

# Gloucestershire 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

#### Scope of the inspection

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

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: engineering and motor vehicle maintenance; construction; information and communication technology (ICT); hairdressing and beauty therapy; art, design and media; literacy and numeracy.

#### Description of the provider

1. Gloucestershire College (formerly known as Gloscat) is the largest of the county's colleges. It primarily serves the major urban areas of Cheltenham and Gloucester but also attracts learners from all corners of Gloucestershire and beyond. The proportion of the college's learners from black minority ethnic groups at 11% is well above that in the local population. Although Gloucestershire is essentially a relatively affluent county, both Cheltenham and Gloucester have wards in the top 10% of most deprived areas in the country.

2. The college has recently completed a major transformation of its previously dispersed estate, resulting in two major new campuses, the Cheltenham campus, completed in 2002 and the Gloucester campus, completed in 2007. In addition the college has two specialist construction centres and three high-street 'Do IT' Centres in Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury.
3. The college has reduced its extensive community programme in order to concentrate on the government priorities of 14-19, basic skills and the Leitch agenda. The college's mission statement 'Transforming lives and supporting business' reflects the focus of the recently re-branded 'Gloucestershire College'.
4. Most schools in the college's catchment area have sixth forms and as a result the college faces significant competition for students at the end of their GCSE courses. The prior attainment of learners attending the college is well below the national average, although the GCSE results of school leavers in Gloucestershire are above the national average. In 2006/07 there were around 2,300 learners aged 16-18 at the college, accounting for over half of full-time equivalent learners (FTEs) on long courses. Almost half of learners aged 16-18 study courses at level 3. The college works closely with three major schools partnerships. It is extensively involved in provision for learners aged 14-16 with around 200 learners, young apprenticeships, and in preparing for the new diplomas. The college also receives around 50 Year 11 learners who, for a variety of reasons, no longer attend school.
5. The college offers qualifications from pre-entry level to degree level via a variety of study modes, including on-line and distance learning courses. Recent years have seen a significant increase in the range and volume of levels 1 and 2 vocational courses. The college runs courses with substantial numbers in almost all of the sector subject areas. The specialist provision inspected accounts for over half of the college's FTEs.
6. Gloucestershire College has close links with its three university partners. It teaches a range of Higher National and Foundation Degree qualifications. The college is a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in information technology (IT) services. The college has a work-based learning contract of just over 400 learners, mainly in engineering and construction trades. Around 140 adults are studying through Train to Gain, mostly in health and social care courses.

## Summary of grades awarded

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

### Sector subject areas

Engineering and motor vehicle maintenance	Good: Grade 2
Construction	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Information and communication technology	Good: Grade 2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good: Grade 2
Art, design and media	Good: Grade 2
Literacy and numeracy	Good: Grade 2

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

7. This is a good college with good capacity to make further improvement. There has been significant improvement in success rates since the last inspection. Learners' achievement is satisfactory. Achievement is good for adults and for work-based learners. Retention remains an area for improvement for learners aged 16 to 18. Learners develop high levels of practical and vocational skills. The college has taken well considered and appropriate action to address key skills success rates, but these remain at best around a low national average. The college recognises that the use of value added data, to ensure that all learners make good or better progress, is an area for further development.
8. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good and are enhanced by information learning technology (ILT). The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners is good and the range of provision is both wide and inclusive. Educational and social inclusion are good. The college has successfully raised the participation and achievement of disaffected learners and of black minority ethnic learners. Guidance and support arrangements for learners are good.
9. Leadership and management are good. Strong and reliable systems for quality assurance, including lesson observation and self-assessment, are leading to continuing improvement in learners' performance. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. College accommodation is outstanding with industry standard equipment and resources. The college has a clear strategic direction closely aligned to both local and national priorities. Partnership work is outstanding.

### Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college's capacity to make further improvements is good. The self-assessment report accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement. Quality assurance and improvement procedures are robust and rigorously applied across the college. College observers accurately judge the quality of lessons. Good support and training are helping to improve the quality of teaching. Strategic planning is closely aligned to local and national priorities. However, success rates for students aged 16-18, although improving, have not yet risen beyond the national average and key skills success rates, especially at level 1, are still too low.

