden design, floristry, flower arranging, balloon display, countryside studies, arboriculture, animal care and saddlery. A work-based apprenticeship programme in horticulture started in 2003. Higher national diplomas and foundation degrees are offered in landscape design and construction. The college's HEAVEN Academy provides courses for 14-16 year old school pupils from local schools. Capel Manor was awarded Beacon status in 2005. The college has been a Centre for Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for horticulture, garden design and landscaping since 2003, and for floristry and business enterprise since 2006.
3. The majority of students travel to study from across the Greater London region to the nearest centre offering the programme they require. The London Borough of Enfield is 12 miles north of the City and a third of the borough – 6,000 acres – is greenbelt, containing country parks and open spaces, including the Lee Valley Regional Park and Trent Park. Over 60% of London is green and open space. The land-based and green-related skills sector in London employs an estimated 34,000 people with over 5,000 businesses having a registered office in the London region.
4. Other colleges offering land-based provision include Hadlow College at the Mottingham Centre and Southwark College. Across London a further 43 providers offer land-based training although mostly at entry level and level 1. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results at 16 are just above the national average.
5. In 2006/07 there were 1,076 full-time equivalent students on further education (FE) courses. Adults account for 76% of the full-time equivalent students. For 16-18 year olds, about one third of full-time equivalent students are studying at level 3. For adults, almost half of the full-time equivalent students are studying at level 2 and just over two fifths at level 3.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

6. Overall effectiveness is good. The college demonstrates a strong commitment to social and educational inclusion. Student achievement is good. Success rates are particularly high for adults who make up the greatest proportion of the college's students. At levels 1 and 3 they have been significantly above the national average for the last three years. Success rates for students aged 16-18 are broadly satisfactory, although at level 3 they have remained below national averages for the last three years. Teaching and learning are good, particularly in garden design and floristry. The standard of students' work is excellent in horticulture, floristry and garden design. Students receive good support and guidance. Educational and social inclusion is good. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Curriculum development is effective and the college works hard to meet local needs, LSC priorities and government initiatives. Leadership and management are good. The college is strong financially and provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. The college's capacity to make further improvements is satisfactory. It has successfully addressed most areas for improvement from the last inspection. Success rates for adults have remained high during a period in which the college has broadened its provision with the introduction of new courses and venues. However, although they show an upward trend over the past three years, success rates for students aged 16-18 at level 3 have remained stubbornly below national averages for the last three years. At levels 1 and 2, success rates for 16-18 year olds have recovered to around national averages following a fall in 2005/06. Self-assessment and target-setting are not yet sufficiently precise or systematic to support the college in raising achievement and standards. Lesson observation does not yet give a sufficiently reliable view of teaching and learning to enable the college to improve the quality of lessons. The college has a clear strategic direction and governance is strong and effective.

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

8. The college has made good progress in addressing areas for improvement since the last inspection. Assessment and verification practice are now consistent and verification is used well to contribute to quality improvement. The management of health and safety is now consistently good across the college. The achievement of students aged 16-18 has improved over the past three years but is broadly average. The college has responded well to developing new initiatives and to the developing needs of regional employers and communities.

Key strengths

- high success rates for adults at levels 1 and 3
- excellent standard of students' work in floristry, horticulture and garden design
- good integration of theory and practical in teaching sessions
- particularly good teaching in garden design and floristry
- highly qualified and vocationally experienced teachers
- excellent specialist teaching resources, particularly for garden design and horticulture
- high level of responsiveness to industry needs and government initiatives
- good employer and community engagement
- good guidance and support for students
- strong strategic direction shared effectively by staff and governors
- well informed and highly committed governors
- strong educational and social inclusion.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- success rates for students aged 16-18 at level 3
- the use of information learning technology (ILT) to support learning across all areas of the curriculum
- the integration of key skills with vocational qualifications
- the effectiveness of group tutorials
- the reliability of lesson observations
- the precision of self-assessment, action planning and target-setting.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning (WBL)

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Students aged 16-18

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Students aged 14-16

Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. Overall achievement and standards are good. Success rates for adults, who account for 76% of full-time equivalent students, are good. They have been significantly above national average at levels 1 and 3 for the past three years. For students aged 16-18, success rates are broadly satisfactory. At levels 1 and 2 they are in line with the national average, but at level 3, despite significant improvement year on year, they remain stubbornly below national average. The college has made a promising start to the provision of apprenticeships and success rates for 2006/07 are in line with the national average. Apprentices make at least satisfactory progress and complete their qualification in a timely way. For school pupils aged 14-16 at the HEAVEN Academy, success rates are broadly satisfactory. In 2005/06 success rates fell as many school pupils failed to complete their programme of study. However, retention improved markedly to 97% in 2007 and many pupils are currently on their way to completing the qualifications. In 2006/07 there were significant improvements in success rates for key skills. However, they remain slightly below national rates at level 2 for both communication and application of number. The standard of students' work is good, particularly in horticulture, garden design and floristry. Students participate frequently in skills competitions and gain regional and national awards for their work. Both attendance and punctuality are good and students greatly enjoy their studies.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

10. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are particularly successful at linking practical and theory teaching. Great care is taken to ensure that students are not taught different conflicting techniques by different teachers. Lesson planning is used effectively to ensure a consistent experience for students at the different centres. Teachers are skilled at planning a variety of interesting and different activities to stimulate students' interest and promote learning. They offer good support during lessons. However, insufficient attention is paid to ensuring that the more gifted and able students are sufficiently challenged. Sometimes teachers make use of the skills of the more knowledgeable students to support their peers rather than extending these students' own learning. Teaching is particularly successful in floristry and garden design where inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that a high proportion of lessons are good or outstanding. However, inspectors found that overall the college's judgement of the quality of its teaching is often overstated.

11. In all curriculum areas teachers are highly vocationally qualified and have good and wide ranging industrial experience. They provide excellent role models for students to aspire to, and set high standards. Specialist teaching resources are excellent, particularly for horticulture and garden design. The garden and college estate form an invaluable teaching resource greatly valued by staff and students. The college has begun to develop a virtual learning environment, Capella. Although some course teams make good use of this facility, for example countryside and horticulture, its use is less well developed by students in other areas of the curriculum. ILT is used effectively in floristry teaching. In particular overhead cameras and data projectors ensure that students can follow demonstrations by teachers. However, in saddlery learning is hindered by students being unable to see clearly what the teacher is doing. In the HEAVEN Academy there are insufficient computers to meet the students' needs.
12. Over the past year there have been considerable improvements in the teaching of key skills. The college has made good progress in ensuring that key skills teaching is linked firmly to the vocational context. However, vocational assignments are still not being used consistently to provide evidence of key skills competence. Too often students are completing separate, additional assignments to achieve their key skills. Vocational teachers do not always make the best use of opportunities to develop and practise the use of key skills in their lessons. These opportunities are not identified on lesson plans and not consistently evaluated during observations of teaching and learning.
13. Courses meet the needs and interests of students well. The college has extended the range and scope of its provision since the last inspection. It has opened new centres across London, widening participation and supporting the college's commitment to inclusion. Curriculum development is effective and new programmes have been accredited to meet industry need in saddlery technology, organics, hard landscape, sports turf, arboriculture, creative skills (balloon display and flower arranging), floristry and garden design. The college has responded particularly well to government initiatives and is strongly committed to meeting identified skills needs in relation to land-based and related green skills initiatives. Employer and community engagement are good. Strong and effective employer forums have been established, often building upon the college's CoVEs. There is a strong focus on ensuring students' employability across all vocational areas. Social and educational inclusion are good. The college participates in a wide range of community projects, often sited in areas of deprivation. Recent developments include the renovation of Horsenden Farm and Forty Hall Farm to provide impressive community venues for arboriculture and countryside studies. Good strategies have been developed to attract women into horticulture and to help promote an initiative to provide London jobs for London residents. A range of commercial florist shops linked to the college's centres provides excellent opportunities for students to develop and practice commercial skills. The college has made good improvements to key skills provision but is aware that there is more work to be done in ensuring that the value of key skills is promoted across all levels and all age groups of students at the college.

14. Guidance and support for students are good. There is a comprehensive and structured approach to supporting students from initial enquiry through to course completion. Prior to interview, prospective full-time 16-18 year old students complete a thorough initial assessment, the outcomes of which are discussed at the interview and used to help decide the most appropriate course. Summer schools of two weeks' duration are used both to act as fun 'taster' sessions and to prepare students for their course of study. Induction includes thorough diagnostic testing and any learning support needs are identified. Appropriate support is put in place for the start of the academic year. However, the college does not fully evaluate the effectiveness of additional learning support or the value it adds to both retention and achievement. Pastoral support is good and much appreciated by students of all ages. Personal tutorials are effective but group tutorials are less successful. This has been recognised by the college and new systems for group tutorials are to be implemented. The counselling service offers specialist advice and support across all centres. The college has developed a highly effective peer mentoring system, aimed at helping students aged 14-19 to develop confidence and supporting their progress.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: Grade 3

