

Stockport 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 and social care; construction, planning and the built environment; hair and beauty; arts, design, media and performing arts; literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); business, administration and law.

Description of the provider

1. Stockport College was formed by the merger of North Area College with Stockport College of Further and Higher Education in January 2006. Provision is delivered on two main sites, with additional sites for brickwork and sports. The college has started a four year redevelopment programme that includes significant new build and extensive refurbishment. The anticipated completion date is the end of 2011 and the overall cost of the scheme is approximately £98M.
2. In 2006/07, the college had just over 11,500 learners. Two thirds of these were adult and one third were 16-18 year olds, or younger. Approximately one third of learners are full-time. There is a high black and minority ethnic population (13%) compared with the borough of Stockport (4%). Around one eighth of the total college population have declared learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or health problems.
3. The college provides courses in all 15 sector subject areas and currently has three Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs). These are in care for the elderly, motor cycle maintenance and media. The college also has strong provision in higher education and has partnerships with a number of universities. The college has significant work-based learning provision. This includes Entry to Employment, Train to Gain and over 430 apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. The college's mission statement is 'working together to develop your skills and learning'.
4. Stockport is eight miles from Manchester on the south western edge of the Greater Manchester conurbation. It has a population of over 282,000. Stockport's unemployment rate (1.9%) is significantly below Greater Manchester (3.5%), the North West (3.4%) and the United Kingdom (3.2%). However, there are a few areas of the borough where there are high levels of unemployment, such as Brinnington (7.7%). All but one of Stockport's wards contain neighbourhoods where deprivation is higher than the national average, even if the ward is affluent overall. These extremes contribute to making Stockport the seventh most polarised local authority area in the country.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Health and social care	Outstanding: Grade 1
Construction, planning and the built environment	Good: Grade 2
Hair and beauty	Outstanding: Grade 1
Arts, design, media and performing arts	Outstanding: Grade 1
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Outstanding: Grade 1
Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

5. The effectiveness of provision at Stockport College is outstanding. Achievement and standards are good and pass rates on most courses are very high. Success rates are good overall. Success and progression rates on programmes for 14-16 year olds are outstanding. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes are good and progression rates on Entry to Employment are very good. Overall success rates on work-based learning apprenticeships are satisfactory, but they are improving. Attendance and retention rates on a minority of courses are low.
6. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers have high levels of subject expertise and they inspire learners to develop a thorough understanding of their subject. Regular and rigorous assessment includes good feedback to learners. Learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs are systematically assessed and good and timely support is provided.
7. Educational and social inclusion and the college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners are outstanding. Progression rates are very good. A very high proportion of school pupils progress to other courses at the college. The college has excellent relationships with its partner organisations and offers an extensive range of enrichment activities.
8. The college provides outstanding guidance and support. Initial advice and guidance are thorough. The range of pastoral, welfare and personal services is outstanding. Excellent use is made of specialist support agencies. The college provides outstanding support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Systems for tracking and monitoring learners are rigorous.
9. Leadership and management are outstanding. Quality assurance is very effective. The self-assessment process is thorough and rigorous. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff are well qualified and staff development is very good. A capital project is underway to replace old buildings with a new campus. Financial management is outstanding. The college provides good value for money. The college has excellent links with a wide range of external partners. Governance of the college is very effective. Governors, managers and staff are passionate about providing a high quality service to learners and work very hard to achieve this.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

10. The college has outstanding capacity to make further improvements. Quality assurance systems are very effective. The rigorous self-assessment process and closely monitored action plans have led to major improvements in all aspects of the college's work. Inspirational leadership has led to a shared commitment across the college to provide high quality education and

training for a diverse range of learners. Achievement and standards and the quality of provision have improved during a period of substantial change. Leaders have demonstrated an impressive ability to ensure the college is responsive to local and national needs and to provide a high quality of service to students and employers.

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

11. The effectiveness of steps taken to promote improvements is outstanding. The college has made very good progress in addressing the weaknesses that were identified at the last inspection of both colleges. The quality of provision in health and social care, that was inadequate at the last inspection, is now outstanding. Several other curriculum areas that were judged satisfactory or good at the last inspection are now outstanding. Deficiencies in resources at the Heaton Moor campus have been fully addressed. Arrangements to deliver key skills have improved significantly. Retention has improved, although the college recognises the need for further improvement of attendance and retention on a minority of courses.