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

11. The college has made good progress in securing improvements since the last inspection. Managers have addressed almost all areas for improvement but there has been slower progress in two key areas. Whilst retention rates for

students aged 16-18 have improved in all levels, retention and success rates remain broadly average. Key skills success rates remain below average at level 1 and around average at level 2. Of the six curriculum areas inspected, four have improved their grade since the previous inspection. Quality of provision is good and the college is responsive to national and local priorities.

### Key strengths

- high levels of practical and work-related skills development
- good teaching and learning enhanced by information learning technology (ILT)
- outstanding partnership work
- wide and inclusive range of provision
- good support for learners
- strong and reliable systems for quality assurance leading to continuing improvement
- clear strategic direction
- outstanding accommodation and industry standard resources.

### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- retention for learners aged 16-18
- the use of value added data to ensure that all learners make good or better progress
- key skills success rates.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

#### *Contributory grades:*

*Adult and community learning*

*Good: Grade 2*

*Work-based learning*

*Good: Grade 2*

*Train to Gain*

*Good: Grade 2*

*Learners aged 14 to 16*

*Good: Grade 2*

12. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report judgement that learners' achievement is satisfactory. Achievement for adults and work-based learners is good; it is also good for learners aged 14-16 and in Train to Gain.
13. At the time of the last inspection in 2004, success rates for adults on long courses had improved and were generally above average. Success rates for the majority of learners aged 16-18 had been consistently below average. Since then there has been significant improvement in success rates as a result of strong management action while national averages have also been improving.
14. Success rates for adults in 2006/07 were above national average and those for learners aged 16-18 were broadly average. The college recognises that retention has been an issue across the college at all levels and in both age groups for several years. The college has taken appropriate action to address this. Retention rates are improving but were not yet at the national rates for learners aged 16-18, or for adults at level 2 in 2006/07. Retention data for the current year show that the improvement trend continues.
15. The prior attainment at GCSE of learners aged 16-18 is significantly below both the local and national average. College data for 2006/07 show that these learners studying graded qualifications at level 3 make good progress overall from their starting points on entry to the college. Around one quarter of these learners study A levels and they make only average progress. The college recognises, as an area for improvement and further development, the use of value added data to ensure that all students make good or better progress.
16. The college has taken appropriate and well considered action to address key skills success rates. However, these remain low for learners at level 1 in application of number and communication but are around a low national average at level 2.
17. Attendance is generally good and has improved on the previous two years. However, there is some variation in attendance across the range of provision.
18. The standard of learners' work is good and they enjoy their studies. They work safely and develop a high level of practical and work-related skills that equip them well for employment and their future social and economic well-being. Progression into employment or further study is good.

## Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

19. The quality of provision is good, matching the college's own judgement. Teaching and learning are good and are enhanced by the use of ILT. There has been a strong focus on improving teaching and learning since the last inspection. New teachers are particularly well supported by teaching improvement managers and advanced practitioners. The majority of lessons are well planned and stimulating with learners enthusiastically involved in a variety of activities. Where lessons are not as successful, learners are insufficiently challenged. Teaching accommodation and resources are outstanding. The availability of ILT resources is good and they are used well. Teachers are increasingly gaining the knowledge and skills in their use.
20. Initial and diagnostic assessments are timely and thorough. Prompt and highly effective arrangements are made to provide individual additional learning support. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress are good. Good communication between teachers and personal tutors helps to ensure that progress reviews are effective and that appropriate targets are set. Students are encouraged to set their own targets and to take ownership of their progress. Target setting has improved but there is still some variation in the quality of recorded targets. In work-based learning programmes, employers take an active part in thorough progress reviews. Arrangements for internal verification have improved since the last inspection and are now robust. The college has improved the management and teaching of key skills since the last inspection. This is now satisfactory.
21. Good arrangements exist with partner schools for college teaching staff to develop skills in teaching students aged 14-16 and to manage challenging behaviour. The college works very effectively with Year 11 pupils who have been excluded from school. The majority of these learners then progress to full-time further education courses.
22. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. The college provides a safe and welcoming environment. A thorough review of provision has enabled the college to develop further its curriculum offer in line with local and national priorities. Entry level and level 1 provision have increased since the last inspection. The college has strengthened its progression routes, including those into higher education.
23. Educational and social inclusion are good. The college has successfully widened participation through initiatives such as the 'Saturday College' and a supportive programme for young people not in education, employment or training. Improved links with community groups have been significant in successfully increasing the participation of black minority ethnic groups in learning. The college's links with schools are well established. It is a member of three main partnerships with local schools and it provides a good range of learning opportunities for learners aged 14-16. These include young apprenticeships in construction and engineering, and discrete courses at levels 1 and 2. The college works closely with employers to meet their needs. Links are well

established through work-based learning and Train to Gain provision. The CoVE in IT services has proved effective in strengthening links with employers.

