

Sandwell 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
- specialist provision in: health, public services and care; engineering and manufacturing technologies; construction, planning and the built environment; information and communication technology (ICT); hairdressing and beauty therapy; preparation for life and work; and business, administration and law.

Description of the provider

1. Sandwell College is a general further education (FE) college situated in the West Midlands. Its mission statement is 'Excellence and success for learners'. The college has campuses in Oldbury, Smethwick and West Bromwich. In 2006/07, the college had 6,603 learners. Of the learners enrolled at the college 68% were adults. In terms of long course provision, nearly half of all learners take courses at level 1, just under one third are at level 2 and nearly a quarter are at level 3, with the remaining learners taking higher level courses. There are similar numbers of male and female learners. There are significant numbers of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds, principally of Indian, Black Caribbean and Pakistani heritage. Some 54% of the learners enrolled are registered as White. Approximately 20% of the local community population are from minority ethnic groups.
2. The college offers provision in all sector subject areas with the exception of agriculture, horticulture and animal care. The highest numbers of learners are in the sector subject areas of preparation for life and work, and information and communication technology (ICT). The college has 293 pupils aged 14 to 16 attending a range of vocational courses. In 2006/07, the college had 210 apprentices in work-based learning.
3. Sandwell's population is 282,904. Nearly two thirds of all learners come from Sandwell, which ranks 16th out of 354 local areas within England for indices of high levels of deprivation. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE subjects at A* to C, including mathematics and English, in Sandwell in 2006 was 29.7% compared to a national average of 45.8%. The rate of unemployment is about 2% above the national average. Nearly three quarters of learners are from areas of high deprivation.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Health, care and public services	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Construction, planning and the built environment	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business, administration and law	Inadequate: Grade 4

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. Effectiveness of provision is satisfactory. Overall college success rates have increased significantly since the previous inspection. Success rates are slightly above the national average for level 1, slightly below for level 2 and well below for level 3. Work-based learning framework success rates are above the national average, significantly so for advanced apprenticeships. Retention is improving across the college. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory overall.
5. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teachers plan lessons well and use a good variety of teaching methods. Work-based learners develop good vocational skills. Lessons do not take sufficient account of learners' individual learning needs. Teachers make satisfactory use of information and learning technology (ILT). The college has systematic arrangements for observing teaching and learning. The provision for learners with additional needs is good.
6. The extent to which programmes meet the needs and interests of learners is good. Curriculum-related enrichment is good. Cross-college enrichment is weak. Progression within the college is good. The college collaborates well with schools, the local authority and community groups, and offers a particularly successful programme for learners aged 14 to 16. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. Links with employers are underdeveloped in some curriculum areas.
7. Guidance and support for learners are good. Initial advice and guidance is effective in helping learners choose the right course. The college offers a good range of personal and welfare services. Tutors provide good informal academic support. The college has introduced improved tutorial arrangements. Careers guidance provides improved support for students interested in going to higher education.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The management of work-based learning is good. Actions to improve success rates have been successful. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Data are used to identify and address concerns. Quality assurance arrangements have improved, but some variability in implementation remains. The self-assessment report (SAR) is accurate. Equality of opportunity is good. Much accommodation is poor. The college's financial position is very weak.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. The college has satisfactory capacity to improve. Learners' success rates have risen. Quality assurance systems have improved and provide a better basis to improve teaching and learning and to monitor learners' progress and the quality of provision. However, links between these systems are incomplete and their implementation by some areas is insufficiently rigorous and consistent. Quality assurance practice is not yet fully embedded across some areas of the college.

10. The self-assessment process includes staff and governors well but learners are not involved sufficiently. The report is accurate. It refers to improvements made but gives insufficient emphasis to evaluating the quality of each aspect considered.

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

11. The college has made satisfactory progress to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Staff have effected significant improvements in success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 and especially for adult learners. Learners on level 1 courses succeed better than the national average but those on levels 2 and 3 courses succeed less well than the national average, especially learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses. Learners' attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. The proportion of lessons graded good or better by the college has improved but too little teaching observed by inspectors is good or better. Employer engagement has increased in some areas but is underdeveloped in the business development unit, construction and applied technology. Managers were slow to implement additional learning support in the autumn term but this provision is now good. Governors and managers use data more effectively to monitor learners' progress and to inform course reviews and the SAR. Self-assessment is more rigorous and effective but it contains insufficient judgement on standards reached. Managers have improved facilities for learners through learning bases but the quality of the accommodation is poor in many areas. Provision in business, administration law and accounts is still inadequate.

