

# West Nottinghamshire 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); and where appropriate the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; 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. West Nottinghamshire College is a large general further education (FE) college which has two main campuses in Mansfield and a further seven smaller sites within the Mansfield and Ashfield area, including a new centre for construction and logistics in Kirkby-in-Ashfield. The college also has four community learning centres and works within more than 100 other local community venues.
2. The college primarily serves the districts of Mansfield and Ashfield and the M1 corridor linking Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, a predominantly urban area which includes an area of new business development along the Mansfield and Ashfield Regeneration Route but also districts of significant deprivation. The local unemployment rate of 6% is higher than the national average. The percentage of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at A\* to C, including mathematics and English, in Mansfield is significantly below the national average. Some 8% of learners are of minority ethnic heritage, compared with 4% of people from such backgrounds in the local community.
3. The college provides courses in all sector subject areas. Learner numbers are highest in preparation for life and work, engineering and manufacturing technologies and in health, public services and care. Qualification levels range from pre-entry level to higher education (HE). The college provides apprenticeship programmes to around 570 work-based learners. Part-time courses for 579 young people aged 14 to 16 are offered in collaboration with 28 local schools.
4. There are currently 18,918 learners enrolled at the college. Some 80% of these are adults and nearly two thirds are male. Most learners aged 16 to 18 follow full-time courses and most adult learners follow part-time courses. There is a fairly even split in the number of enrolments between levels 1, 2 and 3. The college has Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status for engineering and is a partner in CoVEs in construction, logistics and care. The college's vision is 'a dynamic college for aspiring communities' and its mission is: 'Learners at the heart of excellence'.

## 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

5. The college assessed the effectiveness of its provision as outstanding and inspectors agree. Although many learners join the college with low aspirations, achievement and standards are outstanding on courses at all levels and for learners of all ages. Progression between courses within the college is very good but progression to higher education is low. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is rigorous but is not yet used to full effect in planning and developing learning. The college provides an outstanding range of courses which are well matched to the needs of individual learners and the development needs of the local economy. Employer engagement is outstanding. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is imaginative and highly effective. Care, guidance and support arrangements are outstanding. Learners are articulate and passionate in their support of the college.
6. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal provides excellent leadership and is supported by a strong and capable senior management team. The college's outstanding commitment to equality and diversity is reflected in all aspects of college life. The college has developed an excellent range of partnerships which help it to meet national priorities and local needs. Curriculum management is good but the use of data on learners' progress, compared with their prior attainment in monitoring and analysing progress and performance, is underdeveloped. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. Accommodation at the Derby Road site is dated but well maintained. Governance and financial management are outstanding. Value for money is outstanding.

### Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

7. The college demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve. Success rates have improved to well above the national average. The college sets appropriate institutional targets which it nearly always meets and frequently exceeds. The principal provides excellent leadership. Morale throughout the college is high. Curriculum management is good. College planning procedures are rigorous. Quality assurance is excellent. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. Teaching and support staff have excellent opportunities to improve their professional skills. Accommodation is satisfactory but resources are good. Financial management is outstanding.

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

8. The college has made outstanding progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Work-based learning success rates have improved significantly. Key skills success rates have also improved and are now excellent. Retention rates on courses at level 3 have improved

significantly and are now high. Teaching and learning have improved. The college's lesson observation system identifies accurately the strengths and areas for improvement in lessons.

### Key strengths

- high success rates
- highly effective employer engagement
- imaginative and highly effective approach to educational and social inclusion
- outstanding support and guidance
- excellent leadership
- outstanding response to equality and diversity
- excellent partnership arrangements which help meet national priorities and local needs
- outstanding governance and financial management.

### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- the proportion of learners who progress to HE
- the use of assessment in planning and developing learning
- the use of data on learners' progress, compared with their prior attainment in monitoring and analysing progress and performance
- accommodation at the Derby Road site.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

9. Achievement and standards are outstanding. This agrees with the college's own assessment. Success rates for learners of all ages and at all levels have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now well above the most recent national averages. This improvement in success rates has been remarkably consistent across different sector subject areas and for all groups of learners, despite the significant deprivation that many of them have experienced in their lives. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress both in terms of the success rates they achieve and the personal and social skills they gain. Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 are outstanding at 96% and the majority of these younger learners progress to higher level courses at the college. Progression rates within the college are very good but senior managers are aware that the number of learners who progress from the college to HE, although improving, is low and are introducing a range of measures to raise the aspirations of learners.
10. Key skills success rates have also improved and are now excellent. In 2006/07 the overall success rate was 73%, some 30% above the national average. Success rates in work-based learning are excellent, both in terms of the number of full frameworks completed and those successfully completed within the agreed time. Successful outcomes on the college's Train to Gain programme are also very high.
11. The high quality of learners' work is a strong feature and the college is justifiably proud of the achievement of its learners. Success is widely promoted and celebrated and the many attractive displays of work throughout the college provide a good demonstration of how much learners enjoy their work as well as being a source of inspiration to others. Attendance has improved and is satisfactory.

### Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

12. The quality of provision is outstanding which agrees with the college's own judgement. Teaching and learning are good. The college's teaching and learning strategy is well considered and underpinned by excellent arrangements for developing the skills of teachers. The lesson observation system provides a detailed assessment of the strengths and areas for improvement in individual lessons, although inspectors did not observe such a high proportion of outstanding lessons as claimed by the college and saw greater variations in the quality of teaching and learning.
13. Teachers use a good variety of strategies to ensure that learners are engaged in their learning and work productively. Teachers are particularly good at helping learners to develop the occupational competence they need to gain employment or improve performance and promotion prospects in their existing



- jobs. In most lessons, teachers have a good understanding of the learning needs of individual learners and sometimes translate this into lessons which provide different tasks matched to the ability and learning styles of learners. In a significant minority of lessons, teachers demonstrate their commitment to differentiating learning outcomes in this way but in practice do not provide the activities to achieve it. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of the good information and learning technology (ILT) resources available to enrich their teaching.
14. Assessment is thorough, accurate and fair. Assignments are marked promptly and the quality of most feedback to learners is good, providing them with useful guidance on how their standards could be improved. The use of assessment to plan teaching and learning is underdeveloped and on a few courses, particularly at level 3, this hampers progress.
  15. The college is outstanding at identifying and meeting the needs of a broad range of learners. The rich and varied curriculum is well matched to local needs and is provided through a variety of venues in the Mansfield and Ashfield districts. The curriculum provides learners with very good opportunities to progress. Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, both in the college and at the imaginative 'Bay 6' centre, is excellent. Key skills are well integrated into each curriculum area and success rates have improved dramatically. Numerous activities enrich the curriculum, although the opportunities for learners to take part in sporting activities or join college teams are insufficient. Partnership working with local schools is strong. The programme for young people aged 14 to 16 is extremely effective and schools say that it is having a major impact on improving achievement at Key Stage 4.
  16. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Courses are offered in a large number of venues in the community and over two thirds of those attending a course in the community progress to another course at the college. The Ashfield campus, which caters exclusively for learners who did not succeed at school, is an excellent example of the college's imaginative and highly effective response to community needs. Employer engagement is outstanding. The college has a strong presence on local planning groups and plays a significant role in improving the skills base in the community. The college also responds well to government initiatives; for example, the college is the most successful provider of Train to Gain in the area, and has secured recent significant growth in learner numbers on the programme.
  17. Guidance and support are outstanding. Support for the large number of learners with disabilities is particularly good and these learners are well integrated into college life. Initial assessment accurately identifies learners' additional learning needs. These needs are met effectively and lead to improved retention and achievement. Excellent specialist support is available through contacts with a wide variety of external agencies. Learners benefit from highly effective initial advice and guidance. Course information is clear and accessible and procedures to ensure that learners enrol on the right course are secure. College induction is used well to introduce learners to the range of

support and guidance available to them. Learners receive sound advice on applying for HE and employment.

18. Support from tutors and teachers is outstanding. Regular tutorials are used to set and monitor targets for individual learners. Personal tutors are highly skilled and effective at using targets and action plans to raise achievement. The views of learners are taken extremely seriously by college managers and there are numerous good opportunities for their voice to be heard. These are used effectively to improve general college facilities and inform curriculum developments.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Outstanding: grade 1*