Key strengths

- outstanding leadership
- outstanding curriculum management
- very high pass rates on most courses
- outstanding teaching and learning
- excellent range of courses at all levels
- outstanding programme for students aged 14-16
- excellent relationships with all external partners
- outstanding social and educational inclusion
- outstanding support for learners
- rigorous self-assessment
- excellent provision for learners with difficulties and/or disabilities
- very effective performance management leading to significant improvement.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- attendance and retention rates on a minority of courses.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Good: Grade 2

Entry to Employment

Outstanding: Grade 1

Learners aged 14-16

Outstanding: Grade 1

12. Achievement and standards are good. Pass rates on most courses are very high. As identified in the college self-assessment report, overall pass rates have improved from 86% to 92% over the three years up to 2006/07. Success rates are good, particularly at level 1S and 3. At level 2, success rates have also improved but are only now in line with the national average. Success rates for young people taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) have fallen, relative to the national average. Success rates on short courses are good and improving.
13. Success rates for learners receiving additional learning support, and those with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are above those for the college as a whole and they are improving at a faster rate. Success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups are slightly below the college as a whole, but they are also improving at a faster rate.
14. Success and progression rates on programmes for 14-16 year olds are outstanding. The college has over 1,000 learners aged 14-16 taking a wide range of vocational programmes. In 2006/07, 96% of 14-16 learners progressed to vocational education, training or employment, and two thirds of these progressed within the college.
15. Distance travelled at level 2 is good for most learners. Most graded qualifications at this level have a positive distance travelled score. The scores for those on work-based learning programmes are satisfactory. Key skills success rates across the college have improved significantly. Over the three years up to 2006/07, success rates for young people taking key skills rose from 31% to 64%, and for adults from 21% to 70%.
16. Success rates on Train to Gain are good, and progression rates on Entry to Employment programmes are very good. Overall success rates on work-based learning for young people have improved significantly, but they are still only just above the national average for apprentices and well below the national average for advanced apprentices. Data show that in 2007/08 they are likely to improve. Timely success rates are also improving.
17. Attendance and retention rates, on a minority of courses, are low. As recognised in the self-assessment report, although retention rates have improved, on a few level 2 courses they are still low. College data show that in-year retention for 2007/08 has improved significantly. Attendance levels

are improving, but the college recognises the need to improve further learners' punctuality and attendance.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

18. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The college has a clear and successful focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The lesson observation process is rigorous and effective. Observations are regular and teachers receive detailed feedback on their performance. The outcomes of the observation process are closely linked to internal audits and are used to prepare individual teacher development plans. However, there is insufficient analysis of the grades awarded to lessons to identify trends across all aspects of the college.
19. Teachers have high levels of subject expertise and their enthusiasm, support and commitment inspire learners to develop a thorough understanding of their subject. Learners benefit from well planned lessons and a wide range of teaching and learning strategies. Teachers make learning enjoyable and ensure all learners are involved in lessons. Teachers make very effective use of information and learning technology (ILT).
20. Rigorous assessment and verification include good feedback to learners on how they can improve their work. Learner progress is monitored frequently and effectively. Underperformance is challenged and appropriate support provided. Learners are highly motivated and keen to learn.
21. Learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs are systematically assessed and the outcomes are used well to inform individual learning plans. Parents, carers and employers are well informed about learners' progress and about the work of the college. The college recognises, in its self-assessment report, the need to further improve the individualisation of learning through better differentiation, and to make appropriate activities for more able learners consistently available across all areas of learning.
22. Educational and social inclusion and the college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners are outstanding. The curriculum choice is wide and varied with an excellent range of courses at all levels. Rigorous market research and labour market information are used well to inform the curriculum offer. Links with local schools are excellent; provision for school pupils aged 14-16 is highly successful.
23. Progression between courses and to higher education or employment is very good. A very high proportion of school pupils progress to other courses at the college. Close collaboration with a wide range of partners ensures that many groups of learners, including those not in employment, education or training (NEET), and learners from vulnerable groups, are able to gain new skills and raise their self-esteem.
24. The college has excellent relationships with community organisations, employers, trade unions and higher education institutions. They offer highly

innovative, often bespoke, courses and training, enhanced by good provision in the CoVEs. The college's community work plays a significant role in the economic regeneration of Stockport. There are increasing numbers of Train to Gain learners who achieve well.