Key strengths

- the college's promotion of equality of opportunity and social and educational inclusion
- good additional learning support
- good collaboration with schools and voluntary and community groups
- good provision for learners aged 14 to 16
- good range of well publicised personal and welfare support for students.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- long level 3 success rates
- maintaining the rate of improvement in success rates
- the full implementation of quality improvement arrangements across the college
- increasing the proportion of good and better teaching
- the poor accommodation
- its financial position.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

12. Achievement and standards are satisfactory, which agrees with the SAR. At the previous inspection, all long course success rates were significantly below the national average but in the last three years the college's success rates have increased. The most striking improvement has been on long courses at level 1, which for both 16 to 18 learners and adults are now above the national average. Success rates for long courses at level 2 have improved at a slower rate and are just below the national average for both 16 to 18 and adults. Long courses at level 3 are significantly below the national average. Both AS and A2 success rates are well below the national average and the learner achievement tracker suggests that learners achieve less well than expected given their prior attainment.
13. Retention rates at all levels and for all ages are lower than pass rates. For 2006/07, retention rates were at the national average for level 1 but below the national average for levels 2 and 3. The college's in-year data suggests an increase of over 10% in retention when compared to the same period a year ago. Overall success rates for most minority ethnic groups were similar to the college average; however, Black Caribbean learners aged 16 to 18 have consistently achieved less well than others as have adult learners of mixed heritage. Success rates for male learners are lower than for female learners.
14. Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16, judged good at the previous inspection, are now very good at 81%. Key skills success rates are satisfactory at level 1 and level 2, apart from number at level 2. For the few level 3 entrants success rates are low. Work-based learning overall framework success rates have improved substantially between 2005/06 and 2006/07 to better than the national average. Advanced apprenticeships are well above the national average, but apprenticeships remain slightly below the national average. Framework success rates for Black and minority learners are lower than for other learners.
15. Attendance has improved in the past year and is satisfactory. The standard of learners' work is broadly satisfactory. However, in the development of job-related skills in preparation for life, hairdressing and beauty, health and social care, aspects of construction and work-based learning, standards of work are good. In carpentry and joinery learners skilfully manufactured window frames to set dimensions.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

16. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. This agrees with the SAR. Most teachers plan teaching and learning carefully, use a good variety of methods to motivate and maintain the interest of learners, and use questions skilfully to check learning. All these strengths were areas for concern at the last inspection. The high standard of work-based learning helps learners develop good vocational skills. At college, teachers' development of learners' skills is mostly satisfactory and occasionally good. In the better lessons, learning tasks are challenging, management of behaviour is good and learning develops learners' ability to work well in groups. However, in weaker lessons these strengths are areas for improvement. The planning of learning does not always meet the needs of the full ability range and in particular, inspectors noted insufficient challenge for higher ability students. Most learners make appropriate progress in lessons. Teachers make satisfactory use of ILT. Many lessons do not take sufficient account of learners' individual learning needs. Teachers do not focus on the learners' main learning topic and make insufficient use of examples from the workplace and learners' own experience. In some vocational subject areas, learning related to the workplace is insufficient. In discussions with inspectors, learners indicated that they found teaching to be of a high standard.
17. The college has implemented systematic and effective arrangements for observations of teaching and learning. Managers use outcomes from observations to provide useful support and training to improve teaching and learning. Observations provide a mostly accurate assessment of the standard of teaching and learning. However, the college still does not observe all teachers.
18. The college provides a comprehensive range of support for those with additional learning needs. It is of a high standard. The success rates of learners receiving additional support is well above those not receiving help. Arrangements to identify support requirements are thorough. The take up of help for those identified with support needs is very high. However, although most learners receive prompt support, in 2007/08, one quarter had to wait six weeks or more for help. The college has appropriate arrangements to ensure assessment of learners' work is fair and accurate.
19. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners is good overall. The college provides a broad and diverse curriculum at levels 1 to 3, including good work-based learning and Train to Gain opportunities. Clear progression pathways in all significant curriculum areas facilitate a high rate of internal progression. However, there are insufficient opportunities to progress onto level 4 qualifications within the college. In most curriculum areas, good enrichment activities enliven courses but the cross-college enrichment programme is weak. The college plays a pivotal role in local

