

# Cambridge Regional College

Inspection report

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Provider reference 130610  
Published date May 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](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.

## Description of the provider

1. Cambridge Regional College is a large general further education college serving the town of Cambridge and the surrounding region. It operates from two main campuses within the city boundaries: Kings Hedges, which caters for over three quarters of learners and the Cambridge city campus. It also offers courses at 16 village and community centres, on employers' premises and through distance learning. Within the college's catchment area, two sixth form colleges, an agriculture and horticulture campus of another college, three state schools with sixth forms, and five independent schools, also cater for learners aged 16 to 18. Fifteen 11 to 16 schools are in the local area. The Cambridge economy is prosperous and high performing, although some rural areas have declining industries and poor public transport. Unemployment is low and around one tenth of the local population come from Black and minority ethnic groups.
2. In 2006/07, 8,419 learners over 19 and 5,268 under 19 attended the college. In 2007/08, to the date of inspection, 4,461 learners over 19 years and 3,741 under 19 years have attended. Around three quarters of learners are White, just over half are women, and just under three quarters study part-time. In the current year the college has enrolled 1,606 Train to Gain and 39 Entry to Employment learners, as well as 676 apprentices.
3. The college offers provision in all 15 sector subject areas, with the largest numbers of enrolments in preparation for life and work. Courses are offered from entry level to degree level, with level 1 having the highest numbers. The college no longer offers GCE A and AS levels. It has five Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in construction, care, manufacturing, developing managers and sports and fitness coaching.
4. Since the previous inspection the college has revised its mission to focus on employability and delivering economically valuable skills at craft, technician and management levels and in Skills for Life. Its mission is 'to be the first choice provider of training and skills for the Cambridge Region'.

## 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>

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. This is a good college. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates at all levels are improving, with the majority being significantly above national average. Key skills success rates are low but improving and in work-based learning, success rates have improved since the last inspection and are all significantly above the national average.
6. The college has prioritised the development of good teaching skills since the previous inspection, and teaching and learning are now good. Interesting and well planned lessons engage and meet the needs of most learners. Learners enjoy their lessons. Provision for learners with additional learning needs is good. Assessment is rigorous, although not used sufficiently to plan learning.
7. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The range of courses is extensive, with clear progression routes from entry level to level 3. Provision for learners with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. The college develops and maintains excellent partnerships with employers, schools and the community. Its approach to educational and social inclusion is good.
8. Learners receive good support, advice and guidance. Progress is monitored well in individual tutorials, especially for learners at risk of not achieving. However, in a minority of cases, target setting is insufficiently specific. Group tutorials, with a focus on active citizenship, are well planned and resourced by a central specialist support team.
9. Leadership and management are good. Strong and highly effective leadership has overseen significant growth and improvement. Strategically and operationally the college maintains a sharp focus on meeting the needs of learners, employers and the community. Quality assurance procedures are highly effective and performance at all levels is monitored well. Despite some differences in the quality of provision in sector subject areas, overall trends are positive. Equality of opportunity is good, although not yet sufficiently embedded in the curriculum.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college's capacity to improve is good. The self-assessment process is thorough, inclusive and broadly accurate. It leads to a realistic, challenging and well monitored development plan which focuses on the needs of learners. The college responds promptly and successfully to government initiatives and the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) are supportive of the college's plans. Staff development, including training teachers, has high priority. Processes for the observation of teaching and learning are rigorous and the number of good or better lessons has increased significantly in the current year. Quality improvement strategies are highly effective. Performance data show that

provision has improved over the previous four years, and that managers set challenging targets which they mostly meet. Morale is high, and staff have confidence in managers to oversee improvement.

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

11. The college has made good progress in addressing areas for improvement noted at the last inspection, and has maintained and further developed its strengths. Work-based learning has doubled in size and improved to be good provision. Assessment arrangements are now rigorous. The grade profile from observations of teaching and learning has improved. Key skills success rates remain low in some curriculum areas but show a significant upward trend. Framework completion for work-based learners has improved to well above the national average. Retention rates are rising. Individual learning plans (ILPs) are now completed for all those who need them, including those on non-accredited courses, although some still do not have sufficiently specific targets. By the end of the current year the college will have three years of data from which to analyse value added results effectively.

#### Key strengths

- high success rates
- good teaching, learning and assessment
- high levels of learner enjoyment
- good work-based learning and Train to Gain provision
- outstanding and highly responsive range of provision
- excellent support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- strong and highly effective leadership.

#### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- low key skills success rates in some curriculum areas
- low quality target setting in a minority of ILPs
- underdeveloped use of assessment to plan teaching
- insufficient embedding of equality and diversity in the curriculum.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

12. Achievement and standards are good. This agrees with the college's assessment. Success rates on long courses for learners aged 19 or over are improving and significantly higher than the national average at all three levels. Rates are improving for 16 to 18-year-olds, being around the national average at levels 1 and 3, and significantly higher at level 2. Success rates on short courses of five to 24 weeks have improved to around the national average for adults but are significantly below for 16 to 18-year-olds. Success rates on very short courses have improved to above the national average for the 16 to 18 age group but are below the national average for adults. Success rates for all work-based learners show a consistent upward trend and are well above the national average. Key skills success rates have risen to slightly below the national average but are improving.
13. Retention rates are improving at all levels, although for 16 to 18-year-olds, at level 3, the rate remains well below the national average. Pass rates are all rising and have improved to above the national average at level 1 and for short courses for 16 to 18-year-olds, and at levels 2 and 3 for learners aged 19 or over.
14. Success rates for men and women are similar. Success rates for learners from all minority ethnic groups are similar to that of the college as a whole.
15. The college has improved attendance and current attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality is much improved and poor punctuality is appropriately challenged, although too many learners are still late for lessons.
16. Progression is well monitored and several rates are high. In 2006/7, around two thirds of learners aged 14 to 16 progressed to further courses at the college and another fifth progressed to other employment or training. Around half of learners at level 1 progress to level 2 within the college.
17. Learners gain good personal and occupational skills. They enjoy their lessons very much. They treat each other with respect and work well in teams. Learners make good progress in lessons and are well aware of the increase in their knowledge and confidence.
18. The learning environment is safe and appropriate safe working practices are rigorously maintained.

### Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

19. The quality of provision is good. This judgement matches the college's assessment. Teaching and learning, including for work-based and Train to Gain learners, are good. The college gives high priority to improving the quality of teaching and supports this through its comprehensive, accurate and highly



effective lesson observation procedures. Teachers are well qualified and demonstrate good levels of vocational expertise. They plan lessons carefully and provide a broad range of interesting and imaginative learning activities. These, in most instances, are well matched to the needs and abilities of learners. Learners provide valuable support and challenge to each other as their learning progresses. The use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons is satisfactory with increasing use of a virtual learning environment as teachers become more familiar with it. Teaching of key skills is more effective than at the previous inspection. Additional learning support arrangements are very good. Learners who require additional help with their work value the support they receive from their tutors and make good progress.

20. Assessment procedures have improved since the previous inspection and are rigorous. The use of vocationally relevant assignments in the development of learners' key skills is a strong feature of this improvement. Assignments are marked carefully and generally provide learners with an accurate reflection of their standards. However, the use of assessment to identify appropriate starting points for lessons or to plan further learning is underdeveloped. Progress is monitored carefully.
21. Learners are set appropriate targets on most courses and have ILPs which help them to focus on how to achieve them. The quality of these plans is variable. Sometimes they concentrate on the achievement of short term goals related to specific assignments rather than developing the skills required for overall course success. Some reviews for work-based learners have insufficiently specific targets. Resources to support learning are good. Learning resource centres provide good access to a range of valuable materials to support learning and are used well.
22. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. Educational and social inclusion are good. The curriculum is diverse and extensive with clearly identified pathways for progression and a strong focus on vocational qualifications. The college actively collaborates with an extensive range of partners which benefits learners. It has strong and productive relationships with schools and a high profile within the Cambridge Area Partnership of 14 to 19 providers. It delivers a wide range of vocational education for 14 to 16-year-olds successfully. A high level of trust exists between the college and schools and it runs motivating taster sessions for pupils from Year 9 onwards. Successful collaborative projects have widened participation, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Excellent links with a pupil referral unit has helped to re-engage reluctant and disadvantaged learners. An outstanding project helps learners with severe learning difficulties to extend their employment opportunities. The college is very responsive to employers' skills needs. It maintains excellent links with large and specialist employers in the area and skilfully sustains productive long term relationships. Large employers actively support the college and provide expensive equipment and opportunities for staff to update their skills. An innovative project with international partners provides training in environmentally sustainable building techniques. Enrichment opportunities, including visits and additional qualifications, enhance vocational programmes.

An adequate range of enrichment activities is offered across the college but it is not routinely accessible to all learners.

23. Support for learners is good. Learners receive impartial pre-entry information and advice as part of a comprehensive admissions procedure. Very good information, advice and guidance on vocational employment options and progression routes are offered to school pupils. A wide range of services for learners is easily accessible and well managed. Early initial and diagnostic assessment of learners enables those with additional needs and disabilities to receive prompt support. Support for learners with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. Assessors offer good support in the work place to work-based learners. Induction helps learners to settle into college quickly. Individual tutorials are good. Tutors are skilful and are particularly effective at identifying learners' needs and monitoring their progress. They pay close attention to improving attendance and punctuality. Learners at risk are very carefully monitored. Retention is improving. Group tutorials are well planned and promote active citizenship. Not all vocational staff are skilled and confident in delivering some aspects of the programme but are well supported by a central team of specialists in advice, guidance and citizenship. Useful training is given to learners to assist them in representing others on college committees.
24. Access to a range of welfare and information, advice and guidance services is good. Careers advice, counselling, welfare support, mental health services and financial advice, as well as an active multi-faith chaplaincy, are available to all learners. The college makes very good use of its main central mall, as well as reception and corridor areas, to publicise these services, to provide information and celebrate learner success.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Good: grade 2*

25. Leadership and management are good, which agrees with the college's assessment. The college has a clear mission which is sharply focused on meeting the needs of learners, employers and the community.
26. The principal and senior managers provide strong and highly effective leadership and have overseen significant growth and improvement in the college since the last inspection. Communication is good and morale is high. Comprehensive planning procedures throughout the college are closely aligned to the strategic plan and provide a clear framework for further improvement. Curriculum management and the management of work-based learning are good. Quality assurance procedures are well considered and highly effective. Lesson observations, target setting and course review procedures are closely aligned and provide a comprehensive analysis of performance at all levels in the institution. Although some differences in the quality of provision in sector

subject areas still persist, overall trends are positive and success rates are improving. Self-assessment is thorough and broadly accurate.