24. Students benefit from a good range of curriculum-based enrichment activities. The cross-college enrichment programme has expanded since the previous inspection and offers good opportunities to engage in sports. The college is working to broaden the range of enrichment activities and to improve participation rates further.
25. Support and guidance for students are good overall and are satisfactory in work-based learning and Train to Gain. A thorough range of marketing, publicity and recruitment strategies enables prospective students to make well informed course choices. Induction enables most students to settle quickly into the college and to their studies. Comprehensive and well used advice, guidance and support arrangements are available to all students throughout their programmes. Good health and welfare services include increased availability of childcare provision in the college nurseries. Strong links with external agencies enable quick and effective referral to specialist support. A range of support mechanisms for students identified as being 'at risk' of not completing their courses is proving valuable in enabling an increasing proportion to succeed in their qualification aims.
26. Good arrangements throughout the recruitment process ensure that the support needs of students with disabilities are met. The students value this support and make good progress. Students benefit from good academic and pastoral support. The tutorial programme offers good opportunities for personal and social education including accreditation in wider key skills.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Good: Grade 2*

27. The college is accurate in its assessment that leadership and management are good across the college. Strong leadership from the principal and senior managers has brought about much improvement since the last inspection. Senior managers and governors have set a very clear strategic direction, which is well understood and shared by staff. Managers have set challenging targets to achieve the aim of becoming an outstanding college over the next four years.
28. There is strong commitment to continuous improvement, with a clear focus on raising learners' achievement. Achievement is good for adults and work-based learners, but remains satisfactory for learners aged 16-18. Performance management is strong and self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. There are very good mechanisms to identify any areas of underperformance and monitor progress. The systems for judging the quality of teaching and learning are reliable and support improvement well. Quality assurance and improvement procedures are now implemented more effectively and consistently across curriculum areas than at the last inspection. Governors are very well informed

and their wide range of expertise makes a good contribution to the development of the college.

29. The college responds positively to meeting local and national priorities. Outstanding partnership work enables the college to make a strong contribution to the local area, for example, through its involvement in urban regeneration projects. Partnerships with local schools and colleges are supporting the development of the 14-19 curriculum provision, including an innovative collaborative project for the Tewkesbury area. The college has increased its focus on supporting business and now works with over 1,000 employers.
30. Staff are appropriately qualified and benefit from good opportunities for further training and development. Safeguarding procedures are robust. The college promotes equality and diversity well, through extensive staff training and effective work to raise the participation and achievement of black minority ethnic learners. Projects to engage disaffected learners have also been successful in supporting achievement and progression. The college's response to its statutory duties is good.
31. Accommodation and specialist resources are outstanding. In September 2007 the college moved into new buildings on the Gloucester campus. Many curriculum areas now boast very high quality equipment and resources. Staff and students make good use of ILT and the virtual learning environment (VLE).
32. Finances are very well managed and value for money is good. The college has maintained a strong financial position during a period of significant investment in its estate and the revision of its curriculum provision to meet local needs and government priorities.

## Sector subject areas

Engineering and motor vehicle maintenance

Good: Grade 2

## Context

33. The college provides engineering courses in mechanical, manufacturing, electronic and motor vehicle maintenance areas. Adult students generally attend courses alongside students aged 16-18, but those courses offered as day release attract mainly adult learners. The college offers part-time provision with access to level 1 for 46 school link pupils aged 14-16. There are 647 learners of whom 80% are part-time. Around 40% of students are adults. There are 91 apprentices and 40 advanced apprentices on work-based learning programmes.

## Strengths

- high pass rates in most courses
- good development of practical skills
- good use of ILT to support learning
- very good accommodation and resources
- good leadership and management.

## Areas for improvement

- low success rates on motor vehicle progression award
- insufficient support or challenge in many lessons.