25. The college offers an extensive range of enrichment activities including an increasingly strong focus on sports. Opportunities for enrichment within the curriculum, including many trips and residential activities, are valued highly by learners. Learners' views are important to the college and are sought and acted upon regularly.
26. The college offers outstanding guidance and support. Its response to learners' needs is excellent. Initial advice and guidance are thorough and well planned. Information is timely and accessible in a range of formats and enables learners to make well informed choices. Induction programmes are effective and help learners to settle into their courses quickly.
27. The range of pastoral, welfare and personal services is outstanding. Excellent use is made of specialist support agencies. Counselling and mental and physical health services are extensive and used well. The chaplaincy offers valuable pastoral support to meet learners' spiritual needs. Childcare arrangements are good. The college provides outstanding specialist support, including equipment, resources and well qualified staff, to ensure that learners with difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as they can.
28. Systems for the tracking and monitoring of learners are rigorous. As identified in the self-assessment report, data are used effectively to set targets and monitor learners' progress. In a few cases, targets are not sufficiently challenging. Learners' performance against targets is monitored frequently. Attendance is monitored rigorously. It has improved markedly since the last inspection although it remains low on a minority of courses. Communications between learning mentors, teachers and tutors are very effective in identifying and supporting learners at risk of underachieving or not completing their courses.
29. The well managed tutorial programme is flexible and meets the differing needs of learners. Teachers and tutors provide high quality support to learners, especially through individual tutorials. Careers and higher education guidance and information is very good, impartial and widely available.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: Grade 1

30. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal and senior managers have led the college very successfully through a period of substantial change. Throughout, there has been a relentless focus on the learner experience, which has led to major improvements in learners'

achievement. There is a clear strategic direction, which is well shared across the college. Quality assurance is very effective. There is a robust system to review and evaluate all aspects of provision. The self-assessment process is thorough and rigorous. Occasionally, the college underestimates its strengths. There is swift action to deal with any underperformance, which has led to improvements in teaching and learning and overall success rates. Retention rates have also improved, but at a slower rate than pass rates.

31. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a culture of respect for individuals that permeates the college and is reinforced through staff training and learner tutorials. The college meets all legislative requirements and it has a detailed equality and diversity action plan which is closely monitored. Learner support for vulnerable learners is excellent and effective action is taken to adapt accommodation and learning materials to meet the needs of individual learners. The college regularly gathers evidence from targeted groups of learners to evaluate its approach to equality and diversity.
32. Staff are well qualified and staff development is very good. There is effective sharing of good practice and excellent commercial and industrial updating for staff in vocational areas. There is an extensive programme of training for managers. College procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements and all staff receive training in safeguarding requirements. Promotion of health and safety is excellent.
33. The college has improved resources for learning at both its main campuses. A capital project is underway to replace old buildings with a new campus. Learning materials and specialist resources are good. There is effective deployment of resources. Financial management is outstanding. The college provides good value for money.
34. The college is very responsive to the needs of employers and has excellent links with a wide range of external partners. It is well represented on several local, regional and national strategic partnerships, some of which are chaired by the college principal. The college is extremely responsive to national and local priorities in the development of its curriculum.
35. Governance of the college is very effective. Governors are well informed and provide a rigorous level of challenge to the senior management team. They have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and areas for further improvement. Governors pay excellent attention to what learners say about the college. They receive regular training updates on a range of matters. Governors, managers and staff are passionate about providing a high quality service to learners and work very hard to achieve this.

Sector subject areas

Health and social care

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

36. The college offers full-time courses in health and social care at levels 1 to 3, and counselling courses at levels 2, 3 and 4 for part-time adult learners. There are 190 learners on full-time courses, 138 of whom are aged 16-18. Part-time courses range from level 1 to level 4 and have 440 learners. Learners are able to progress to higher level courses such as foundation degrees in early years. Six learners are currently completing work-based learning apprenticeships. The college works with local schools to provide courses for 14-16 year olds on which 31 pupils are currently enrolled. The college has a CoVE in elderly care, in partnership with two other colleges.

