

Uxbridge College

Inspection report

Provider reference	130446
Published date	July 2008

Audience	Post-sixteen
Published date	July 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 at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

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

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: science and mathematics; engineering; information and communication technology (ICT); arts, media and publishing; literacy and numeracy; English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

Description of the provider

1. Uxbridge College is a large general further education college located in Hillingdon, West London. It has campuses in Uxbridge and Hayes and attracts students from a wide area. Qualification and skill levels in Hillingdon are below average, by London and national standards. Twenty-seven per cent of working age residents have qualifications below level 2. The college offers courses in all sector subject areas apart from land-based programmes. Courses range from entry level to level 4 and include courses for school pupils aged 14 to 16, mainly in vocational areas. Seventy-five per cent of the 4,153 full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Ninety-three per cent of the 1,258 part-time students are

adults. There are 238 students aged 14 to 16, 157 apprentices and 875 learners on Train to Gain courses. Black and minority ethnic students (BME) make up 72% of full-time students and 62% of part-time students. A high proportion of students qualify for educational maintenance allowances and financial support.

2. The Uxbridge site is predominantly a large sixth form centre that provides General Certificate of Education (GCE) A levels and General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs), mainly for students aged 16 to 18, and a range of vocational courses. The achievement of five or more GCSEs at grades C and above in 2006/07, including English and mathematics in Hillingdon, was just below the national average.
3. The Hayes Community Campus provides a range of courses for young people and adults including courses in ESOL, which makes up almost 20% of the total college provision. The location of the campus and the courses run there form a key part of the college's widening participation strategy. Integrated community services such as the Asian day care centre, a medical centre, a youth centre and a newly extended nursery, are provided on the same site. Courses are also offered at other locations in the community.
4. Work with employers is managed through the employer services unit which also manages the contract work for work-based learning. Most apprentices study electrical installation, engineering or hairdressing.
5. The college's mission is: 'Committed to excellence and student success in everything we do'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: Contributory Grade 1</i>

Sector subject areas

Science and mathematics	Good: Grade 2
Engineering	Good: Grade 2
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Outstanding: Grade 1
Arts, media and publishing	Good: Grade 2
Literacy and numeracy	Good: Grade 2
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)	Outstanding: Grade 1

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

6. Uxbridge College is an outstanding college. Provision is outstanding in ESOL and ICT, and good in the other curriculum areas inspected. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates on long qualifications are very high at all levels and for students of all ages. Success rates are high for students from all minority ethnic groups, male and female students and for students receiving additional learning support. Progression rates between the levels are high. Students have well developed personal skills and confidence in their abilities.
7. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The college has thorough arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning and there has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Good use is made of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning. The proportion of inadequate lessons is small, as is the proportion of outstanding lessons. Attendance and punctuality have improved significantly in most lessons.
8. Curriculum provision is outstanding. The broad curriculum and range of enrichment activities are well matched to the needs and interests of learners and the local community. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. The college is particularly successful at attracting students from diverse backgrounds, and in creating an environment that promotes highly effective learning and respect for others. Very good links with external organisations are used well to widen participation.
9. Support and guidance are good. Students with specific needs receive particularly good support to enable them to achieve well and to progress. Pastoral support is good. The tutorial programme is well designed and successfully develops students' personal, social and employability skills. Students receive regular reviews of their progress but targets set to help them to improve are not always sufficiently specific.
10. Leadership and management are outstanding. Managers at all levels are committed to raising student success. Self-assessment is thorough and data are analysed and used effectively to drive improvements. Quality assurance is well focused and highly effective. Student success rates are outstanding. The strong ethos of equality of opportunity and educational and social inclusion permeates the college at all levels. Financial management and value for money are outstanding.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

11. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. The attention to detail in order to bring about improvements is impressive. There is a shared commitment across the college to raising the aspirations and achievement of its very diverse

range of students. The college's key priorities and strategic direction are clear. Success rates have improved significantly since the last inspection and are very high. Quality assurance arrangements and improvements are clearly focused and very effective. Student performance is closely monitored at all levels. Student achievement data are extensive and accurate and are used with confidence at all levels to improve standards. Governors carefully monitor the college's performance. Self-assessment is well established, comprehensive and inclusive but tends to underestimate strengths.