## Achievement and standards

34. Learners' achievement is good overall but satisfactory in work-based learning, which accounts for around one third of learners. Pass rates on most courses improved since the last inspection and are high. Retention overall has improved and is above average. However, success rates on the progression award in automotive service and repair are low. Success rates for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships are in line with the national average. Learners produce work of a high standard. The department celebrates success with awards and prizes to motivate and inspire learners. One apprentice recently won the third year engineering apprentice of the year award for the south west region. Attendance, punctuality and behaviour are good. Health and safety is well managed.

## Quality of provision

35. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners enjoy practical lessons and take pride in their work. Teachers have good occupational skills which they use well to engage learners, illustrate theory and develop practical skills. There is good use of ILT and the college VLE in lessons. However, in many lessons teachers pay insufficient attention to providing appropriate support and challenge for learners according to their abilities. Assessment and the

monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory. The full-time attendance patterns for level 2 apprentices limit opportunities for assessment in the workplace. The extent to which programmes meet the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Initial assessment and the identification of individual learning needs are good. Support is quickly in place and learners are appreciative of the help from tutors and teachers.

### Leadership and management

36. Leadership and management are good. There are productive links with industry and partner schools. Apprentices benefit from good training opportunities in the workplace. Quality improvement is robust. Individual course performance is closely monitored and internal verification is rigorous. Teaching and learning observations are accurate and linked well to appraisal and staff development. Areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been resolved. Self-assessment is accurate. There has been much investment in updating resources and accommodation, providing industry standard facilities. New teachers have much recent industrial experience and are well supported. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Policies and procedures are in place but promotion is not yet fully embedded in workplace reviews.

## Construction

Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Context

37. The provision comprises programmes in trowel and wood trades, plastering, painting and decorating, electrical installation, plumbing, heating and ventilation and technician studies from levels 1 to 3. At the time of inspection enrolments totalled 1,609. The majority of learners are aged 16-18. Included in this total are 215 work-based learners of whom the majority are apprentices. An introductory programme in construction crafts accounts for around 100 learners from nine local schools.

## Strengths

- high apprenticeship framework success rates
- high pass rates for learners at level 3
- good development of vocational skills
- good planning of teaching and learning
- high quality accommodation and resources to support learning
- particularly effective range of partnerships.

## Areas for improvement

- variable retention and pass rates at levels 1 and 2
- insufficient sharing of good practice in work-based assessment.

## Achievement and standards

38. Learners' achievement is satisfactory overall but good in work-based learning and for adults. Framework success rates on the apprenticeship programme have been significantly above national rates for the last three years, but are broadly average for advanced apprenticeships. Level 3 pass rates are high. The standard of learners' work is good both at college and in the workplace. Learners progressively develop a good range of vocational skills to industry levels of competence. Progression from levels 1 to 3 or into employment is high.
39. However, retention and pass rates at levels 1 and 2 are low in construction crafts, being below national rates for the last 3 years. Current in-year retention rates on construction craft programmes are still low with many programmes being below the college target of 85%.

## Quality of provision

40. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and teachers use successfully a range of learning strategies to engage learners. In the better practical lessons, learners set and evaluate their individual targets with tutor comments on progress where appropriate. Animated electronic media are used well in practical lessons to reinforce key learning objectives. However, in theory

lessons, understanding is not always checked sufficiently before developing topics further.

41. The monitoring of learners' progress is good. Assessment is satisfactory. There is not yet sufficient sharing of good practice in workplace assessment. In building services workplace assessment is both frequent and regular, but it is insufficient to meet the needs of learners in construction craft programmes. The range of provision is diverse and meets the needs of learners and employers well. There are particularly effective partnership arrangements with local employers, heritage organisations and higher education establishments. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Additional learning needs are effectively identified at initial assessment and promptly responded to by specialist staff.

#### Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Whilst there have been many successful actions to improve provision since the last inspection, there has been little impact on retention. This remains a key area for improvement. Communication within the sections and with senior staff is good. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Accommodation and resources to support learning are good. All classrooms and workshops on the main site in Gloucester are resourced well. Resources at the Cheltenham centre are not to the same high standard, with classrooms being very small. Teachers are appropriately qualified and new teachers are supported well. All staff use management information effectively. The standard of course reviews is good and self-assessment is both reliable and accurate.

## Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

## Context

43. The ICT provision offers progression routes from level 1 to higher education. Full-time provision includes IT at work, first and national diplomas for IT practitioners and GCE AS and A2 in ICT. Part-time courses include certificate for IT users, a variety of technical courses and other short courses in their outreach centres. The college provides a variety of training for local employers through CoVE initiatives. There were over 2,000 adult enrolments, 273 learners aged 16-18 and a small number of learners aged 14-16.