Strengths

- very high success rates
- outstanding teaching and learning
- imaginative and well produced assessments and support materials
- outstanding engagement with external partners
- very good support for learners
- outstanding leadership and management in this curriculum area
- outstanding specialist resources.

Areas for improvement

- attendance on a few courses
- cramped accommodation in some lessons.

Achievement and standards

37. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates on full-time courses are very high. They have been improving over the last three years and are now significantly above the national average. The percentage of learners gaining higher grades is well above the national average. Progression between levels and into work or higher education is very good. Attendance on a few courses is low, but absenteeism is closely and effectively monitored. Learners are supported by their teachers and fellow learners to catch up work they have missed. Learners develop very good vocational skills. The learning resources, including mobility and caring aids, which help them develop these skills are outstanding.

Quality of provision

38. Teaching and learning are outstanding. In the best lessons, the teaching is inspirational. Learners are enthused to achieve. Teachers stimulate learners to work independently. Classrooms are equipped with interactive

whiteboards and these are used effectively. The quality of assignments is consistently high. Assessments and supporting material given to learners are imaginative and encourage high achievement.

39. Engagement with external partners is outstanding. Some of these initiatives involve the CoVE. This has been developed through a highly effective partnership between the college, local schools and employers. Year 10 pupils from local schools have an after school course in society health and development. The college works closely with local employers to provide a variety of courses at the college or in the workplace. Distance learning and NVQs are well managed.
40. There is very good support for learners. Individual tutorials and tutorial workshops are highly regarded by learners. NVQ candidates are effectively interviewed and inducted onto the right qualification. Target setting and monitoring of learners' progress is thorough.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management in health and social care are outstanding. The curriculum area manager, advanced lecturer managers and CoVE manager all provide clear direction and dynamic leadership. Quality assurance is rigorous. Self-assessment is accurate. The curriculum teams work well together. They have clear targets which are regularly monitored. Teachers enjoy working at the college. Staff are supportive in sharing resources and experiences. The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is outstanding. Some accommodation is cramped. In a number of lessons activities cannot be varied because of limited space. In some lessons learners have difficulty seeing the whiteboard.

Construction, planning and the built environment

Good: Grade 2

Context

42. The college offers a range of full-time, part-time day, and part-time evening programmes from levels 1 to 4 in construction crafts, building services and professional studies. At the time of inspection, there were 340 learners aged 16-18 and 205 adult learners. Approximately 100 pupils from local schools attend construction programmes. A further 250 learners are on college work-based learning programmes and a further 217 learners from other training providers attend the college for part of their apprenticeship framework.

Strengths

- very high pass rates on most courses
- good overall pass rates on work-based learning programmes
- very good development of practical skills
- much good teaching and learning
- wide range of vocationally relevant enrichment activities which benefit learners
- very effective support and guidance for learners
- outstanding leadership and management of the curriculum area.

Areas for improvement

- low retention on a significant number of courses
- lack of clarity in some lesson planning.

Achievement and standards

43. Achievement and standards are good. As identified in the self-assessment report, pass rates are consistently high, and substantially above the national average on most courses. However, some courses have had low retention, and this has affected success rates. Managers are aware of this area for improvement and have introduced a number of strategies to improve retention. At the time of inspection, retention rates are rising, for example, retention on the construction award has increased from 58% to 70%. The quality of learners' practical skills is very good. Learners make good progress, and their work is of high quality. Overall success rates on work-based learning programmes are good.

Quality of provision

44. Teaching and learning are good. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the majority of teaching and learning is good or better. Learners are encouraged, motivated, and challenged. Teachers are enthusiastic and well qualified and use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies. In the better sessions, learning is well planned and uses innovative approaches

and resources, which stimulate interest and engage learners. In a minority of lessons, there is a lack of clarity in lesson planning and learning outcomes are not clear. Assessment and verification are rigorous and effective. Feedback to learners is detailed in most cases, but spelling and grammatical mistakes are not always corrected.