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

12. The college has made outstanding progress in addressing the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. The quality of curriculum management is now good or better. The quality of teaching has improved and is now generally good overall. The thoroughness of the college lesson observation process is now very effective. The assessment of students' work has improved significantly and is good. The proportion of qualified teachers is now very high. The college has a rigorous and comprehensive approach to student punctuality and attendance, both of which are much improved. Work-based learning provision has improved significantly.

Key strengths

- outstanding success rates for students of all ages
- outstanding leadership and management
- outstanding equality of opportunity
- outstanding promotion of educational and social inclusion
- outstanding provision in ESOL and ICT
- high progression rates
- particularly good support for learners with specific needs.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the low success rates in key skills in 2006/07
- the inconsistencies in target setting for students
- reducing further the proportion of inadequate lessons and increasing the proportion of good and outstanding lessons.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

13. Achievement and standards are outstanding. The self-assessment report contains detailed and accurate analysis of student performance data. Success rates on long qualifications have risen substantially since the last inspection and in 2005/06 they were 14 percentage points above the national average. In 2006/07 the high success rate rose from 81% in 2005/06 to 82%. Success rates are high for students of all ages and at all levels and both retention and pass rates are above average at all levels. Students make significantly better progress at A level than expected, based on their previous attainment at GCSE, but the proportion of high-grade passes is below average. The progress made by students on almost all qualifications and at all levels is good. Students make particularly good progress on A levels, BTEC national diplomas, GCSEs and national vocational qualifications at level 2. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes are outstanding. Framework completion rates for the small number of work-based learners are satisfactory. Key skills success rates were low in 2006/07 but they were much higher previously. Students are making good progress with key skills this year. Success rates for 14 to 16 year old students are satisfactory. Success rates on short qualifications are satisfactory.
14. Sixty-nine per cent of students overall are of black and minority ethnic heritage. Success rates for all ethnic groups of students are very high. Success rates for both male and female students are high. Students receiving additional learning support achieve success rates that are higher than the average for the college. Student progression and destination rates are high.
15. The college has a strong focus on improving students' punctuality and attendance and good improvements have been made in most curriculum areas. Attendance and punctuality in most lessons are satisfactory or better although issues remain on some engineering and arts and media courses.
16. Students' achievement and their acquisition of practical and workplace skills are good. They work safely and cooperatively. Students are confident and polite, and demonstrate mutual respect for each other and their teachers. Events organised through the student council enable students to make a very positive contribution to the community. These include, for example, involvement in external consultations about community development projects, taking part in the neighbourhood clean up event, and participating in charitable events. Students work effectively in groups and on individual tasks. Work experience and the good development of personal skills enable students to prepare effectively for their future economic well-being. Advanced level students critically analyse and evaluate topics effectively. Students enjoy their learning and achieve well.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

17. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good and inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment grade. A strong ethos of equality of opportunity and mutual respect permeates teaching and learning throughout the college. In many lessons, teachers plan and manage learning skilfully. Objectives are clear and understood by students. Particularly good learning materials are used effectively and a range of teaching methods successfully engage students. Good use of ILT enhances learning. Teaching and learning are outstanding in ESOL. Teaching on apprenticeship programmes is satisfactory but there is insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching on Train to Gain programmes is good. Teachers are well qualified and keep up-to-date with their specialisms. Accommodation is good. Facilities for ESOL are excellent. Weaker lessons fail to provide effectively for students' individual needs. A minority of lessons lack clarity and appropriate pace and include insufficient checking of learning. There is a small proportion of both inadequate and outstanding lessons.
18. The college's lesson observation scheme is rigorous. Strong emphasis is placed on making judgements about students' learning. Development opportunities for teachers are extensive and areas for improvement are clearly identified. Good use is made of peer observations to share best practice. Lesson observers are well trained and good use is made of both internal and external moderators.
19. Assessment and verification are good. Students' work is marked regularly and feedback highlights how students can improve. Clear reports on students' progress are regularly sent to parents, guardians and employers.
20. Students' additional learning needs are identified effectively and supported well. Key skills are now well integrated into most curriculum areas. The development of students' key skills in lessons is satisfactory or good. Good use is made of interactive learning materials and these are used successfully to prepare students for key skills tests.
21. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. Actions to promote inclusion have created a safe, harmonious and welcoming environment which is highly conducive to learning. People from diverse backgrounds are immersed in a culture of mutual respect. The broad range of courses includes particularly good provision for widening participation at the lower levels in, for example, ESOL, science and mathematics, and literacy and numeracy. Good links exist with external organisations, employers and community groups. The college's strong links with employers enhance provision in curriculum areas and provide work experience for learners. Projects and programmes to meet the needs of particular groups are well designed. The college's provision at its site in Hayes very successfully widens participation by engaging the local community. Work with 14 to 16 year old pupils has helped to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training. The college offers a wide range of subject-related and cross-college enrichment activities and work experience. Many activities promote equality. A recent college-wide poetry competition, using the inspirational work of notable black poets who visited the college, attracted many entries. College-wide enrichment activities

are not always well attended or easily available to all students. Students are particularly well involved in shaping the college's course provision.

22. Support and guidance for students are good overall and particularly good for students with specific needs; for example, students with hearing impairments participate effectively in dance lessons. Support is highly effective in developing students' confidence and independence and in enabling them to achieve well and make good progress. Teachers receive detailed information on students' needs and the adjustments required to support them effectively. Initial advice and guidance are effective in placing students on appropriate courses. Pastoral support for students is good. Approachable staff help students to overcome potential barriers. Careers advice and information about progressing to higher education are good. The college's tutorial provision for full-time students is well designed and detailed. It successfully develops students' personal, social and employability skills and provides good guidance on staying safe and being healthy. Individual progress reviews are used well to monitor students' progress and identify areas for improvement. However, targets set for students are not always sufficiently specific. Attendance and punctuality are monitored and followed up carefully. However, this action has not been sufficiently successful in improving punctuality and attendance in all areas. The college has appropriate support arrangements for part-time students.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grades:

*Equality of opportunity
Train to Gain*

*Outstanding: Grade 1
Good: Grade 2*

23. Leadership and management are outstanding. Both the new principal and her predecessor have provided strong leadership, and have been well supported by a very good and competent senior management team. Since the last inspection their impact on raising standards has been outstanding. The determination to raise the aspirations of learners and to help them to succeed has been relentless and is present throughout the college. Strategic planning is highly developed and detailed. Staff at all levels are enthusiastic and committed to raising standards.
24. The college perceives itself, rightly, to be rooted in the local communities it serves, and its course portfolio reflects this aspiration, as recorded in the college's self-assessment report. The promotion of equality of opportunity and arrangements to eliminate discrimination are outstanding. There is a strong ethos of respect for diversity and difference. The college rigorously monitors the success rates of students from different ethnic groups and takes effective action to resolve issues. The college has made a good response to statutory requirements including the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, and government requirements in regard to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are met. All college sites are accessible to people with mobility difficulties. The college has recently addressed the imbalance in the minority ethnic profile of the corporation to

better represent that of the local community. Governors have a wide range of relevant skills and monitor all aspects of the college's performance effectively. Participation in on-going training is not always consistent.