14 to 19 partnerships and makes good provision for learners aged 14 to 16. Students take up good opportunities to gain additional qualifications in many curriculum areas. The college pays close attention to ensuring learners' health and safety. Security arrangements are excellent, so that learners themselves feel very safe at the college. They make a positive contribution to the community inside and outside the college.

20. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. Its diverse student population strongly reflects the local community. Students behave harmoniously and respectfully within the college. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and appropriately integrated into college life. Achievement by students of all abilities is celebrated. The college collaborates enthusiastically and successfully with schools, the local authority, and voluntary and community groups to widen participation by under-represented and vulnerable groups in the borough. The college has made tangible improvements to employer engagement since the previous inspection and currently engages with some 600 employers. However, a few curriculum areas have poor links with employers and commercial training for employers remains underdeveloped.
21. Guidance and support for students are good, reflecting significant improvement since the last inspection. Initial advice and guidance, supported by high quality promotional materials, is effective in helping students choose the right course. Early course transfers have reduced. A good range of personal and welfare services are well publicised and signposted on each campus and much used by learners. Financial support enables a large number of learners to stay the course. Induction arrangements help learners to settle in quickly. Careers guidance resources are much improved, and guidance and support for learners interested in going on to higher education are good.
22. Tutors in most curriculum areas provide their learners with extensive informal academic support, which contributes significantly to improving their retention and success rates. Strategies to improve attendance have proved successful. Personal tutors and learners value the new and comprehensive tutorial arrangements for full-time learners. Tutors regularly review progress with individual learners and report much more reliably to parents, carers and employers. In the weaker curriculum areas, there is evidence of some inconsistencies in implementing the new tutorial model. Target setting remains overly focused on ensuring learners meet assessment requirements rather than helping them to further develop their skills. The use of target grades is very rudimentary.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

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

23. Leadership and management are satisfactory and this agrees with the college's judgement. Managers have been effective in improving learners' achievement during the last three years. The management of work-based learning and 14 to 16 provision is good. Senior leaders monitor performance data rigorously and take appropriate actions to address areas of concern. Curriculum management is satisfactory.
24. Managers have improved the quality assurance systems. The course review and internal lesson observation processes are comprehensive and detailed. Course reviews inform the SAR and the lesson observation outcomes link to staff development and partially to appraisal. However, course reviews have insufficient focus on the quality of teaching and learning, and on links to employers. The SAR is accurate. The implementation of quality processes is too variable, especially in health and social care, and preparation for life and work.
25. Governors are very committed to improving students' learning experiences. They set a clear strategy and mission, and know the college's strengths and areas for improvement well. They monitor key aspects of college performance thoroughly and challenge senior leaders effectively. However, they have approved deficit budgets. Their participation in training on child protection procedures is incomplete.
26. The college is in a very weak financial position and has been so for some time. The college operates at a significant deficit and has not met its funding allocations for several years. Nevertheless, managers have invested in improved ICT and ILT resources, and in learning resource centres, to improve students' facilities. The accommodation is poor in many areas, including construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy. Managers have submitted designs for a new building on a single site, planned to open in 2010. Resources are good in motor vehicle but poor in applied technology. The college provides satisfactory value for money. Staff are appropriately qualified and access much relevant staff development.
27. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Equality and diversity policies, procedures, analysis and monitoring are well embedded and very effective. The college meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 well, the Special Education Needs and Discrimination Act 2002 (SENDA) appropriately and the Child Protection Act thoroughly. No one is debarred from accessing the college, by virtue of restricted mobility. However, the proportions of governors who are female and from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are low, women are under-represented on the senior leadership team and staff from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are under-represented in middle and senior management positions.

