

Chesterfield 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.

Description of the provider

1. Chesterfield College is a large general further education (GFE) college serving Chesterfield Borough, North Derbyshire and Bolsover District. The college has three sites, with the main campus in Chesterfield, a new campus in the Bolsover district which opened in 2005, and the Tapton House campus near Chesterfield which houses the college's higher education and access provision. The area is served by 22 schools, eight of which are for 11 to 19-year-olds. The proportion of school leavers attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, at 57%, is just below the national average. Some 4% of the learners are of ethnic minority backgrounds, compared with 2% for the local population. Of the 179 super output areas (SOA) within the Bolsover, Chesterfield, and North East Derbyshire local authority areas, 15 are within the top 10% most deprived areas in England.
2. The college offers courses in all 15 sector subject areas leading to qualifications ranging from pre-entry to higher education, although the provision in agriculture, horticulture and animal care, history, philosophy and theology and education and training is very small. The most significant learner numbers are on courses in arts, media and publishing and preparation for life and work. In response to changes in government priorities, the number of adult learners on long courses has declined between 2005/06 and 2006/07 by 22% and on short courses by 88%. Much of this is through the removal of non-accredited level 1 long course and collaborative short course provision. The college operates Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in design practice and in logistics and supply chain management.
3. In 2006/07, the college enrolled 13,447 individual learners, of whom 3,584 were full-time. Of these, 86% were aged 16 to 18 and 53% were female. 60% of learners on long courses were aged 16 to 18, whereas the majority of part-time learners were adults. About 476 learners aged 14 to 16 attended the college. Around 400 work-based learners (WBL) were supported on national vocational qualifications (NVQ) and modern apprenticeship programmes. Some 390 learners were enrolled on level 2 Train to Gain (T2G) programmes. The college has outward collaborative provision with six partners.
4. The college's seven strategic objectives are to support young people to stay on in learning, to engage adults in vocational learning, to maximise the contribution of education and training to economic performance, to raise standards, to deliver responsive, efficient and effective provision that represents value for money, to promote equality and diversity and to commit to a sustainable responsibility for our local environment.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The effectiveness of provision is good. Learners' achievement and standards are good. Overall success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 and for adults on level 3 courses are good. Success rates on a minority of courses and adult key skills and framework achievements of advanced apprenticeships are below average.
6. Teaching and learning are good and teachers plan and prepare their lessons carefully to employ a wide range of teaching techniques to engage learners. Particularly effective resources support learners and many benefit from the use of information learning technology (ILT). The college's internal lesson observation programme is accurate and rigorous. Assessment practice ensures learners complete their tasks well but feedback does not consistently assess or comment on how learners can improve their learning skills. Additional learning support is prompt and effective.
7. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is also outstanding. The college's broad and diverse curriculum has clear progression routes. Collaborative arrangements to improve the provision are very successful. Progression rates for learners at entry level to level 1 are low. Curriculum related enrichment activities provide excellent opportunities for learners.
8. Guidance and support for learners are good and are effective in improving standards. The college provides a comprehensive range of personal and welfare services. Tutorials are planned effectively although for a minority of learners targets are too broad to effectively monitor progress.
9. Governance and leadership and management are good. The clear strategic planning process is robust but strategies to broaden and identify the training needs of employers are incomplete. Staff are well supported, although inconsistencies in the workloads of a few middle managers remain. Quality improvement mechanisms are robust. Self-assessments at all levels are accurate. Financial management is strong and the college provides good value for money. The promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity is good. The management of work-based learning is good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college demonstrates good capacity to improve. Governance and leadership and management of the recent significant changes are very good. Clear and challenging targets for improvement are set across the college. These have been met or exceeded. Quality improvement plans are rigorous. Prompt and effective action is taken to deal with failing or poorly performing provision. Self-

assessments are accurate and used well to help improvement. Readily available management information is used extensively to monitor performance.

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

11. The effectiveness of steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection is good. Key strengths have been maintained and weaknesses have mostly improved. The management of the curriculum has been successfully changed to adapt and improve the provision and response to government priorities and initiatives. Achievement and retention rates have improved. Strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning are good and effective. The college's estate has improved significantly with much refurbishment and rebuilding work undertaken. Information and communication technology (ICT) resources have improved markedly.

Key strengths

- good governance and leadership and management
- well managed work-based learning provision
- robust quality improvement arrangements
- good support for students and staff
- particularly effective resources to support teaching and learning
- strong financial management
- good success rates for 16 to 18-year-olds on many courses
- much good teaching and learning
- prompt and effective additional learning support
- very wide range of programmes
- excellent curriculum related enrichment activities
- very successful collaboration with employers, schools, universities and community groups.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- further development of employer engagement strategies
- the workload of programme managers
- the underperformance in a minority of courses
- inconsistencies in success rates and high grades between subjects
- the use of assessment to develop learning skills
- the quality of learning plans and target setting.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