## Strengths

- high success rates on full-time vocational courses and certificate IT user at level 1
- good proportion of high grades on levels 1 and 2 full-time courses
- well developed VLE used well to enhance learning
- wide range of full-time programmes at level 3
- strong employer and schools links
- good leadership and management.

## Areas for improvement

- low success rates on AS ICT.

## Achievement and standards

44. Learners' achievement is good. Success rates are high on full-time vocational courses and on level 1 adult part-time certificate IT user. There is a good proportion of high grades on level 1 and 2 full-time courses. However, success rates are low on AS ICT and part-time adult European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) courses. Learners' work is of a good standard. Adult learners develop valuable skills for employment and also gain confidence in learning.

## Quality of provision

45. Teaching and learning are good. Several lessons were judged to be outstanding. All lessons are well planned and have detailed schemes of work. Most lessons use the VLE effectively to enhance learning. Learners appreciate the flexibility of using the VLE outside the college; however, they are restricted in their access to specialist software outside the classrooms.
46. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress are good. There is very helpful written feedback on learners' assignments. In adult IT centres there is an effective system for recording progress which learners use well.
47. Programmes and activities meet the needs and interest of learners well. A wide range of courses provides a comprehensive offer for progression from entry

level to level 3. There is a broad range of practitioner computing at level 3, enabling learners to choose from four different national diploma routes. Strong links with schools have led to improved progression from schools to technical IT. Adult learners studying in IT centres in the community appreciate the flexibility and convenience that these provide. Guidance and support for learners are good.

### Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management are good and have improved since the last inspection. Quality systems are robust and self-assessment is evaluative and accurate. Since the last inspection many improvements in the curriculum offer have led to improved success rates. There are strong links with schools and also employers through the CoVE. CoVE initiatives have encouraged employers to support and sponsor college activities through curriculum planning and giving experience of IT in the workplace. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good.

## Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Good: Grade 2

## Context

49. There are 941 students in hairdressing and beauty at NVQ levels 1 to 3. Of these, most are female. Around 60% of students are on beauty therapy courses. Some 40% of learners are under 19 years old. There are equal numbers of full-time and part-time students. Some 60 learners are on work-based apprenticeships. There are 36 pupils from local schools on level 1 hairdressing programmes.

## Strengths

- very high pass rates in NVQ levels 1 and 2
- good teaching and learning developing students' vocational skills
- good support and target setting contributing to good student progress
- outstanding accommodation and industry standard equipment
- good curriculum leadership and management.

## Areas for improvement

- low retention and attendance in hairdressing.

## Achievement and standards

50. Learners' achievement is good. Pass rates on NVQ levels 1 and 2 courses are very high and consistently above national average over the last two years. Success rates on most NVQ courses are satisfactory. Retention and attendance rates in hairdressing have not improved sufficiently over the last three years and are low. Attendance is satisfactory overall but it is low in hairdressing. In-year progress towards completion of assessments is good. Many students, including work-based learners, have either completed early or are on track to do so by the end of their course. Students' acquisition of practical and vocational skills is good and in many cases above the level expected for their time on the course. Adherence to hygiene, health and safety and client care are good.

## Quality of provision

51. Teaching and learning are good and develop students' vocational skills well. Good technical demands are made of learners and they are expected to work to commercial timings. Students are stretched to achieve challenging targets in all lessons. Teachers use their commercial experience successfully to give examples that illustrate key points and set underpinning knowledge in context. Lessons meet the needs of individual learners well. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress are good. Students are encouraged to set challenging targets for themselves. The extent to which the range of programmes meets the needs of learners is good. Students have access to a wide variety of opportunities for additional experience such as visits to trade

fairs, competitions and manufacturers' product training to enrich the curriculum. Guidance and support for learners are good. Students speak highly of the support they receive from both 'learning links' and the vocational teachers.