25. The college has a strong culture of quality improvement. Since the last inspection, success rates have improved significantly and are at a very high level for students from all ethnic backgrounds. Quality assurance arrangements are clearly documented, very effective, and well understood by staff. There is a high level of compliance with quality assurance protocols. Management information is extensive and accurate and managers and teachers use it with confidence to support improvement. The work of the student council is taken seriously and contributes to college decision making.
26. Arrangements for lesson observations are thorough and have contributed to raising standards and sharing good practice. Self-assessment is well focused, comprehensive and inclusive, although it underestimated strengths in some of the curriculum areas and aspects inspected. Curriculum management and the management of Train to Gain are good or better and the management of work-based learning is satisfactory.
27. There are very well established staff development and appraisal procedures which are linked to the outcomes of lesson observations. Teachers are well qualified and value highly the well planned staff development programme. The proportion of qualified teachers, a weakness at the last inspection, is now high.
28. Accommodation and resources are good. The college management of its finances is outstanding. Student success rates are very high and the college provides outstanding value for money.

Sector subject areas

Science and mathematics

Good: Grade 2

29. There are 437 students aged 16 to 18 and 138 adult students. The college provides a pre-GCSE course in mathematics and science; GCSEs in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics; and AS levels and A levels in biology, chemistry, physics, psychology and mathematics. An access to higher education course in psychology and social studies is provided for adults. GCSE mathematics is offered by day and as a part-time evening course.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- high standards of students' work in chemistry
- good use of ILT to support learning
- thorough assessment of students' work
- good student progression through curriculum levels and to higher education
- good curriculum management.

Areas for improvement

- low proportion of high grades in A level
- insufficient attention to the needs of all students in lessons.

Achievement and standards

30. Success rates on most courses are high with pass and retention rates well above the national average at all levels. Students studying AS mathematics, AS and A2 chemistry and psychology make much better progress than would be expected based on their previous attainment at GCSE. However, the proportion of AS and A level students achieving high grades is low and at A level very small numbers of students achieve the top grade. Success rates at grades A* to C on all GCSE courses are significantly above the national average. Overall success rates for adult students are also good.
31. Students work well together in lessons and produce good work. In a chemistry lesson, students' discussion following practical work was outstanding. Progression rates to higher level courses and higher education are good. Students' attendance is good.

Quality of provision

32. Teaching is mainly good or better. Most lessons are well planned and use a good variety of activities to sustain learners' interest. In weaker lessons the activities do not always provide sufficient challenge for more able students. Lesson planning for students of varying ability is not sufficiently well thought out. The use of ILT is strong in all lessons. The college's virtual learning environment has a good range of high quality learning materials. This provides

a very valuable resource for teachers and aids students' learning. Teachers are very well qualified.

33. Assessment is good. It is well planned, consistent and accurately informs student progress. A good variety of assessment methods are used to give students an accurate picture of the quality of their work.
34. The range of courses is good. The pre-GCSE course provides opportunities for learners who have no previous educational qualifications.
35. Guidance and support are good. Students' needs are identified early and additional support is provided promptly. Students value the good subject support that teachers provide informally and in timetabled revision sessions. Students' progress and attendance are reviewed regularly. Individual targets for improvement are sometimes too general and too long-term. Advice about career opportunities and higher education applications is good and is supported by visits to universities.

Leadership and management

36. Leadership and management are good. Self-assessment and quality improvement are thorough and accurate. Managers are proactive in the spreading of good practice. Lessons are observed regularly and teachers are set clear targets for improvement. A strong academic ethos exists, creating a climate of mutual respect where learners work hard to achieve their goals. Equality of opportunity is actively promoted. Accommodation and learning resources are good. Laboratories are well equipped.