45. Learners have access to a broad range of courses which provide good progression routes. The college provides a wide range of vocationally relevant enrichment activities which enhance the learners' experience. Guidance and support are very effective and learners with learning difficulties are well supported both in college and the workplace.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels in the curriculum area, as identified in the self-assessment report. Communications are effective; managers and course teams understand their roles and are clear about what action is required to bring about improvements. Workshops are well resourced, but they are sometimes crowded, with particular congestion in storage areas.
47. External links are very good. Partnerships with local schools, managing agents and other providers are very effective. Good communications with employers ensure coordination between the training in the college and in the workplace. Significant sponsorship from suppliers has greatly enhanced training facilities, particularly in gas services. Employers value the college, and make a significant contribution to college life. They provide good work placements, contribute to curriculum developments and offer professional updating for teaching staff. The promotion of equality and diversity is very effective.

Hair and beauty

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

48. The college offers an extensive range of full- and part-time hairdressing and beauty therapy courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. Courses include nail services, holistic therapies, massage, aromatherapy, reflexology and Indian head massage. Some 455 full-time and 99 part-time learners are currently enrolled. Approximately 60% of learners are aged 16-18, and 40% adults. Only 15% of learners in this area are male. Provision in hairdressing and beauty is provided for 324 school pupils aged 14-16 from 10 partner schools. Fifty one apprentices and 10 advanced apprentices are completing work-based learning programmes in hairdressing.

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates on most courses
- very good skills development
- outstanding teaching and learning
- extensive enrichment activities which benefit learners
- particularly good and effective support for learners
- outstanding management of the curriculum area.

Areas for improvement

- retention rates on a few courses.

Achievement and standards

49. Achievement and standards are very good and pass rates are outstanding on most courses. In 2006/07, pass rates increased significantly and most are well above the national average. In 2006/07, pass, retention and progression rates for 14-16 year olds in beauty and hairdressing were outstanding. These learners are highly committed and ambitious. Learners develop very good skills. In particular, skills development in nail art is outstanding, with great attention to detail in producing elaborate designs. Learners take great pride in their appearance. Learners enjoy participating in national competitions and are successful. Assignments are excellent, both in content and presentation. Overall, work-based learning apprenticeship framework achievement is satisfactory. Over the past three years, retention has declined on few courses. The college self-assessment report recognises this. However, in-year retention has significantly improved in 2007/08 to 91% overall.

Quality of provision

50. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Lessons are well planned and effectively motivate learners. Salons are busy and productive, and learners acquire new skills quickly. Assessments are rigorous and thorough. Feedback

on written work is constructive and effectively informs learners how improvements can be made. Staff have excellent links with industry and learners benefit from their expertise. Work-based learning progress reviews are satisfactory. Some targets lack specific detail. In a minority of lessons, there is insufficient recap of previous learning.

51. Learners benefit from extensive enrichment activities, especially community and charity events. An extensive range of courses gives learners a wide choice and provides good progression opportunities. Evening and weekend courses meet the needs of learners in employment.
52. Learners are supported and guided extremely well. Initial assessment is effective in identifying learners' needs. Individual support is particularly good. Teachers and the additional learning support team work together very effectively. The college, for example, organised additional resources to accommodate the needs of a visually impaired learner's guide dog. Progress is closely monitored in salons and classrooms. Learners have a 'buddy' system which provides effective peer support. Hairdressing learners benefit from the loan of mobile camera/phones, allowing them to capture evidence of their work. They can also connect to the college intranet to download this evidence and access learning materials.

Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management in the curriculum area are outstanding. Managers have a clear focus on supporting learners and raising standards. Communications are good and staff developmental opportunities excellent. Advanced lecturer managers are very proactive and effective in their roles. They deliver all tutorials and also interview applicants to ensure they are placed on the most appropriate courses. Course reviews are detailed, actions and evaluations closely monitored, with key points fed into the self-assessment process. Equality and diversity are effectively promoted.

Arts, design, media and performing arts

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

54. The college offers vocational qualifications and general certificate of education (GCE) advanced (A) levels in art and design, media, performing arts and graphic design. Courses are mostly full-time. Of these, 693 learners are aged 16-18 and 517 are aged 19+. There are 95 learners aged 14-16. The college is part of a strong consortium with local schools, in which the college leads on media, make-up, and radio production through the CoVE in creative and media.

Strengths

- outstanding success rates
- very high standard of student work
- outstanding personal and social development within an occupational context
- outstanding teaching and learning
- comprehensive progression routes which benefit learners
- outstanding leadership and management of the curriculum area.