Sector subject area

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

28. The college offers courses in care and early years. Eleven part-time learners aged 14 to 16 are on entry level courses, 27 full-time learners aged 16 to 18 are on level 1 courses, 33 on level 2 courses and 46 on level 3 courses. In addition, 157 part-time adult learners are on level 2 courses and 82 are on level 3 courses. Five community outreach venues offer national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in early years and education.

Strengths

- high success rates on childcare programmes
- very effective support for learning.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on health and social care programmes at levels 2 and 3
- too few strategies to attract males into learning
- incomplete implementation of quality improvement arrangements.

Achievement and standards

29. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on childcare level 1 and level 3 programmes have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now significantly above the national average. Success rates for programmes in health and social care at level 2 and level 3 are low. The college has improved retention rates, which for the current year, are around 90%. Progression rates from level 2 to level 3 in health and social care programmes are good at 86%.

30. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory overall. Work by level 3 learners often contains a good level of detail with good illustrations and academic references. Learners have an appropriate understanding of child development and health issues. Learners make satisfactory progress towards their qualifications.

Quality of provision

31. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Better lessons contain a range of activities to motivate and engage learners of all abilities. Learners are attentive and contribute well to group discussions. Attendance is satisfactory.

32. Learning resources are generally satisfactory. A new learning centre provides good access to computers and an appropriate range of textbooks and professional journals. Many classrooms are in need of decoration and some

handouts contain spelling errors and some important omissions. Standards of assessment are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate feedback on their work to enable them to make improvements.

33. The range of programmes is adequate to meet the needs of learners and employers. All learners have appropriate work placements. However, teachers do not always link classroom learning to work placement experiences.
34. Support for learning is very effective. Learners with identified needs receive very effective literacy, numeracy and language support in lessons and make good progress towards their qualification. Learners with no previous qualifications receive distinction grades for their assignments.

Leadership and management

35. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have introduced effective strategies to improve the provision. Retention and success rates on most programmes have improved since the previous inspection. The college has been unsuccessful in attracting more male learners. At the time of the inspection, only 5% of health and social care learners and 2% of childcare learners were male and programme improvement plans are inadequate to increase the recruitment of men.
36. Managers have not fully implemented the college's quality improvement arrangements. They have not observed all staff delivering training. Nor have they completed staff appraisals in the five years up to 2007. Standards of record keeping and the effectiveness of target setting in reviews are variable. Staff contribute appropriately to the SAR, which accurately identifies many of the key issues.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

38. The college offers full- and part-time courses from entry level to level 4 in engineering and motor vehicle studies. There are 236 learners aged 16 to 18 and 158 learners are adults. Work-based learning programmes have 68 apprentices and 29 advanced apprentices. Seventeen pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools undertake engineering courses.

Strengths

- high success rates on motor vehicle courses
- high success rates on advanced apprenticeships
- good skills development in work-based learning
- well resourced motor vehicle training.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates for adults
- low success rates for apprentices
- too little good teaching
- weak target setting and review for many learners.

Achievement and standards

38. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on motor vehicle courses are high. In 2006/07, success rates for levels 2 and 3 were significantly above the national average. Success rates for adults are low at levels 1 and 2 and at level 3 have steadily declined to around the national average. Success rates of advanced apprentices have been consistently high over the past three years improving from 68% in 2004/05 to 82% in 2006/07. All of those who completed in 2006/07 did so within the planned time. The success rate of apprentices is low. Retention is satisfactory and attendance in lessons is good. Punctuality is good in most lessons and tutors appropriately challenge lateness.
39. Learners in college demonstrate appropriate standards in the use of tools and in their theory work. The standard of practical work in vehicle body repair is good. Apprentices demonstrate good standards of work and quickly develop high levels of skill.

Quality of provision

40. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Little teaching and learning is good in engineering, although it is better in motor vehicle. In the better lessons, learners engage in a variety of activities, maintain their interest in the topic and actively enjoy learning. However, too many lessons do not sufficiently challenge learners, lack pace and are dull and uninspiring. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Most assignments have detailed grading criteria and learners receive

timely and helpful feedback. Assessment of work-based learning is well planned, thorough and accurate.