Engineering

Good: Grade 2

Context

37. The college provides courses in mechanical, manufacturing, electrical installation, electronic and motor vehicle engineering by day and evening. Electronics and motor vehicle courses are offered for 41 pupils aged 14 to 16. There are 529 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 131 adults. There are 294 part-time students who are adults and 41 students aged 16 to 18. There are 12 apprentices and 80 advanced apprentices on electrical installation, mechanical and motor vehicle programmes.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- good teaching in mechanical, manufacturing, electronic and motor vehicle
- good monitoring, target setting and support for students
- very good and well used accommodation and specialist resources
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- slow completion rate for electrical installation apprentices
- poor punctuality in many lessons.

Achievement and standards

38. Success rates are high on most mechanical, manufacturing, electronics and motor vehicle courses at levels 1 to 3. They are satisfactory on electrical installation. The standards of students' work and behaviour are good. There is a high regard for health and safety. Completion rates for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in mechanical and motor vehicle are satisfactory. In electrical installation, progress towards completion has been very slow. Students use specialist equipment with care and accurately carry out tests. Mechanical engineering students produce clear pre-production plans from engineering drawings. Attendance is satisfactory but poor punctuality disrupts many lessons.

Quality of provision

39. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good occupational skills, which they use well to enthuse students, develop their practical skills, and illustrate theory. Students benefit from detailed lesson plans that pay close attention to individual needs and abilities. In a lively and outstanding electronics lesson students planned, built and tested logic circuits from an industrial scenario. Students made excellent progress. A minority of theory lessons are unimaginative. Students spend too long passively listening or completing task sheets. ILT is well used in lessons. In the vehicle workshops complex vehicle systems are explained using training software. The college intranet provides

access to monitoring reports and learning materials from home and the workplace.

40. There is a good range of courses to meet students' needs. Good industrial visits and guest speakers enrich learning. The high quality accommodation and industry standard engineering training resources are well used. Classrooms and workshops are bright and inviting and contain interactive whiteboards which enhance learning.
41. Initial advice and guidance are good. All students are interviewed and assessed at induction to ensure they are on the correct course. Targets set at tutorials are challenging. The monitoring of students' progress is good. Assessments are fair and appropriate. Work-based reviews are generally satisfactory but are too infrequent in electrical installation. Guidance and support are good. Teachers and support staff know their students' needs well.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are good. Links with industry and partner schools are productive. Apprentices benefit from good training opportunities in the workplace. Quality improvement is robust and course performance is closely monitored. Internal verification is rigorous. Internal teaching and learning observation records are accurate and are formally linked to appraisal and staff development. Many areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been resolved. New teachers are well supported. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted. The management of work-based learning is satisfactory and recent changes are addressing the unsatisfactory coordination of on- and off-the-job training and assessment in electrical installation.

Information and communication technology

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

43. The college offers a range of courses for IT practitioners and IT users with progression routes for qualifications from level 1 to higher education. Full-time provision includes IT at work, first and national diplomas for IT practitioners, and diplomas and advanced diplomas in ICT support. Part-time courses include certificate for IT users, ITQ (NVQ course for IT users) and a variety of specialist technical courses. There are 334 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 115 adults. There are 54 adult students who are part-time and 3 part-time students aged 16 to 18.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- high proportion of high grades on levels 1 and 3 full-time courses and GCSE in ICT
- much good teaching
- well organised and rigorous assessment practices on most courses
- particularly wide range of courses
- good arrangements for reviewing students' progress
- outstanding leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- restrictive accommodation in a few rooms inhibits teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

44. Students' achievement is very good and success rates are high on most courses. There is a high proportion of high grade passes on levels 1 and 3 full-time courses. Students make very good progress. They produce work of a high standard and critically analyse tasks well; for example, in one impressive lesson students successfully reviewed and amended a program so that it performed extra functions. Students demonstrate very good skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis.