19. Leadership and management are outstanding and this agrees with the college's self-assessment. The principal provides visionary leadership and is well supported by a strong and capable senior management team. This combination has contributed significantly to the sustained improvement which the college has achieved. The college has successfully addressed all the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and meets or exceeds the majority of its performance targets. The college's achievement is underpinned by a clear, shared purpose, comprehensive planning and the highly effective use of strategic partnerships. Communication within the college is excellent and staff morale is high. The management of work-based learning is good.
20. Curriculum management is good. The college has successfully developed a culture where managers have the autonomy to run their areas whilst being held to account for their performance. It supports this with an effective management development programme. Management information is accurate and is well used to aid improvement planning. However, the use of data on learners' progress, compared with their prior attainment to analyse progress and target improvements in performance, has not been developed sufficiently.
21. There are excellent arrangements for curriculum quality assurance which include well developed procedures for peer review. Performance management, including the appraisal of teachers, is rigorous. Self-assessment is well established and the key judgements in the self-assessment report are accurate.
22. The promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity are outstanding. The college has been particularly successful in attracting learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who have been less successful in their prior education. The college makes an effective response to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA). The college analyses the performance of different groups of learners rigorously and ensures that any issues are dealt with in detail in its development planning. Action on meeting standards under

child protection legislation is very good, as is attention to the health and safety of learners.

23. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Accommodation is satisfactory. Accommodation at Derby Road is dated but well maintained. The college's plans to replace this accommodation are well advanced. The new centre in Kirkby-in-Ashfield provides outstanding accommodation for construction and logistics. Specialist resources are good. Governance is outstanding. Governors are extremely supportive of the college and provide a good level of challenge to managers and hold the college to account for its performance. Financial management and control are excellent. The college provides outstanding value for money.

## 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.

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>
1 Long	04/05	1087	77	69	8	1386	73	58	15
	05/06	1311	71	69	2	1075	75	65	10
	06/07	1340	80	*	*	708	77	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	9	78	72	6	1	0	65	-65
	05/06	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
	06/07	18	94	*	*	2	100	*	*
NVQs	04/05	100	70	69	1	373	67	44	23
	05/06	126	69	73	-4	338	74	63	11
	06/07	201	87	*	*	203	69	*	*
Other	04/05	978	78	68	10	1012	75	63	12
	05/06	1185	72	68	4	767	76	66	10
	06/07	1121	78	*	*	503	81	*	*

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.

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>
2 Long	04/05	1184	66	61	5	1700	69	63	6
	05/06	1528	70	68	2	2566	79	73	6
	06/07	1267	80	*	*	2120	84	*	*
GCSEs	04/05	280	56	64	-8	208	62	63	-1
	05/06	237	62	67	-5	165	72	67	5
	06/07	235	71	*	*	129	88	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	51	67	68	-1	7	100	62	38
	05/06	87	70	71	-1	7	100	62	38
	06/07	49	49	*	*	2	100	*	*
NVQs	04/05	235	61	54	7	757	77	66	11
	05/06	372	67	66	1	1648	87	78	9
	06/07	322	80	*	*	1412	87	*	*
Other	04/05	618	73	61	12	728	63	60	3
	05/06	832	73	68	5	742	62	63	-1
	06/07	661	85	*	*	577	75	*	*

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	1117	66	66	0	884	57	54	3
	05/06	1092	65	70	-5	1000	64	64	0
	06/07	1104	76	*	*	1069	75	*	*
A/A2 Levels	04/05	183	78	82	-4	74	58	82	-24
	05/06	197	76	85	-9	49	61	69	-8
	06/07	115	87	*	*	31	87	*	*
AS Levels	04/05	379	59	65	-6	51	51	52	-1
	05/06	368	50	65	-15	64	61	53	8
	06/07	213	54	*	*	28	89	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	40	58	57	1	4	75	46	29
	05/06	21	57	60	-3	6	33	46	-13
	06/07	5	100	*	*	2	100	*	*
NVQs	04/05	37	62	70	-8	252	59	48	11
	05/06	33	76	73	3	331	67	64	3
	06/07	32	63	*	*	435	80	*	*
Other	04/05	478	68	61	7	406	55	57	-2
	05/06	472	73	67	6	479	64	65	-1
	06/07	739	81	*	*	573	69	*	*

\* The 2006/07 national rates were not released at the time of this inspection

\*\* Qualifications not offered

Table 4

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

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No. of learners *	College NVO rate **	National NVO rate **	College Framework rate **	National framework rate **
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	90	43	48	24	34
		timely	65	34	31	18	22
	05/06	overall	76	43	53	36	44
		timely	72	29	34	24	27
	06/07	overall	37	62	64	54	58
		timely	39	41	43	31	37
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	194	44	51	31	39
		timely	231	20	29	16	22
	05/06	overall	341	76	58	70	52
		timely	313	40	38	36	34
	06/07	overall	332	89	65	82	61
		timely	286	76	47	69	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 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 NVO rate**
Train to Gain ***	2006/07	overall	89	98
		timely	na	na

\* 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 NVO provision, but not 'Skills for Life'

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