41. Resources are good in motor vehicle with well equipped workshops and employers provide good skills development for apprentices. However, the engineering workshop lacks modern machinery and many engineering classrooms are cluttered. A few motor vehicle classrooms are cramped and inhibit the use of a wider variety of teaching activities.
42. The range of programmes effectively meets the needs of learners and employers. The motor vehicle department has developed extremely good links with employers. Staff work with employers to develop their own technical skills and employers support the work of the college. However, in applied technology, links with employers are weak.
43. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Learners find their teachers approachable and supportive. Target setting and review of learners' progress is weak. Targets are often too broad and unhelpful.

Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Team leaders in motor vehicle manage their programmes well and focus effectively on the needs of learners. Internal verification procedures are appropriate but insufficiently frequent on some programmes. Observation of teaching and learning is over-graded and is inconsistent. All staff are actively involved in self-assessment, which is broadly accurate. Tutorials and lessons effectively promote equality and diversity. Learners value the respect they get from staff and feel safe in the college.

Construction, planning and the built environment Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

45. The college offers courses in plastering, carpentry and joinery, plumbing, painting and decorating and in electrical installation. There are 267 learners aged 16 to 18 and 233 are adult learners. 282 learners are on full-time courses and 233 study part-time. The majority of learners, 243, were on courses at level 1, 176 were studying at level 2 and 57 at level 3. A further 15 pupils attended courses from local schools.

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses
- good development of learners' practical skills
- highly effective strategies to motivate learners
- good monitoring and support aiding learners' progress.

Areas for improvement

- low retention rates on construction craft courses
- very low success rates for adults on electrical installation courses
- insufficient range of courses and activities to meet learners' needs
- poor links with industry, employers and other providers.

Achievement and standards

46. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall success rates on the majority of courses are close to the corresponding national average of similar colleges. Pass rates on many courses are high. In 2006/07, pass rates on the basic construction skills course and on the intermediate construction award were well above average. However, retention rates on construction craft courses were low and success rates for adults on electrical installation courses were very low. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Written work in learners' files and portfolios is of an appropriate standard.

Quality of provision

47. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and enable learners to gain the required skills and knowledge. Teachers use very effective strategies to motivate learners in lessons encouraging their participation and achievement. Practical teaching enables learners to develop good practical skills. Learners in a plastering lesson competently applied finish plaster to walls and ceilings.
48. The range of programmes and activities to meet the needs and interests of learners is inadequate. The department does not offer NVQs and there are no learners on work-based courses. Formal arrangements to enable learners to gain work experience are at a very early stage of development. The department

offers satisfactory enrichment opportunities but does not offer additional qualifications to enhance the employability prospects of learners.

49. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Initial assessment arrangements have improved and are satisfactory. Induction enables learners to settle quickly into the department. Staff provide good support to aid learners' progress and monitor their progress well. Tutors set and monitor achievement targets for learners during tutorials. However, not all targets are sufficiently specific to be useful or meaningful to learners.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Actions taken to improve provision are having a positive impact. The department has addressed most areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Communication is effective with clear roles, responsibilities and expectations of staff. However, links with employers, industry and with other providers are poor and much accommodation is now outdated. The SAR is broadly accurate and improvement planning is satisfactory.

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

51. The college offers a range of courses in both ICT practitioner and information technology (IT) user subject areas. A full range of progression routes are available from foundation to level 3 courses. The majority of courses are vocational and based in a new ICT learning base at the Smethwick site. GCSE AS and A2 courses are available at the West Bromwich site. There are 156 learners aged 16 to 18 and 363 are adults.

Strengths

- good success rates on adult computer literacy and information technology courses
- good development of learners' non-ICT skills
- good learning resources in ICT suite.

Areas for improvement

- poor retention on level 3 vocational courses 2005/07
- unsatisfactory arrangements for teaching in drop-in workshops
- inadequate arrangements for internal verification and course evaluation.

Achievement and standards

52. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Success rates for GCE AS level and for some adult level 1 IT user courses are good. Many of the courses now have satisfactory success rates, which is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. However, retention on level 3 vocational programmes between 2005 and 2007 are poor and significantly below the national average. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. The quality of learners' work is broadly satisfactory; however, some adult learners are making slow progress.