## Leadership and management

52. Leadership and management are good. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and reflects the judgements made at inspection. Issues from the last inspection report have been addressed successfully. Progress to address poor success rates has been good. A number of robust processes are now in place to bring about improvements. Students at risk of not achieving are highlighted for additional support. Teachers have changed the curriculum delivery to improve retention and pass rates in beauty therapy programmes. Accommodation at both campuses is outstanding. All hairdressing and beauty practical workshops have been fitted and equipped to a very high quality that reflects the best industrial standards. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

## Art, design and media

Good: Grade 2

## Context

53. There are 485 students aged 16-18, most of whom are full-time, and around 300 adult students. There is an extensive range of full-time and part-time courses from levels 1 to 3 in a wide variety of arts, crafts and media subjects. Vocational subjects are mostly delivered at the Gloucester site and academic subjects mainly at Cheltenham.

## Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- high standard of student work
- demanding and stimulating teaching
- wide and inclusive range of provision
- outstanding accommodation and resources
- good curriculum management.

## Areas for improvement

- low retention on several courses
- poor attendance and punctuality on level 2 art and design.

## Achievement and standards

54. Learners' achievement and standards are good. Success rates are generally satisfactory on most courses and good on some. Pass rates are high but retention rates, particularly in 2006, were low. However, current in-year retention is very good. The standard of student practical work is good, particularly in photography and graphics. Photography students recently won a local arts festival competition and are regularly commissioned by local companies and organisations to produce high quality materials. Progression internally and to higher education, often to prestigious institutions, is good. Attendance and punctuality are generally good on level 3 courses but less so on level 2 art and design.

## Quality of provision

55. Teaching and learning are good. The range of students' learning needs is met well. Teaching is both demanding and stimulating. Final year photography students respond well to the expectation that they should manage their own learning. Assignments are demanding and often live and client-led, with the result that students' understanding of industry requirements increases. Teachers encourage risk-taking in learning. The use of ILT in studios and classrooms is excellent. Students are expected to use the college VLE to support and develop their learning, and do so well. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Students' assessed work benefits from clear progress review. Learners value the detailed verbal and written feedback that

clearly identifies what they need to do to improve. In a few classes the small size of groups affects learning dynamics.

56. The wide range of provision is inclusive and meets learners' needs well. Students have good opportunities to progress from levels 1 to 3 and on to the level 4 provision within the college. Guidance and support for students are good. The quality of initial advice and guidance has been variable but now is much improved. Learning support needs are identified at enrolment and appropriate support provided on entry. The thorough tutorial system allows students and teachers to identify barriers to learning and implement action plans where appropriate. Students appreciate the efforts made on their behalf. Second year students are part of the interview process and able to provide their perspective to applicants.

### Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are good and there is a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Successful strategies have been implemented to improve retention and the quality of teaching since the last inspection. There are excellent links with local employers and organisations. Accommodation and specialist resources are outstanding. Staff are well qualified and many are current or recent industry practitioners. The extensive self-assessment report is mainly accurate and actions for improvement have been successfully implemented. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

## Literacy and numeracy

Good: Grade 2

## Context

58. Some 1,300 learners aged 16-18 take key skills communication and application of number as part of their full-time vocational programmes. Nearly 400 learners attend part-time literacy and numeracy courses. Of these, 125 are adults.

## Strengths

- high adult success rates on part-time literacy and numeracy courses
- good teaching and learning
- wide range of responsive programmes
- good support for learners
- very effective curriculum management.

## Areas for improvement

- low success rates on level 1 key skills application of number and communication.

## Achievement and standards

59. Learners' achievement is satisfactory overall but good for adults. Adults achieve high success rates on part-time literacy and numeracy courses. Retention on adult part-time programmes and the college's Entry to Further Education and Employment (E2FEE) courses is above average. Learners produce high standards of work in classes. Literacy learners make good progress in reading, punctuation and spelling. Numeracy learners become significantly better at estimating and calculating. All learners grow in confidence and self-belief. However, success rates on level 1 key skills application of number and communication are low.

## Quality of provision

60. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers plan carefully for learners' needs with individual targets and programmes of work. A wide variety of group learning activities engages and interests students. Learning resources in part-time courses are very well designed and supplemented by real life materials. Both teachers and learners in key skills use ICT confidently. Key skills lessons are generally well designed to develop learners' skills within a vocational context. Most learners enjoy their lessons and work hard. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress are good. The recording of progress is detailed and helpful. However, not all key skills teachers manage the development of speaking and presentation skills successfully. In part-time courses, teachers occasionally offer learners too many rules and exceptions in the same lesson.
61. The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. Programmes are flexible and responsive. They range from pre-entry level to level 2 and include

targeted courses for young people not likely otherwise to enter education. Part-time courses run for 50 weeks in college and at probation service offices. Shorter courses are run at employers' requests for their employees or to help recruit a wider range of entrants. Summer schools prepare learners for college in September or allow learners to complete their key skills portfolios. However, the range of community and employer provision is small.