Learners aged 19+

Satisfactory: grade 3

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

12. Achievement and standards are good. This agrees with the college's own self-assessment. Overall 16 to 18-year-old success rates on long courses have increased over the last three years and are good at 75%, although success rates remain at the national average for level 1.
13. Adult success rates on long courses are lower at 67% and are improving in line with the national average. High level 1 success rates in 2004/05 declined to the national average in 2006/07. However, when adjusted for accredited learning only, they have been maintained at the national average in both years, as they have for level 2 provision. Success rates at level 3 are above average.
14. In the last three years, most sector subject area long course success rates were maintained or improved to the national average or above, but in health, public services and care success rates have declined. Success rates on short courses for 16 to 18-year-olds improved to above the national average. Overall student retention rates are at the national average and overall attendance rates are good.
15. NVQ level 1 success rates for students aged 16 to 18 are well above the national average. Framework completions for apprenticeships are at the national average but are low for advanced apprentices.
16. Key skills success rates for students aged 16 to 18 improved significantly and at level 1 are particularly high. However, adult key skills success rates are low. Value added measures show that most learners make the progress expected of them, although there are inconsistencies in success rates and high grades between subjects. Success rates for students aged 14 to 16 have improved and progress onto further education or training is good.
17. Many learners make good progress and enjoy their learning. Inspectors observed some very good standards of individual work, particularly in art and design. Regard for health and safety is good. Students take advantage of a wide range of opportunities to achieve regional and national recognition through competitive sports and other competitions. Planned college activities increase many students' opportunities to develop their confidence and communication, influencing and other job-ready skills.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

18. The quality of provision is good. This judgement matches the college's assessment. Teaching and learning are good and are satisfactory in work-based learning. The college's lesson observation process is accurate and rigorous, and focuses on the quality of learning. Teachers plan and prepare lessons carefully, and have up-to-date knowledge of their subjects. They employ a wide variety of teaching techniques, which successfully keep most learners interested. In the better lessons learners make good progress and are challenged to achieve well. Learning resources are used particularly effectively to engage learners. The virtual learning environment is used well to enliven learning and assessment in some areas, although it is still at an early stage of development in others. Information on learners' individual needs is inconsistently used to inform lesson planning and individual activities.
19. Clear procedures and assessment practice ensure learners complete their tasks well. Marking of assignments and recording of completed tasks are thorough and detailed. However, feedback does not consistently include good formative assessment of skills for learning or for achieving higher grades. Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors are left unmarked too often, and this is not reported in internal verification feedback. Learners have easy access to assignment and key skills support workshops. However, the impact of this on their progress and development of independent learning skills is insufficiently monitored.
20. Arrangements to identify learners' additional learning needs are effective. Following careful diagnosis of their needs, appropriate support is put in place promptly. Support teachers help learners effectively in many lessons. Directorate-based key skill staff work well with subject area teachers to ensure that key skills are embedded within relevant and useful assignments. Key skills are delivered effectively in work-based learning.
21. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is outstanding and this agrees with the college's own self-assessment. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is also outstanding. It provides a very broad and diverse curriculum with clear progression routes from pre-entry level to higher education. The college collaborates very successfully with schools, universities and community groups. The college has been very successful in widening participation of learners with few educational achievements and of the most vulnerable and challenging. Provision for learners aged 14 to 16 is very good. There has been a significant increase in provision for 16 to 18-year-old learners. Level 2 'Gateway' programmes attract increasing numbers of adults. The college has highly effective and responsive partnerships with local employers. Employers who use the college speak highly of it.
22. The college provides a good range of recreational and leisure courses within community centres and numerous accredited short courses. Progression rates for learners at entry level to level 1 are low.

23. Enrichment activities provide excellent opportunities for learners to enhance personal and work-related skills closely matched to their academic and vocational courses. The college makes good provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
24. Guidance and support for learners are good. This agrees with the college's own self-assessment. Student support is effective in improving standards. Personal tutors provide good pastoral support. Directorate-based operational support managers provide a very effective link between personal tutors and central learner support services.
25. Good advice and guidance enable many learners to progress to higher education. Application processes are successful at placing learners on the correct courses. The comprehensive range of personal and welfare services and financial support enable a large number of learners to stay on course. Induction arrangements are good and help learners to settle quickly.
26. Effectively planned tutorial arrangements ensure both full- and part-time learners meet with their personal tutors regularly to review progress. However, some learning targets are too broad to effectively monitor progress. Comprehensive systems to monitor attendance and punctuality are in place but attendance of individual learners is not always managed effectively.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

27. Leadership and management are good. This agrees with the college's own evaluation. Governance is good and governors bring a good range of skills and experience to their role. They set clear and challenging targets, challenge poor performance effectively and take difficult decisions where necessary. Governors scrutinise finances and performance well and give good guidance through the effective working of committees.
28. The principal, aided by capable senior managers, demonstrates effective leadership. Working with governors, she provides a clear and sustainable direction for the college. The strategic planning process is robust and clear. However, strategies to broaden and identify the training needs of employers are incomplete. The college has either met or exceeded its demanding performance targets. The management of work-based learning provision is good.
29. Communication is good with effective cross-college working. Staff are well supported. Roles are clearly defined and well understood. Appraisal processes are thorough and systematic. Staff development is good. Arrangements to identify and share best practice are well established and effective. New staff are very well supported and given responsibility quickly. Teachers are well qualified. Almost all teachers have, or are working towards, qualified teacher status. The

college has been responsive to ease workloads for middle managers where pressures of additional recruitment or increased caseload have increased. However, some inconsistencies remain to be addressed.