Quality of provision

53. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and much improved since the previous inspection. Much training, development and observation of teaching and learning of tutors has been undertaken. Teachers use ILT well to broaden their range of teaching techniques. Teachers support learners well in the development of their wider skills, in particular, problem solving, team building and communication skills. Learning resources are good within the ICT suite at the Smethwick site, which is spacious and well decorated with new industry standard furniture and equipment. However, on the BTEC national programme, arrangements for teaching in the drop-in workshop are unsatisfactory. Learners make good use of specialist ICT resources and support staff. Arrangements for information advice and guidance, induction and review of adult learners are not sufficient to ensure satisfactory learner progress.

54. Programmes and courses meet the needs of learners and employers appropriately. The full-time curriculum offer enables learners to choose a level of course that is appropriate to their needs in either practitioner or IT user subjects. Adult learners can follow a comprehensive range of part-time courses at anytime during the day or evening. Employers are able to have bespoke courses tailored to meet their needs. However, full-time learners do not have sufficient work experience opportunities.
55. Support for learners is satisfactory overall but good for learners with additional literacy, numeracy and English language needs in ICT classes. Tutorials are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, success rates and the quality of teaching have improved significantly. The opening of an ICT suite at the Smethwick site provides a good learning environment and has improved resources overall. The self-assessment process uses performance data, staff and learners' views well and is broadly accurate. The development plan is satisfactory. However, arrangements for internal verification and course evaluation are inadequate. Internal verification planning is weak and feedback is too brief to identify improvements. Analysis of key data does not sufficiently inform course evaluations.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Good: Grade 2

Context

57. Full-time courses are available in hairdressing at levels 1, 2 and 3, and in beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3. Part-time courses are also available in hairdressing, barbering, beauty therapy and holistic therapies such as Indian head massage, aromatherapy and hot stone therapy. The college also offers apprentice programmes for work-based learners and provision for 14 to 16-year-old learners. There are currently 239 full-time and 150 part-time learners. There are 205 learners aged 16 to 18, 216 adults and 22 learners aged 14 to 16.

Strengths

- good timely success rates for apprentices in hairdressing
- good success rates for NVQ2 beauty therapy
- good practical skills development in hair and beauty
- good learner progress relative to their starting point
- good opportunities for enrichment and additional qualifications
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- poor and declining retention on level 2 hairdressing
- insufficient challenge for more able learners in hairdressing.

Achievement and standards

58. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates for NVQ2 in beauty therapy are good. Many courses have high retention and pass rates but some programmes have yet to show consistent positive trends. Learners develop good professional and practical skills. Learners gain additional qualifications, which enhance their skills and employability within the profession. Learners make good progress relative to their starting point. Young people aged 14 to 16 achieve well and often progress to full-time work-based learning programmes or full-time courses at the college. The timely success rate for hairdressing apprenticeship framework is very good and significantly above the national average.

Quality of provision

59. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons well and have good working relationships with learners. Learners have clear direction and understand the learning outcomes expected from the lessons. Learners quickly develop good practical skills, are aware of standards expected in the commercial world and progress at a fast rate. Teachers continuously refer to commercial aspects in lessons and emphasise good health and safety practices. Teachers take account of different learning styles in the group and offer a

variety of learning activities. Teachers' lesson plans take account of differentiation; however, in hairdressing these activities do not always challenge the most able learners.

60. The range of provision is satisfactory. Salons do not represent best industry standards but provide an adequate learning environment. Products and equipment reflect those of industry and learners have sufficient equipment. Enrichment provides learners with good opportunities to gain additional experience and qualifications.
61. Support for learners is good. Initial screening at interview effectively identifies additional support needs. Of the 71 learners identified, 70 are receiving support. The learning support team set and monitor clear targets. Learners in both hair and beauty state that they have received good support from student services.