15. Leadership and management are good. Long course success rates have risen at level 3 for both adults and students aged 16-18 over the past three years. At levels 1 and 2 for both age groups the trend in success rates is uneven. Overall, long course success rates were good for adult students in 2006/07, accounting for the majority of the college's provision. Success rates were broadly average in 2006/07 for students aged 16-18.
16. The chief executive officer and the head of college, with the support of the college management team and the governing body, have set a strong and clear vision for the strategic development of the college that is effectively shared by staff. Governors are well informed of the college's performance and highly committed to its success. Provision meets the LSC's priority targets and the college is highly responsive to requirements across the London region. Very successful links have been developed with employers, schools and other partners. The college makes good use of these links to develop courses that meet the needs of employers and students very well. For example, the college has recently successfully introduced work-based learning apprenticeships in horticulture and arboriculture.
17. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The college has successfully addressed most areas for development identified by inspectors. The management of health and safety is now consistently good across the college. Quality assurance arrangements are significantly improved and managers use these well to identify issues promptly and to take corrective action. Assessment and verification practice are consistent and are used well to inform quality

improvement. However, the lesson observation process does not yet provide a reliable view of the quality of teaching and learning.

18. The college self-assessment report recognises the main strengths and key areas for development. However, self-assessment, particularly at curriculum level, is not sufficiently rigorous and there is too little use of evaluations of teaching or analysis of success rates at course level. Target-setting is not yet sufficiently systematic or precise to support the college in raising students' achievement. The lesson observation system does not provide a reliable view of the quality of teaching and learning. The quality assurance of the process and the analysis of areas for improvement in lessons are insufficiently developed or rigorous.
19. Equality of opportunity is adequately promoted but action planning as part of the equality schemes is imprecise and the college has yet to carry out impact assessments on its key policies. The college's response to recent legislation, including equality relating to race and disability, and to child protection, has been satisfactory. The five themes of 'Every Child Matters' are integrated satisfactorily into college life.
20. Staff are well qualified and there is a comprehensive and responsive staff development programme. Teachers make good use of the college estate and the facilities at its centres across London in practical learning activities. Overall, teaching accommodation is satisfactory. The college is financially strong and provides good value for money.

Learners' achievement

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	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	04/05	108	69	65	4	94	88	62	26
	05/06	98	67	78	-11	195	77	64	13
	06/07*	80	79	N/A		204	81	N/A	
NVQs	04/05	15	60	60	0	14	93	71	22
	05/06	2	50	72	-22	12	75	62	13
	06/07*	3	100	N/A		5	80	N/A	
Other	04/05	93	71	66	5	80	88	62	26
	05/06	96	68	78	-10	183	77	64	13
	06/07*	77	78	N/A		199	81	N/A	

* college data

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	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	04/05	92	66	68	-2	745	68	62	6
	05/06	112	60	73	-13	922	70	65	5
	06/07*	147	69	N/A		865	68	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	18	83	73	10	102	81		
	05/06	28	68			110	77		
	06/07*	34	53	N/A		123	71	N/A	
NVQs	04/05	4	25			32	72	56	16
	05/06	5	0			19	47	62	-15
	06/07*			N/A		14	36	N/A	
Other	04/05	70	64	69	-5	611	65	63	2
	05/06	79	61	75	-14	793	70	66	4
	06/07*	111	76	N/A		728	68	N/A	

* college data

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	52	27	69	-42	487	61	57	4
	05/06	48	48	74	-26	559	69	58	11
	06/07*	86	59	N/A		523	74	N/A	
GNVQS and precursors	04/05					9			
	05/06					7			
	06/07*			N/A				N/A	
NVQs	04/05					3	33	50	-17
	05/06								
	06/07*			N/A		3	100	N/A	
Other	04/05	52	27	68	-41	475	63	59	4
	05/06	48	48	73	-25	552	70	61	9
	06/07*	86	59	N/A		520	74	N/A	

* college data

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes managed by the college 2005 to 2007

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of students*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	1	0	53	0	25
		timely	1	0	25	0	9
	06/07	overall	3	67	N/a	67	N/a
		timely	4	0	N/a	0	N/a
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	23	43	51	39	39
		timely	23	30	29	30	22
	05/06	overall	18	44	58	39	52
		timely	18	0	38	0	34
	06/07	overall	18	56	N/a	56	N/a
		timely	18	39	N/a	39	N/a

Note 'At the time of the inspection - LSC data for 2006/07 had yet to be fully validated'

* Students who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of students are then added to the students 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'