

# Moulton 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.

## Description of the provider

1. Moulton College is situated five miles north-east of Northampton in the East Midlands. The college is designated as a specialist land-based college. Although it provides courses in most of the sector subject areas, the highest numbers of learners are taking courses in construction, planning and the built environment; agriculture, horticulture and animal care; health, public services and care; and leisure, travel and tourism. The college's mission is to be a 'Centre of Excellence for Education and Training for the Natural, Built and Recreational Environment by providing relevant and cost-effective vocational opportunities for everyone who will benefit from them'. The college is a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for its construction programmes and a Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) Beacon. The college also makes provision for pupils aged 14 to 16, work-based learners and higher education students.
2. Around 70% of students come from Northamptonshire. The college attracts students from nearby counties and from Milton Keynes. In 2006/07, there were 5,551 students on further education courses, of whom 3,018 were aged 19 or over. Amongst 16 to 18-year-olds, males outnumber females by 3 to 1, but amongst adults the proportions are fairly even. The percentage of students belonging to minority ethnic groups is low, at 7%, reflecting the college's catchment area.

## Summary of grades awarded

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

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

3. Effectiveness of provision is outstanding. This agrees with the college's own assessment. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Learners' success rates are high or very high. Key skills success rates are excellent. Work-based learners' success rates are satisfactory. Learners develop a broad range of skills to a high standard. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now outstanding. Learners benefit from the outstanding provision which meets their needs and interests as well as those of employers. Arrangements to ensure educational and social inclusion are outstanding. The college provides outstanding care, guidance and support. The quality of additional learning support is very high. Leadership and management are outstanding. A very clear sense of direction, supported by effective quality improvement arrangements, highly effective governors, rigorous performance management and outstanding financial management, have contributed to raising standards and achieving outstanding value for money.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

4. The college demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve. Very effective quality improvement arrangements enable the college to assess the quality of its provision accurately. Actions to address concerns are timely and effective. Well qualified and experienced staff have a very strong commitment to improvement. The college has made good improvements to success rates, the quality of teaching and learning, and to leadership and management since the last inspection whilst also expanding its provision in line with LSC priorities. Resources for learning are excellent and well maintained. The college's capacity to improve is underpinned by accurate and useful management information, strong governance and outstanding financial acumen.

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

5. The college has made good progress in building on its strengths and improving areas of concern identified at the last inspection. Retention rates of adult learners have improved significantly at level 2 but only satisfactorily at level 3. Progress in improving the timeliness of apprenticeship framework completions has been satisfactory. Very good progress has been achieved in improving the use of information learning technology (ILT) to support learning, and outstanding progress has been made in broadening the provision at level 1 and in promoting equal opportunities. Good progress has been made in ensuring effective use of differentiation strategies in teaching.

## Key strengths

- very high long course success rates at level 1
- high long course success rates at levels 2 and 3
- very high success rates in key skills
- outstanding practical teaching
- wide ranging and highly inclusive provision
- highly responsive and effective partnerships with employers and schools
- outstanding guidance and support
- inspirational leadership and very clear strategic direction
- excellent governance
- rigorous and very effective actions to improve equality of opportunity
- very good performance management involving very effective target setting and monitoring
- excellent resources to support learning
- outstanding financial management.

## Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- success rates in work-based learning
- the variable quality of target setting to help learners to improve
- the insufficient analysis of aspects of learners' performance.

## Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

*Contributory grade:*

*Work-based learning*

*Satisfactory: grade 3*

6. Achievement and standards are outstanding. This agrees with the college's own assessment. Success rates at level 1 for learners on long courses are very high. The number of learners aged 16 to 18 taking courses at this level has risen significantly since the last inspection. Success rates at levels 2 and 3 for learners of all ages taking long courses are high and well above the most recent national averages. The number of learners aged 16 to 18 at these levels have also risen since the last inspection. The improvement in success rates has been fairly consistent across various types of qualification. The college is aware of relatively poor performance by learners aged 16 to 18 at level 2 in construction and by adult learners at level 3 in health and social care. Actions to address this are in hand.
7. Key skills success rates are very high. The college has a very strong commitment to key skills for full-time learners, most of whom are expected to take either key skills or basic skills subjects at appropriate levels. The number of key skill subject enrolments rose significantly in 2006/07 to over 2,000. All of the learners who took key skills were successful.
8. Success rates in work-based learning are satisfactory. Most of these learners are in construction and two-thirds are apprentices. Framework success rates for apprentices rose in the three years to 2006/07 to around the national rate. Advanced apprenticeship framework success rates fell in 2005/06 but recovered strongly in 2006/07 and are now well above the national rate. The extent to which work-based learners complete within the planned time period has improved and timely completion rates are now just above the national average.
9. In-year retention rates for the current academic year are high and attendance rates are good. The college analyses the performance of different groups of learners. Apart from by age, there are no significant variations.
10. Learners develop good personal and vocational skills and gain excellent experience of working in land-based and related industries. Most learners progress to employment or higher level courses, although the proportion progressing to higher education is low. Learners benefit from the strong emphasis placed upon safe working practices and many learners gain qualifications related to health and safety as part of a portfolio of additional qualifications which contribute to a college certificate framework. Learners clearly enjoy their studies.



Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

*Contributory grade:*

*Work-based learning*

*Good: grade 2*

11. The quality of provision is outstanding, in line with the college's judgement. In work-based learning the quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Almost all lessons are good and practical teaching, the basis for a high proportion of learning, is outstanding. Highly skilled teachers use excellent resources to create an interesting and challenging learning environment. They use a wide range of highly effective strategies and incorporate realistic work in commercial units, such as the garden centre or animal therapy unit, very effectively. Learners thrive on this approach and develop a broad range of useful skills quickly, and to a high standard. Teaching for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. ILT is used well in learning, including highly productively in several cases, such as in match analysis for sports studies learners. Considerable use is made by both teachers and learners of the rapidly developing and high quality virtual learning environment.
12. Assessment is used well to support learning, including for work-based learners. Assignments incorporate 'real work' tasks and are challenging. Commercial unit managers and employers contribute well to assessment, ensuring tasks and outcomes are a close match to industry requirements. Marking and feedback are mostly of high quality. Internal verification is thorough and helpful in improving assessors' practice. Initial assessment is used well to plan teaching and learning.
13. A well established lesson observation scheme supports improving teachers' practice as well as providing an accurate evaluation of the quality of lessons. It uses observations by external and internal teams very effectively with thorough moderation in place. The formal analysis of results was cursory in 2006/07, but has improved considerably in the current year. Clear, prompt identification and sharing of good practice works very effectively to improve teaching practice.
14. The college's provision is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of a broad and diverse range of learners. Close and productive collaboration with stakeholders and a high level of industry-related research, including keeping abreast of developments in technology, ensure a close match between curriculum development and the needs of the specialist areas the college serves. Provision is made across the ability range, including dedicated provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a range of academies to provide challenge for gifted and talented learners. Progression into higher education is available in most of the main specialist subject areas within the college. Liaison with schools is very good and includes all the secondary schools in the county. Many pupils, including primary school pupils, gain an insight into the specialist areas the college offers through taster days and specifically designed introductory courses.

15. Key skills are well integrated into the curriculum, as is the case with promotion of equality and diversity, although some curriculum areas are more advanced in these areas than others. Wider key skills, such as team work and skills to support employability, including good timekeeping and communication skills, are well developed and help learners considerably towards achieving economic well-being.
16. Inclusion, both social and educational, is outstanding as shown through the college's open access entry policy and its work to widen participation from under-represented groups. The college enables easy access to its courses through its satellite centres across the county, residential accommodation, flexible modes of attendance and the extensive transport networks it operates.
17. Enrichment activities, including sport, visits and study tours, have high participation rates and are a much valued aspect of college life but there are fewer activities that promote cultural awareness and creative development. Learners contribute positively in many ways to the life of the college and the community, including raising considerable amounts of money for charity.
18. The college provides outstanding care and support through a range of support staff, including for residential learners. It supports learners with a wide range of ability and from diverse social backgrounds. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well integrated into college life and an inclusive environment is fostered by all. Personal support is given promptly and effectively by personal tutors. Specialist support is available through contacts with a wide range of external agencies. Support staff work flexibly to be available to support learners studying by a range of modes of attendance.
19. The provision of initial advice and guidance is very good and effective in helping learners make informed and appropriate choices, as shown by high retention rates on most courses. Advice on career progression is good and enhanced by ensuring that learners undertake work experience in their chosen field of interest. The quality of additional learning support is very high and valued by learners. Success rates for the large number of learners in receipt of support often exceed the rates for those who are not supported.
20. Tutorials are frequent and highly effective. Tutors are supportive and keep a close watch on progress, particularly timely and comprehensive completion of work. Tutorials contain an appropriate balance of group work based on important subjects such as health and safety education, as well as individual tutorials. The quality of target setting in these tutorials varies. Good practice exists; however, in a few curriculum areas, targets are too general and insufficiently focused on challenging learners to achieve higher levels of attainment. In work-based learning the review process is less effective, with some incomplete records and insufficient use of targets.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

*Contributory grades:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Outstanding: grade 1*