Leadership and management

62. Curriculum leadership and management are good. Communication and teamwork are good. Managers rigorously monitor student data at both team and department level. All staff take part in the self-assessment process and participate in planning. Self-assessment is generally accurate. Managers implement quality assurance procedures well. However, the planning and activities of internal verification is insufficiently rigorous.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

63. The college currently offers full- and part-time courses for learners aged 14 to 18 and adults from pre-entry level to level 2. There are currently 723 learners on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses, 159 on programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 423 learners are attending literacy and numeracy courses and 154 are on personal development programmes. There are 977 learners studying key skills in application of number and communications at levels 1 and 2. A further 453 learners are on wider key skills courses to improve their own learning and performance, problem-solving and working with others.

Strengths

- high pass rates in ESOL
- high pass rates on adult level 1 numeracy in 2006/07
- good development of learners' self-confidence and motivation.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient planning of learning to meet individual needs
- insufficient use of appropriate resources for learners with significant ESOL needs
- low numbers of learners taking ESOL accreditation.

Achievement and standards

64. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Pass rates at over 75% are high in ESOL but the number of learners taking ESOL accredited qualifications is low. In 2006/07, pass rates in adult numeracy level 1, were significantly above the national average.
65. Learners' self-confidence and motivation are significantly developed in programmes. Frequent praise and encouragement from tutors has raised learners' self-esteem and confidence in contributing to discussions in class. Independent living activities enable learners to experience social occasions, including cooking and eating meals together. Learners take pride in their work and make reasonable progress towards lesson objectives.

Quality of provision

66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers use an appropriate range of activities which are very relevant to everyday life and work to engage learners. A cooking activity in an independent living lesson, helped learners develop good additional skills in numeracy. However, teachers do not always challenge more able learners. Key skills are vocationally relevant and integrated appropriately in most curriculum areas.

67. Planning to meet individual learning needs is insufficient. Target setting on individual learning plans is underdeveloped. Targets are too general to be useful. Tutors do not use diagnostic assessment effectively to plan longer-term targets for learners. Learners attending several subjects have separate plans for each subject, which are not coordinated effectively. Reviews are weak and sometimes have inappropriate comments.
68. Resources are satisfactory. Some teachers make good use of ILT in lessons. Learners with significant ESOL needs do not always have access to appropriate resources. Some resources are not age appropriate.
69. Learners' understanding of key induction topics, including health and safety, equality and diversity and programme content, is satisfactory.
70. Support for learners is satisfactory. Group sizes are generally small enabling teachers to provide appropriate support. Teachers work closely with support workers to provide effective specialist support.

Leadership and management

71. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Quality assurance arrangements have improved since the previous inspection. Observations of lessons are now more rigorous with an improved moderation process. The self-assessment process is inclusive and the report critical and accurate. Managers and course teams make better use of data to judge performance. Resources are satisfactory overall, although some accommodation is poor. Whilst managers have been slow to develop the formal Skills for Life strategy, some of the actions are being implemented.

Business administration and law

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

72. The college offers full-time courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 in accounting, office technology and business and law, including GCE AS and A level and NVQ courses. Part-time courses include office technology, business studies and accounts. Of the 553 registrations, 244 are full-time, mainly 16 to 18-year-olds and 309 are part-time. There are 29 work-based learners.

Strengths

- good timely success rates on work-based learning provision
- good tutor support for learners
- good individualised learning in the business studies learning centre
- well targeted additional learning support in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on many business courses
- underdeveloped study skills of many full-time learners
- insufficient work-related experience for full-time learners
- imprecise targets set with college based learners
- insufficient sharing of good practice across business provision, including work-based learning.

Achievement and standards

73. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Success rates are satisfactory on full-time levels 1 and 2 courses but are well below the national average at level 3. Success rates on several administration courses are very poor. Learners achieve well on GCE A-level law but poorly on other GCE courses. Success rates on accounting NVQ programmes are satisfactory or above. Success rates on provision for 14 to 16-year-old learners are very high. Work-based learners achieve well within the expected timeframe. Black African learners do better than the national average, all other minority ethnic groups, including white learners do worse. Key skills success rates are poor. Standards of learners' work are satisfactory. Progression from the BTEC national course to higher education is good.