Quality of provision

45. There is much good teaching. All lessons are well planned with effective recapitulation. Students are involved actively throughout lessons, often in collaborative team working. In most lessons individual students' needs are well met. Good use is made of the virtual learning environment to enhance learning. Key skills delivery and assessment are embedded well into full-time courses.
46. Assessment and internal verification are well organised and rigorous with helpful written feedback on students' assignments and work. All lessons include good checking of learning through activities and quizzes. Formative assessment results are included in reports to parents three times a year. Students' progress

is monitored very well during individual tutorials where targets are set and monitored. The restrictive arrangement of classrooms on the Uxbridge site sometimes inhibits aspects of teaching and learning; for example, small group work.

47. The extensive range of courses provides a comprehensive offer for progression from entry level to level 3. The range of practitioner computing at levels 2 and 3 is broad. The range of enrichment activities is satisfactory.
48. Guidance and support are very good. A strong interview process enables students to be placed on a suitable course. Students value and remember their induction. Additional learning support is provided promptly and effectively. Supportive tutorials provide continuous monitoring throughout the year.

Leadership and management

49. Leadership and management are outstanding. Success rates and the quality of teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. Quality systems are thorough. The self-assessment report is evaluative and accurate. The students' voice is used well with posters publicising improvements made as a result of feedback received. Equality and diversity are very well embedded in the curriculum, but there are low numbers of females on full-time ICT courses.

Arts, media and publishing

Good: Grade 2

Context

50. The college offers a range of courses in visual and performing arts and media. There are 414 full-time students, almost all of whom are aged 16 to 19. Most of the provision is in vocational arts subjects at levels 1 to 3. There is a small GCSE and A level provision in media. Art, design and media are based at the main Uxbridge site with performing arts subjects located at the Hayes site.

Strengths

- high success rates on many courses
- good progression rates internally and to higher education
- high standard of students' performance work
- good provision for art and design
- good curriculum management.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on level 1 performing arts and level 3 art and design courses
- poor attendance on a minority of courses.

Achievement and standards

51. Success rates are high apart from on the level 1 performing arts and level 3 art and design courses. Progression rates for students internally and to higher education are good with some students attaining places at prestigious and highly competitive specialist institutions. The standard of students' work in art and design and performing arts is high. Attendance and punctuality are mainly good but are unsatisfactory on a few courses. Current in-year retention is good and significantly improved on previous years.

Quality of provision

52. Teaching and learning are good in art, design and dance and mainly satisfactory elsewhere. Teachers have a consistent style of delivery with aims, objectives and tasks clearly explained. Lessons are well designed to match the age and experience of students. ILT is used effectively and students demonstrate sophisticated skills in its use. Art and design assignments are demanding and often inspirational. They are clearly linked to educational visits, enrichment activities and to students' perceptions of their immediate environment. Excellent use is made of peer learning initiatives in dance. Drama students are able to study, rehearse and perform in demanding and rewarding productions, although some poor attendance adversely affects collaborative projects. Assessment is thorough, rigorous and helpful to students. Good use is made of the college's intranet. Relationships between students and staff are excellent. Students appreciate the extra time and effort made by staff on their behalf. Specialist resources and accommodation are good for all subjects.

53. The overall range of provision is satisfactory with internal opportunities to progress from level 1 to level 3 in most subjects. School links are good. Students benefit from the good range of enrichment opportunities such as educational visits to Rome and Berlin and to more local galleries and exhibitions.
54. Learning support is good. Individual needs are identified and support allocated on entry. Excellent support is given to hearing impaired students so they can participate in dance classes. Students are counselled regularly and potential problems are readily identified. Effective systems are in place to support learners. Where appropriate, parents are involved in resolving difficulties.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management are good. Managers have developed many beneficial curriculum initiatives with the local community. In-year retention is much improved and actions to improve courses causing concern are effective. Staff are well qualified. Many have excellent industry contacts which enable students to have work experience with high profile employers and companies. Management information is used effectively. Staff feel valued and consulted, and actively contribute to the mainly accurate self-assessment report.

Literacy and numeracy

Good: Grade 2

Context

56. There are 1,884 enrolments on literacy and numeracy programmes across the college and in the community. Around 60% of these enrolments are of students aged 16 to 18. Key skills qualifications in communication and application of number are taken by 1,400 students alongside their vocational courses. Approximately 95% of students taking key skills are aged 16 to 18.