*Work-based learning*

*Good: grade 2*

21. Leadership and management are outstanding and this concurs with the college's self-assessment. The principal provides inspirational leadership and is very well supported by the senior team. A very clear strategic direction has enabled the college to grow by providing courses which build on the college's strengths and which complement other provision in the area. Actions to raise success rates have been particularly effective whilst also expanding provision. Issues identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The arrangements for ensuring that managers at all levels contribute effectively to fulfilling the college's mission are very good. The well developed target setting relating to enrolment, retention and achievement in the academic provision, as well as concentration upon appropriate measures to drive commercial operations, underpinned by timely and accurate management information, ensures that managers are able to monitor and be accountable for their area of responsibility to good effect. The management of work-based learning is good. The college has identified the factors which inhibited framework completions in recent years and these are being addressed.
22. Governance is excellent. Governors make an important contribution to the development of relevant strategic objectives, using their vocational experience to good effect. They have a very good grasp of financial and educational issues, maintain productive links with the curriculum areas and conduct a thorough self-assessment of their work. Financial management is outstanding, as is value for money. All of the college's commercial operations are self-sufficient and make a contribution to the college budget.
23. The resources to support learning are of a very high standard, reflecting best industry practice in some areas. Significant capital investment has been achieved without loss of the agricultural estate. Innovative arrangements such as a partnership with a local veterinary practice enable learners to benefit from skills and experience not normally available on a college campus. Facilities are very well maintained, providing a very welcoming and attractive environment for learners and staff. Staff are well qualified and experienced. The well established appraisal system is linked to good staff development arrangements.
24. Equality of opportunity is outstanding. The college has responded well to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA). It is fully compliant with requirements relating to child protection and safeguarding. The college has been particularly effective in attracting learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or for whom engaging in learning is particularly challenging. Very good progress is being made in implementing action plans and conducting impact assessments. A thorough analysis of the performance of different groups

of learners is carried out. Arrangements to embed equality and diversity within the curriculum have been more effective in some subject areas than others.

25. Good arrangements for quality assurance include thorough course reviews and frequent and timely interventions by subject managers who identify issues at an early stage. The self-assessment arrangements are comprehensive, initially involving all staff and leading to a well structured process for validating judgements. The key judgements accurately reflect the college's strengths, although inspectors did identify two areas for improvement not included in the report.
26. The analysis of aspects of learners' performance is insufficient. The college does not record high grades achieved by learners when making its returns to the funding body. There is no systematic evaluation of the value added by the college based on a comparison of actual outcomes in relation to predicted outcomes. The rigour of analysis applied to the evaluation of the impact of additional learning support and the analysis of progression data is an area for development.

## 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	557	98	65	33	293	88	62	26
	05/06	726	100	78	22	191	92	64	28
	06/07*	1300	99			338	95		
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	29	93	71	22
	05/06	...	...	...	...	9	100	62	38
	06/07*	...	...	...	...	4	100		
Other	04/05	557	98	66	32	264	88	62	26
	05/06	726	100	78	22	182	92	64	28
	06/07*	1300	99			334	95		

\* 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	593	75	68	7	1055	56	62	-6
	05/06	509	78	73	5	799	68	65	3
	06/07*	834	84			811	78		
GCSEs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	142	83	73	10	91	77	...	...
	05/06	15	93	...	...	61	56	...	...
	06/07*	36	92			29	79		
NVQs	04/05	21	29	...	...	418	52	56	-4
	05/06	11	36	...	...	312	63	62	1
	06/07*	3	67			215	84		
Other	04/05	430	75	69	6	546	56	63	-7
	05/06	483	78	75	3	426	73	66	7
	06/07*	795	84			567	76		

\* 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	316	81	69	12	566	62	57	5
	05/06	587	83	74	9	626	54	58	-4
	06/07*	699	87			550	70		
A/A2 Levels	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
AS Levels	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	15	60	...	...	266	52	50	2
	05/06	10	0	...	...	304	44	46	-2
	06/07*	9	44	...	...	265	52	...	...
Other	04/05	301	82	68	14	300	70	59	11
	05/06	577	85	73	12	322	65	61	4
	06/07*	690	88	...	...	285	87	...	...

\* college data

Table 4

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

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners*	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2004/05	Apprenticeship	242	44	39	52	51
	Advanced	25	40	34	56	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	291	50	52	54	58
	Advanced	76	36	44	43	53
2006/07	Apprenticeship	276	58	61	59	65
	Advanced	87	69	58	74	64

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

b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2004/05	Apprenticeship	339	29	22	32	29
	Advanced	33	24	22	36	31
2005/06	Apprenticeship	214	38	34	42	38
	Advanced	98	22	27	27	34
2006/07	Apprenticeship	248	47	44	48	47
	Advanced	70	46	37	47	43

\* The number of learners who planned to complete their learning programme in the given year

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