62. Guidance and support are good. Support for learners in E2FEE courses is particularly helpful and includes very effective behaviour management strategies. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive a thorough assessment of their needs. Adaptive equipment is readily available. Specialist teachers provide effective individual support for severe dyslexia outside class time. Class sizes are appropriately small where necessary to allow considerable personal care and attention. Arrangements for initial interviews and assessment are satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

63. Leadership and management are good. A new management structure brings all aspects of basic skills together and facilitates sharing of good practice. Accommodation and resources are good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Staff development opportunities are extensive. Quality assurance is good. Lesson observations are detailed and supportive. Self-assessment is evaluative and broadly accurate. Robust action is taken to address areas for improvement. Equality and diversity are promoted well through the curriculum. Teachers take positive action to challenge stereotyping and discrimination.

## Learners' achievement \*\*

Table 1

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

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	04/05	1001	51	65	-14	2263	60	62	-2
	05/06	819	64	69	-5	1594	77	65	12
	06/07*	858	68	N/A		1443	77	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05								
	05/06								
	06/07*								
NVQs	04/05	79	66	68	-2	43	63	66	-3
	05/06	62	60	72	-12	33	64	74	-10
	06/07*	97	84	N/A		22	50	N/A	
Other	04/05	902	49	64	-15	2219	60	62	-2
	05/06	741	63	69	-6	1561	77	65	12
	06/07*	730	65	N/A		1413	78	N/A	

\* college data

\*\* note to the achievement tables: qualification types with low numbers or that have been discontinued have been omitted from the table for the benefit of clarity

Table 2

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

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	04/05	1415	64	61	3	1877	61	60	1
	05/06	1406	63	66	-3	1589	64	66	-2
	06/07*	1426	68	N/A		1624	67	N/A	
GCSEs	04/05	590	65	64	1	282	62	63	-1
	05/06	632	64	68	-4	261	61	67	-6
	06/07*	530	69	N/A		290	67	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05								
	05/06								
	06/07*								
NVQs	04/05	361	63	57	4	400	62	60	2
	05/06	285	59	65	-6	397	70	67	3
	06/07*	335	69	N/A		416	72	N/A	
Other	04/05	449	64	61	3	1177	60	59	1
	05/06	455	64	66	-2	926	62	65	-3
	06/07*	524	65	N/A		915	64	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 to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	04/05	1719	59	68	-9	1335	63	58	5
	05/06	1695	62	70	-8	1392	67	63	4
	06/07*	1646	68	N/A		1551	70	N/A	
A/A2 Levels	04/05	302	75	86	-11	121	76	69	7
	05/06	243	86	87	-1	119	78	72	6
	06/07*	246	86	N/A		86	77	N/A	
AS Levels	04/05	868	55	66	-11	277	56	52	4
	05/06	875	55	67	-12	257	57	55	2
	06/07*	657	61	N/A		173	57	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	100	57	61	-4				
	05/06	37	65	66	-1				
	06/07*	46	46	N/A					
NVQs	04/05	41	56	63	-7	163	61	56	5
	05/06	64	50	71	-21	162	62	63	-1
	06/07*	82	63	N/A		339	71	N/A	
Other	04/05	408	59	60	-1	734	64	59	5
	05/06	476	63	65	-2	832	70	64	6
	06/07*	615	70	N/A		927	72	N/A	

\* unvalidated 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	89	47	48	30	34
		timely	101	29	31	18	22
	05/06	overall	129	62	53	52	44
		timely	108	42	34	35	27
	06/07	overall	74	62	64	53	58
		timely	69	54	43	43	37
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	209	62	51	48	39
		timely	190	28	29	21	22
	05/06	overall	151	68	58	58	52
		timely	122	51	38	47	34
	06/07	overall	137	76	65	73	61
		timely	130	64	47	62	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 2007 to 2008 (part-year).

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVO rate**
Train to Gain ***	2006/07	overall	21	62
		timely	24	50
	2007/08 (6 months)	overall	117	72
		timely	N/A	N/A

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'