27. The college invests heavily in staff development, including teacher training, in order to overcome its difficulties in recruiting sufficient staff to curriculum areas which are experiencing rapid growth. The number of teachers who are qualified or who are undergoing training is high. Lesson observations demonstrate that the quality of teaching and learning is also improving. Appraisal procedures are thorough.
28. Equality of opportunity is good. The college makes an appropriate response to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA). Child protection procedures are fully in place. The college makes good arrangements to ensure that the needs of different groups of students are met and celebrates diversity through a wide range of cross-curricular activities. However, the college accurately identifies in its self-assessment that equality issues are more successfully embedded in some curriculum areas than others.
29. The college is making an excellent contribution to improving the skills base of the regional community and is highly responsive to employer needs. Partnership work with local schools is good. Accommodation and resources are good overall and include some outstanding resources such as the Smartlife centre which has been designed to provide training opportunities in sustainable methods of construction.
30. Governance is good. Governors know the college well and monitor its provision carefully. Financial management is strong and the college 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	1020	62	65	-3	2090	65	62	3
	05/06	1730	71	69	2	2330	72	65	7
	06/07	3167	76			1913	73		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	9	44	68	-24	0			
	05/06	0				0			
	06/07	0				0			
NVQs	04/05	195	64	68	-4	44	59	66	-7
	05/06	228	73	72	1	139	86	74	12
	06/07	169	87			139	87		
Other	04/05	816	62	64	-2	2046	65	62	3
	05/06	1502	71	69	2	2191	71	65	6
	06/07	3207	75			1953	72		

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	1557	62	61	1	1881	60	60	0
	05/06	2029	71	66	5	1708	71	66	5
	06/07	2614	76			1506	76		
GCSEs	04/05	346	62	64	-2	366	73	63	10
	05/06	283	67	68	-1	230	70	67	3
	06/07	360	67			182	60		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	0				0			
	05/06	0				0			
	06/07	0				0			
NVQs	04/05	267	47	57	-10	323	46	60	-14
	05/06	221	61	65	-4	301	69	67	2
	06/07	242	72			320	80		
Other	04/05	944	66	61	5	1192	60	59	1
	05/06	1525	73	66	7	1177	71	65	6
	06/07	2012	77			1149	77		

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	1590	57	68	-11	1363	56	58	-2
	05/06	1393	62	70	-8	1241	68	63	5
	06/07	998	70			629	73		
A/A2 Levels	04/05	196	63	86	-23	109	72	69	3
	05/06	106	84	87	-3	50	86	72	14
	06/07	4	100			14	79		
AS Levels	04/05	507	49	66	-17	266	45	52	-7
	05/06	350	47	67	-20	143	50	55	-5
	06/07					23	65		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	43	63	61	2	5	60	54	6
	05/06	0				0			
	06/07	0				0			
NVQs	04/05	37	57	63	-6	150	49	56	-7
	05/06	27	70	71	-1	159	67	63	4
	06/07	30	87			114	78		
Other	04/05	807	61	60	1	833	59	59	0
	05/06	910	65	65	0	889	70	64	6
	06/07	964	69			766	74		

Table 4

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

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	71	69	48	44	34
		timely	92	51	31	33	22
	05/06	overall	87	72	53	56	44
		timely	115	34	34	29	27
	06/07	overall	191	73	64	68	58
		timely	180	46	43	41	37
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	233	57	51	28	39
		timely	258	40	29	23	22
	05/06	overall	235	72	58	64	52
		timely	242	44	38	39	34
	06/07	overall	249	70	65	67	61
		timely	236	53	47	52	44

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned  
 \*\* College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

Table 5

Success rates on work-based learning 'Train to Gain' programmes managed by the provider/college 2007 to 2008.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2006/07	overall	491	84
		timely	****	****
	2007/08 (7 months)	overall	157	85
		timely	****	****

Note: 2007/08 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned  
 \*\* College/provider qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'  
 \*\*\* Includes 'Train to Gain' long course NVQ provision, but not 'Skills for Life'  
 \*\*\*\* Data not available

Table 6

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the provider/college 2006 to 2007.

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate*	Progression rate**
2005/06	0		
2006/07	29	20	17
2007/08 (7 months)	17	14	14

Note: 2007/08 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the three months or greater of the LSC contract year

\* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

\*\* Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period