30. Quality assurance mechanisms are robust. The college has built on many of the strengths and made good progress to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Processes to identify poorly performing courses and areas of provision are accurate. Prompt and effective action is taken to improve. The college makes good use of peer reviews in partnership with other colleges to share good practice and raise standards. Self-assessment at all levels is accurate and usually generates precise action plans with measurable outcomes which are effectively monitored. Staff use management information effectively to set and monitor targets. The college's well designed and accurate lesson observation system is used systematically to evaluate and to effectively improve teaching and learning.
31. The college's very well developed intranet contains much useful information and guidance for staff. However, electronic systems to collate and monitor progress and assessment of students are underdeveloped. The college has invested heavily in information technology infrastructure since the last inspection and access is good. Resources are generally good and support teaching and learning well. Plans to rebuild a significant proportion of the college are well in hand. Much effective refurbishment work has been undertaken since the last inspection. Financial management is strong. The effective monitoring and control of expenditure have enabled the college to sustain a strong financial position. The college provides good value for money.
32. The promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity is good. Policies to encourage equal opportunities are extensive and the achievement of different student groups is effectively monitored. Steps are taken to effectively challenge gender stereotyping and to raise awareness of cultural diversity through induction, tutorials and well organised cross-college events. The college complies with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA). The procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements. All staff have undergone enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. Training in child protection is extensive.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	04/05	1185	67	65	2	1673	81	62	19
	05/06	1531	72	69	3	1428	75	65	10
	06/07*	1576	73	n/a		1019	67	n/a	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	30	57	68	-11	2	0	64	-64
	05/06	30	70	72	-2	1	100	67	33
	06/07*	17	76	n/a		1	100	n/a	
NVQs	04/05	63	71	68	3	28	71	66	5
	05/06	66	83	72	11	7	43	74	-31
	06/07*	70	80	n/a		3	100	n/a	
Other	04/05	1092	67	64	3	1643	82	62	20
	05/06	1435	71	69	2	1420	75	65	10
	06/07*	1489	73	n/a		1015	67	n/a	

* college data

Table 2

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	04/05	1634	67	61	6	1673	62	60	2
	05/06	1721	66	66	0	1677	64	66	-2
	06/07*	1592	73	n/a		1381	65	n/a	
GCSEs	04/05	311	75	64	11	84	74	63	11
	05/06	234	71	68	3	51	84	67	17
	06/07*	233	72	n/a		84	68	n/a	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	33	82	67	15	1	0	74	-74
	05/06	7	57	69	-12	3	33	67	-34
	06/07*	14	57	n/a		8	38	n/a	
NVQs	04/05	441	53	57	-4	656	58	60	-2
	05/06	418	54	65	-11	492	60	67	-7
	6/07*	440	68	n/a		784	64	n/a	
Other	04/05	849	70	61	9	937	64	60	4
	05/06	1066	69	66	3	1134	65	65	0
	06/07*	905	77	n/a		505	65	n/a	

* college data

Table 3

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	04/05	2373	72	68	4	1331	63	58	5
	05/06	2855	73	70	3	1555	65	63	2
	06/07*	2587	77	n/a		1247	67	n/a	
A/A2 Levels	04/05	369	88	86	2	66	82	69	13
	05/06	367	90	87	3	69	80	72	8
	06/07*	341	92	n/a		44	82	n/a	
AS Levels	04/05	763	71	66	5	124	60	52	8
	05/06	770	68	67	1	86	56	55	1
	06/07*	733	68	n/a		84	67	n/a	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	257	57	60	-3	38	61	54	7
	05/06	154	67	66	1	3	100	57	43
	06/07*			n/a				n/a	
NVQs	04/05	74	64	63	1	438	66	56	10
	05/06	147	63	71	-8	469	66	63	3
	06/07*	101	70	n/a		309	66	n/a	
Other	04/05	910	73	60	13	669	60	59	1
	05/06	1417	73	65	8	929	64	64	0
	06/07*	1412	79	n/a		810	67	n/a	

* college data

Table 4

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

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	53	51	48	36	34
		timely	76	29	31	17	22
	05/06	overall	89	55	53	51	44
		timely	87	23	34	14	27
	06/07	overall	72	53	64	43	58
		timely	63	22	43	21	37
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	42	57	51	45	39
		timely	30	17	29	17	22
	05/06	overall	37	73	58	73	52
		timely	35	31	38	29	34
	06/07	overall	78	69	65	64	61
		timely	80	50	47	48	44

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

Table 5

Success rates on work-based learning 'Train to Gain' programmes managed by the provider/college 2006 to 2007.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2006/07	overall	175	59%
		timely		

* 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'

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