Areas for improvement

- retention on some level 1 courses for 16-18 year olds.

Achievement and standards

55. Achievement and standards are outstanding. As identified in the self-assessment report, success rates are outstanding across all levels and programmes. Progression rates are very high. Learners' practical skills are highly developed. Personal and social skills are developed very effectively in lessons through well facilitated discussion. Learners produce high quality work and use media and materials with confidence. The college recognises, however, in its self-assessment report, that retention rates for young people on some level 1 courses was low in 2006/07. Actions have been taken to improve this, and in-year retention has risen. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

Quality of provision

56. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Lessons and tutorials are well planned and teaching materials are of a very high quality. Teachers skilfully develop learners' social skills and self-confidence through well managed discussions and effective questioning. Learners are set challenging projects and teaching is fun and engaging. Effective use is made of group and independent learning activities. In basic skills lessons, there is innovative and engaging teaching and this is used skilfully to engage the more challenging learners. Learning is clearly enhanced through the commercial

knowledge and expertise of teachers. Teachers make excellent use of contextual and historical referencing to explore equality and diversity themes and this is particularly strong in graphic design and photography courses. Attainment is above the expected level and learners enjoy their studies.

57. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are excellent. Regular formative assessment feedback is provided to learners. There is much innovative practice; for example, the digital recording of assessment using moving image and effective use of role play and peer assessment.
58. Progression routes are comprehensive and inclusive. There is appropriate provision for learners of all abilities. Good provision is made for learners to access additional courses. Links with community and visual arts organisations are strong, and they are used effectively to provide learners with valuable experience of real design commissions.
59. Guidance and support for learners are good. As identified in the self-assessment report, support for learners is comprehensive. Learners are closely monitored and early responses are made when learners are at risk. Learning mentors are effective in supporting learners. Learners are very positive about the support provided by teachers and tutors.

Leadership and management

60. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are outstanding. Managers provide clear direction and ensure that learners have a positive learning experience, are retained, and achieve their learning goals. Rigorous systems and processes assure quality and there is effective use of performance monitoring tools to support quality improvement. Meetings are purposeful and are learner focused. Managers and teachers are enthusiastic and committed to improving quality. The promotion of equal opportunities is very effective. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. Learning resources are good and are updated to meet the needs of the curriculum. Some accommodation is cramped, but classrooms are in good order and are well equipped with good displays of learners' work.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

61. The college offers full- and part-time English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacy and numeracy courses at the college, in the community and in the workplace. Courses range from entry level to level 2. A total of 769 young and adult learners are enrolled. Approximately 450 are on literacy and numeracy courses and approximately half of these are aged 16-18. The majority of ESOL learners are adults and study part-time. Key skills in application of number and communication, at levels 1 and 2, are offered to learners on vocational programmes. Additional language, literacy and numeracy support is provided to learners on other vocational college programmes.

Strengths

- outstanding success rates in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL
- very good development of skills
- outstanding teaching and learning
- highly effective support and guidance
- very good range of provision which meets learners' needs
- very good management of Skills for Life provision across the college.

Areas for improvement

- attendance on some courses
- the use of initial assessment outcomes to set learning targets.

Achievement and standards

62. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL are significantly above the national average. The majority of learners successfully achieve external qualifications. Success rates in key skills application of number and communication have improved significantly. Learners make good progress and develop a wide range of skills. They are highly motivated and they gain and demonstrate good skills at a range of levels. The standard of their work is good and they successfully improve their communication and literacy skills. Progression to higher levels and to other college courses is good. As recognised in the self-assessment report, attendance is low on some courses, but good monitoring strategies and procedures have been implemented. Attendance and retention have both improved significantly.

Quality of provision

63. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Well managed and structured lessons, using a variety of good learning resources engage learners well. A wide range of teaching methods are used. Learners benefit from regular

checks on, and consolidation of, learning throughout lessons. Skilled and experienced teaching and support staff collaborate effectively in team teaching situations. Learning activities and topics are relevant, stimulating and interesting.

64. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are good. Individual goals and targets are identified and regularly reviewed. However, insufficient use is made of initial assessment outcomes to set learning targets and to inform teaching and learning.
65. The range of provision is very good and responsive to learners needs. Provision offered is extensive and targeted at particularly diverse and challenging client groups. Recent developments in integrating literacy and numeracy with vocational areas have been very successful. As identified in the self-assessment report, innovative and flexible programmes have been designed to meet the needs of employers in the workplace and the local community.
66. Support and guidance are outstanding. Highly effective support is contributing to improving learners' performance. Thoroughly planned and well delivered group tutorials for young full-time learners incorporate literacy and numeracy content. Subject specific one-to-one support, delivered by experienced tutors, impacts positively on the retention and success of learners.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management are outstanding. Roles and responsibilities are clear and communication is very good. Thorough lesson observation and performance review schemes are contributing to improvements in teaching and learning. Effective use is made of performance data at a local level to monitor the quality of the provision. The development of Skills for Life across the college, with specialist staff servicing and establishing links with vocational areas, is improving the quality of this provision. A well developed strategy and action plan is regularly monitored. The promotion of equality and diversity is very effective. The self-assessment report accurately identifies many of the strengths of this provision.

Business, administration and law

Good: Grade 2

Context

68. The college offers a range of full- and part-time courses in business, accountancy, law, and administration. There are 95 full-time learners on diplomas in business at levels 1 to 3, and the diploma in administration at level 2. There are 53 AS and A2 learners studying business and law, and 168 part-time learners studying accountancy at levels 2 to 4. Of the 316 learners, 106 are 16-18, 193 are female, and 87 are from black and minority ethnic groups. There are 321 learners on part-time professional and management programmes, 19 accounting work-based learning apprentices, and 18 Train to Gain learners.

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- high standard of learners' work
- wide range of enrichment activities which benefit learners
- good leadership and management of the curriculum area.

Areas for improvement

- planning for the needs of individual learners in lessons
- attendance of 16-18 year olds.

Achievement and standards

69. Achievement and standards are good. Pass rates are high and above the national average on most courses. Pass rates on the introductory diploma in business, retail and administration are excellent, and retention has also been high on these courses. However, data supplied by the college suggests that this year retention is declining. There is above average value added on AS and A2 law. Learners at all levels produce work of a high standard and most learners are achieving or exceeding their target grade. Learners develop professional skills in the classroom and successfully apply them in the workplace, especially in law and accountancy. As recognised in the self-assessment report, attendance is low on some courses, particularly for young people.

Quality of provision

70. Teaching and learning are good. In the better lessons, teachers use ILT effectively to stimulate discussion and learning. Learners enjoy learning through the use of video clips and interactive games. Teachers use case studies effectively to develop learners' ability to apply theory to practice. In weaker lessons, teachers do not plan for individual needs, time is wasted and questioning is not effective in checking learning.

71. Guidance and support for learners is good. Learners are well supported by their teachers both formally, through tutorials, and informally. The learning mentor provides good differentiated support based on individual needs. Links with external agencies are effective. ESOL support and support for learners with disabilities are effective. Feedback on learners' assessed work is detailed and constructive. Internal verification, at both centres, is rigorous.
72. Learners benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. Employer involvement in training enables learners to apply their theoretical knowledge in practical situations. Law learners visit courts and have the opportunity to question a judge and clerk to the court. One learner has set up a law society with financial support from the college. Learners achieve the wider key skill, working with others, through role play in an exercise entitled 'Perfect Pitch', an innovative adaptation of a well known television programme.

Leadership and management

73. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum is reviewed regularly. Managers and teachers focus on improving the learners' experience through regular performance monitoring. Targeted training and lesson observations are used effectively to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Team working and communication across the two sites are good. Course teams work well to raise the quality of the learners' experience through mentoring, peer assessment, targeted staff development and sharing of resources. Equality and diversity are effectively promoted. Accommodation and equipment for staff and learners are good. ILT and the resource centre are used well by learners to develop their independent learning skills.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 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	03/04	1,099	69	61	8	1,548	56	59	- 3
	04/05	1,370	72	65	7	1,588	61	62	- 1
	05/06	1,175	75	69	6	963	69	65	4
	06/07*	1,121	76	N/A		836	73	N/A	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	62	63	65	-2	4	25	64	- 39
	04/05	25	72	68	4	2	0	64	- 64
	05/06	-	-	-		-	-	-	-
	06/07*	-	-	N/A		-	-	N/A	-
NVQs	03/04	54	59	61	-2	17	65	62	3
	04/05	131	69	68	1	59	81	66	15
	05/06	175	72	72	0	54	63	74	- 11
	06/07*	130	66	N/A		46	85	N/A	-
Other	03/04	983	70	60	10	1,527	56	59	- 3
	04/05	1,214	72	64	8	1,527	60	62	- 2
	05/06	1,000	75	69	6	909	69	65	4
	06/07*	991	78	N/A		790	72	N/A	-