Strengths

- high success rates on literacy and numeracy certificates
- very good teaching of vocational students with additional needs at college
- well designed learning materials
- broad range of programmes to widen participation
- well designed cross-college Skills for Life strategy.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates in key skills in 2006/07
- unsatisfactory target setting on foundation and Train to Gain programmes.

Achievement and standards

57. Achievement and standards are good. Overall success rates in 2006/07 were satisfactory. Success rates on literacy and numeracy certificates are high. Students receiving support have higher success rates than the very high average success rate for the college. Success rates were low on key skills in 2006/07 but they were much higher in previous years. Current in-year successful completion of tests and portfolios for key skills is much higher than at this time last year. The development of students' key skills is good and they are making good progress towards achieving their qualifications. The standard of students' oral work and numeracy skills are generally good. Most students' writing skills are satisfactory or better. Foundation school students develop satisfactory skills in managing money and speaking for themselves. Progression from foundation courses to level 1 vocational programmes is good.

Quality of provision

58. Teaching is satisfactory overall and it is good in literacy and numeracy support for vocational students. Many learning advocates attached to curriculum areas use their specialist curriculum expertise very effectively when supporting students. Learning materials are well designed with attractive visual imagery and accessible fonts. Laminated cards and games and digital photographs stimulate interest and motivate students. Many teachers use ICT imaginatively. Teachers on foundation programmes use a wide variety of learning activities which students enjoy. However, teachers sometimes underestimate the time needed to complete tasks effectively and occasionally insufficient attention is paid to correct spelling, punctuation or grammar.

59. Initial assessment is generally thorough but target setting on foundation programmes and Train to Gain is not always effective or frequent enough. Students with weak literacy and numeracy skills are well supported on vocational programmes at college but they are not sufficiently supported on Train to Gain provision.
60. The college offers a broad range of programmes from pre-entry level to level 2, to widen participation. Programmes at entry levels 2 and 3 and level 1 attract students without the literacy or numeracy skills for vocational courses. A range of programmes are followed by full-time students on other courses. A pre-GCSE course for students with first languages other than English prepares them for an academic progression route onto a GCSE programme.
61. Guidance and support are good. Initial and on-going guidance about progression is encouraging and realistic. Signers and assistive technology are provided for students with sensory impairments. Staff in the foundation area are skilled at working with challenging behaviour.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are good. The college's Skills for Life strategy is well designed and comprehensive. The college has made good progress in implementing the strategy. Accommodation and resources are good. Quality assurance is good but lesson observation reports do not always give enough guidance on development points. Equality of opportunity is good. Equality and diversity issues form a central part of the curriculum. Staff awareness is high and gender issues are unusually well understood and managed.

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

63. A range of courses for ESOL is studied by approximately 1,000 students at the two college centres, in the workplace and at community centres. Both full- and part-time courses are provided for students aged 16 to 18 and adults. Forty-one per cent of students are aged 16 to 18. Students either study dedicated language courses or link courses which include academic studies and vocational training. A range of courses is provided for employers. The majority of teaching staff are full-time.

Strengths

- outstanding success rates
- outstanding achievement of additional qualifications
- highly developed personal, vocational and employability skills
- inspirational teaching
- excellent teaching and learning resources
- extensive curriculum offer
- excellent support for students
- outstanding leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- none.

Achievement and standards

64. Success rates are outstanding and are well above the national average at entry level and level 1, which form the majority of ESOL provision. Students' achievement of additional academic and vocational qualifications is outstanding. Students have well developed personal, vocational and employability skills. They are confident and have high aspirations relating to employment and further study. Standards of behaviour are excellent and students show great respect to each other. The standard of students' work is high. Attendance, retention and progression rates are high.