Quality of provision

74. Standards of teaching are satisfactory. Teachers use a very wide range of teaching methods in the business studies resource centre, where learners are appropriately challenged and supported whilst working at their own pace. However, in classroom settings, teachers rely too heavily on whole class teaching. Learning support is good. Additional support in lessons is particularly effective. Behaviour in lessons is good. Poor punctuality disrupts the start of some lessons. Learners do not develop their literacy and numeracy skills

sufficiently. Work-based learning provision integrates key skills well. Assessment is accurate and appropriate with helpful comments although teachers do not always correct grammar and spelling.

75. The range of provision is satisfactory. Business studies learners access a well resourced centre on a drop-in basis. Much course material is available on the college virtual learning environment. Courses do not provide sufficient opportunities for work experience and work-related learning. On-the-job support for work-based learners is good.
76. Learners speak highly of good tutor support. Tutors monitor their progress more closely and attendance monitoring is effective. However, most learner targets do not specify the knowledge and skills needed to achieve higher grades. Many learners are unaware of their overall target grades. Work-based learning reviews are of a good standard and clear targets are set and monitored.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are inadequate. Recent management changes have strengthened quality assurance arrangements; however, these have yet to impact on learner achievement. Managers have discontinued poor performing courses. The new programme manager is building more effective teams. However, managers do not use college data well in weekly review meetings. Course reviews are not sufficiently rigorous. Leadership and management of work-based learning are effective with good communication and standardised approaches to documentation and delivery. Good practice is not sufficiently shared across the provision.

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	871	49	62	-13	2089	48	61	-13
	05/06	1133	65	68	-3	1944	63	67	-4
	06/07*	1370	73	N/A		1141	75	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	10	40	64	-24	1	0	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	61	54	66	-12	19	63	71	-8
	05/06	36	78	70	8	9	67	72	-5
	06/07*	28	86	N/A		3	67	N/A	
Other	04/05	800	49	61	-12	2069	48	61	-13
	05/06	1097	65	67	-2	1935	63	67	-4
	06/07*	1342	73	N/A		1138	75	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	829	56	61	-5	1443	41	60	-19
	05/06	1024	58	65	-7	1413	56	66	-10
	06/07*	869	62	N/A		986	62	N/A	
GCSEs	04/05	309	71	66	5	199	64	64	0
	05/06	387	63	69	-6	163	52	67	-15
	06/07*	329	58	N/A		158	59	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	49	43	67	-24	6	0	65	-65
	05/06	26	73	66	7	...	...	...	...
	06/07*	36	75	N/A		...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	105	50	56	-6	272	47	62	-15
	05/06	146	56	64	-8	441	61	69	-8
	06/07*	103	57	N/A		251	69	N/A	
Other	04/05	366	48	59	-11	966	35	58	-23
	05/06	465	53	63	-10	809	54	65	-11
	06/07*	401	65	N/A		577	59	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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	04/05	749	46	66	-20	1107	40	57	-17
	05/06	631	54	68	-14	1033	54	62	-8
	06/07*	660	57	N/A		618	56	N/A	
A/A2 Levels	04/05	56	88	85	3	39	72	74	-2
	05/06	99	72	86	-14	53	60	74	-14
	06/07*	99	79	N/A		52	75	N/A	
AS Levels	04/05	249	55	64	-9	94	49	53	-4
	05/06	226	49	64	-15	99	42	57	-15
	06/07*	238	49	N/A		69	51	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	101	34	60	-26	26	46	52	-6
	05/06	29	76	68	8	8	63	54	9
	06/07*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	122	17	54	-37	211	37	55	-18
	05/06	29	66	66	0	270	52	65	-13
	06/07*	27	52	N/A		145	75	N/A	
Other	04/05	221	48	57	-9	737	38	57	-19
	05/06	248	49	62	-13	603	56	62	-6
	06/07*	296	57	N/A		352	47	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 learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	37	65	48	49	34
		timely	37	62	31	46	22
	05/06	overall	58	45	53	36	44
		timely	58	41	34	34	27
	06/07	overall	28	86	64	82	58
		timely	30	73	43	70	37
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	121	45	51	36	39
		timely	108	25	29	22	22
	05/06	overall	89	37	58	35	52
		timely	70	37	38	37	34
	06/07	overall	99	58	65	57	61
		timely	96	58	47	57	44

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

- * 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'