* college data (use where complete, validated and produced using proprietary software)

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 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	03/04	1,285	57	56	1	1,610	53	54	- 1
	04/05	1,423	63	61	2	1,515	55	60	- 5
	05/06	1,219	66	66	0	1,419	64	66	- 2
	06/07*	1,330	70	N/A		1,420	71	N/A	
GCSEs	03/04	247	55	61	- 6	410	46	59	- 13
	04/05	283	59	64	- 5	353	52	63	- 11
	05/06	185	63	68	- 5	348	62	67	- 5
	06/07*	233	74	N/A		212	64	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	142	76	63	13	49	78	59	19
	04/05	96	71	67	4	54	78	74	4
	05/06	94	77	69	8	63	73	67	6
	06/07*	75	79	N/A		50	90	N/A	
NVQs	03/04	335	55	51	4	308	55	53	2
	04/05	279	63	57	6	241	63	60	3
	05/06	300	62	65	- 3	409	69	67	2
	06/07*	291	65	N/A		439	74	N/A	
Other	03/04	561	54	54	0	843	54	53	1
	04/05	765	64	61	3	867	53	60	- 7
	05/06	640	67	66	1	599	61	65	- 4
	06/07*	731	69	N/A		719	69	N/A	

* college data (use where complete, validated and produced using proprietary software)

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 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	03/04	1,242	63	64	- 1	1,701	58	54	4
	04/05	1,275	67	68	- 1	1,433	67	58	9
	05/06	1,215	72	70	2	1,361	71	63	8
	06/07*	1,302	76	N/A	-	1,102	76	N/A	-
A/A2 Levels	03/04	85	85	84	1	62	77	66	11
	04/05	83	82	86	- 4	43	62	69	- 7
	05/06	105	94	87	7	39	87	72	15
	06/07*	121	92	N/A	-	47	94	N/A	-
AS Levels	03/04	240	58	63	- 5	191	30	50	- 20
	04/05	268	59	66	- 7	154	42	52	- 10
	05/06	234	70	67	3	127	57	55	2
	06/07*	246	66	N/A	-	56	77	N/A	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	500	63	65	-2	218	50	45	5
	04/05	194	65	60	5	94	74	54	20
	05/06	79	66	66	0	56	80	57	23
	06/07*	-	-	N/A	-	-	-	N/A	-
NVQs	03/04	31	52	54	- 2	251	51	48	3
	04/05	58	81	63	18	257	64	56	8
	05/06	64	66	71	- 5	233	65	63	2
	06/07*	67	67	N/A	-	278	77	N/A	-
Other	03/04	386	61	57	4	979	66	56	10
	04/05	672	68	60	8	885	72	59	13
	05/06	733	70	65	5	906	73	64	9
	06/07*	868	77	N/A	-	721	74	N/A	-

* college data (use where complete, validated and produced using proprietary software)

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes managed by the college 2004 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	95	42%	48%	23%	34%
		timely	85	34%	31%	21%	22%
	05/06	overall	99	56%	53%	32%	44%
		timely	102	49%	34%	30%	27%
	06/07	overall	104	63%	64%	52%	58%
		timely	104	58%	43%	46%	37%
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	123	59%	51%	43%	39%
		timely	129	46%	29%	33%	22%
	05/06	overall	136	60%	58%	53%	52%
		timely	139	47%	38%	41%	34%
	06/07	overall	208	66%	65%	64%	61%
		timely	210	56%	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 college 2006 to 2007

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2006/07	overall	48	81%
		timely	n/a	n/a
	2007/08	overall		
		timely		

Note: 2007/08 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first 3 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'

Table 6

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college 2005 to 2008

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate*	Progression rate**
2005/06	40	43%	48%
2006/07	56	59%	55%
2007/08 (6 months)	16	69%	81%

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