Quality of provision

65. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Inspirational teaching fully engages students in lessons and students take great pride in their work. Teachers are particularly skilled at integrating ILT into lessons, which enhances learning and motivates students. Students value and make good use of the interesting materials on the college virtual learning environment. Teachers use a wide range of excellent resources to aid learning. A successful variety of activities and methods are used to extend, consolidate and review students' learning. Lesson plans and schemes of work are very thorough and detailed to meet students' individual needs. The focus on developing employability skills is good with vocational learning well embedded in courses. Topical events are used

effectively to provide a relevant and stimulating focus for developing language skills.

66. A very extensive range of ESOL provision, including link courses in hairdressing, motor vehicle, ICT, accountancy, childcare and health and social care is offered to a diverse student population. There are strong links with employers and the local community. The many enrichment opportunities provide students with a good understanding of life in the United Kingdom.
67. Guidance and support for students are excellent. Well planned weekly tutorials provide good guidance on academic and personal issues. Vulnerable students receive good support from 'academic friends' including the principal. ESOL students appreciate the supportive learning atmosphere and the focus on high academic performance.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are outstanding. Rigorous quality improvement processes have led to measurable improvements since the last inspection. Management and staff are committed to achieving high standards in all aspects of the provision. Course reviews are thorough and lead to actions for improvement. Frequent observations of teaching and learning and a thorough staff appraisal process contribute to outstanding teaching and learning. All staff are fully aware of targets for improvement. Students' views are regularly gathered and acted upon. Aspects for improvement raised by students are dealt with effectively. Equality and diversity are outstanding. They are embedded seamlessly throughout the very inclusive provision which provides for students from many different countries. The self-assessment report is accurate.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1Long	04/05	1,112	76	65	11	763	61	62	-1
	05/06	1,308	80	69	11	1,286	86	65	21
	06/07	1,090	83			1,001	91		
GNVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07								
NVQs	04/05	60	82	68	14	32	56	66	-10
	05/06	116	84	72	12	18	72	74	-2
	06/07	91	92			11	91		
Other	04/05	1,052	76	64	12	731	61	62	-1
	05/06	1,192	80	69	11	1,268	87	65	22
	06/07	999	82			990	91		

Table 2

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	04/05	1,775	72	61	11	685	71	60	11
	05/06	1,798	79	66	13	608	76	66	10
	06/07	1,778	84			664	77		
GCSEs	04/05	908	77	64	13	230	70	63	7
	05/06	990	81	68	13	216	80	67	13
	06/07	934	86			236	79		
GNVQs	04/05	161	50	67	-17	20	45	75	-30
	05/06	63	75	69	6	23	78	68	10
	06/07	76	89			21	71		
NVQs	04/05	80	74	57	17	83	83	60	23
	05/06	127	76	65	11	98	82	67	15
	06/07	123	80			80	74		
Other	04/05	626	69	61	8	352	71	59	12
	05/06	618	77	66	11	271	70	65	5
	06/07	645	80			327	77		

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	04/05	2,056	69	68	1	811	66	58	8
	05/06	1,528	78	70	8	667	73	63	10
	06/07	1,487	79			710	76		
A/A2 Levels	04/05	344	92	86	6	65	78	69	9
	05/06	347	96	87	9	59	86	72	14
	06/07	226	97			83	84		
AS Levels	04/05	1,054	63	66	-3	145	55	52	3
	05/06	625	73	67	6	71	75	55	20
	06/07	629	75			73	79		
GNVQs	04/05	93	75	61	14	34	74	54	20
	05/06	33	85	66	19	10	90	57	33
	06/07	48	56			11	55		
NVQs	04/05	29	62	63	-1	83	55	56	-1
	05/06	32	66	71	-5	68	59	63	-4
	06/07	30	73			93	67		
Other	04/05	536	67	60	7	484	69	59	10
	05/06	491	70	65	5	459	72	64	8
	06/07	554	79			450	76		