

Runshaw 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. Runshaw College is a tertiary college situated in the area of South Ribble and Chorley in Lancashire. The area experiences low levels of unemployment but also has pockets of deprivation. In 2006/07, the college enrolled 7,400 students, of whom 4,200 were full-time and mainly aged 16 to 18. About 490 students were enrolled on higher education (HE) courses and over 200 on apprenticeship programmes. Over 4% of students are from minority ethnic groups, which is higher than the proportion in the local population. The college has substantial provision in most curriculum areas.
2. In 2007, 68% of the areas school pupils achieved five A* to C grades at GCSE. The college is the destination for around 70% of school-leavers in Chorley and South Ribble. A large number of post-16 providers of education and training operate nearby. The college operates from three major sites: a sixth form centre, an adult college and business centre, and a town centre site. Community-based provision is available at a number of outreach centres. A bus equipped with information technology (IT) facilities brings learning to outlying areas. The college has two Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs): one in leadership and management and an information technology for business CoVE.
3. The college aims to provide a wide range of learning opportunities and a supportive environment where each individual feels valued, and to provide all its students with first class facilities. Runshaw is a Beacon college and has won several awards, including a United Kingdom Business Excellence Award and a European Quality Award.

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

4. The college's overall effectiveness is outstanding as a result of high expectations for staff and students, backed up by excellent support and resources for teaching and learning. The college is relentless in its efforts to maintain high standards and to find further ways of improving its provision. In doing this, it is often innovative without losing sight of its core values and the central importance of teaching and learning. The culture of the college is one of hard work and respect for the individual. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 continue to be outstanding and have increased each year since the last inspection. The value added to students' previous attainment is very high. Success rates for adults are also high on most of the provision. The outcomes for work-based learners are good. The large number of students aged 14 to 16 now studying with the college achieve excellent results. In addition to gaining qualifications, students' personal development is excellent.
5. The reasons for these successful outcomes lie in the outstanding quality of provision. Teaching and learning are excellent due to a combination of exceptionally good lesson planning, plus innovative ideas that create a sense of teacher and learner working together in pursuit of excellence. The college's response to local and national needs, and its approach to social and educational inclusion, are both outstanding. Since the last inspection, the college has made excellent progress in developing its range of courses and in its response to employers. The range of enrichment opportunities available to all students, including adults and work-based trainees, is exceptional and participation rates are very high. Guidance and support are outstanding. In addition to the high levels of personal support, the systems for giving students extra help with work are excellent and contribute greatly to the high success rates. Students speak very enthusiastically about the impact the college has on their lives.
6. Leadership and management are outstanding in all aspects and at all levels. Of particular note is performance management; as well as the highly effective formal systems, managers carry out daily walks through the college and listen carefully to student feedback. Any potential problems are identified and dealt with swiftly. Equality of opportunity is outstanding. The culture of respect that permeates the college is backed by rigorous systems to ensure all students reach their full potential.
7. Governors place a high value on analysing their own performance, as well as closely monitoring student achievement. They work extremely well with senior managers in setting the strategic vision for the college. Financial management is outstanding. The college deploys its resources with care and imagination to create a high quality provision, in which students thrive. Staff are both highly competent and totally dedicated to helping students enjoy and achieve. The level and quality of resources to support learning are excellent.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

8. The college demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve based on its year-on-year improvements to students' achievement, which were already high at the last inspection. The college has exceptionally good systems for quality improvement. Its self-assessment processes are outstanding in their rigour. Action plans to maintain high standards, and bring about further improvement where appropriate, are very effective.

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

9. The effectiveness of steps taken to improve provision is outstanding. Since the last inspection, the college's success rates have improved year-on-year. It has maintained an outstanding quality of provision and improved its social and educational inclusion from good to outstanding. It has successfully improved its range of provision and students' achievement on key skills.

Key strengths

- exceptionally strong focus on student enjoyment and achievement
- outstanding success rates for students aged 16 to 18
- high success rates on the majority of courses for adults
- outstanding personal development of students
- excellent value added to learners' previous attainment
- innovative and creative practice leading to high quality teaching and learning
- highly inclusive range of provision and excellent enrichment
- excellent partnership working to meet local needs
- outstanding guidance and support for students
- inspirational leadership
- excellent performance management, leading to consistently high standards and relentless focus on continuous improvement
- exceptionally competent and dedicated staff and excellent resources to support teaching and learning
- excellent financial management and deployment of resources.

Areas for improvement

There are no significant areas for improvement

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

10. Inspection confirmed the college judgement that achievement and standards are outstanding. The standard of work produced by the majority of students is very high. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 are well above national benchmarking data for courses at all levels. In 2005/06, this placed the college at the top of national performance tables for colleges of a similar type and success rates have continued to improve in 2006/07. On General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level courses, the proportion of students gaining grades A to B has risen each year for the last three years and is well above the national average. Success rates on this provision are above the national rate for sixth form colleges. Results on vocational courses for students aged 16 to 18 are equally outstanding. The value added to students' previous levels of attainment is excellent. The college has addressed the weakness in key skills achievement identified at the last inspection and the proportion of students achieving these qualifications is high. Achievement on courses for students aged 14 to 16 is outstanding and many of these students progress to further courses at the college.
11. Success rates for students aged 19+ are well above the national average at levels 2 and 3. Success rates on level 1 courses for adults, which is a relatively small proportion of the college's provision, were satisfactory in 2006/07. Retention on these courses is good and there is evidence of improving achievement in 2008.
12. Achievement for trainees on work-based learning courses is good. In 2006/07, success rates for advanced apprentices were very good and for apprentices they were above the national average for the previous year. In Train to Gain, there are good success rates on much of the provision, although there was some variability across programme areas in 2006/07. Work in place to address this and to further improve timely success rates, is showing positive impact in 2008.
13. The personal development of students is exceptional. Students speak with great enthusiasm about their achievement at college and attendance is very good. They acquire a good range of skills to help them at university or in the workplace. Students adopt healthy lifestyles and make an excellent contribution to the life of the college and to the wider community. There is extensive celebration of students' achievement. Student progression to higher education, further education or training is excellent.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

14. Inspectors agree with the college judgement that the quality of provision is outstanding. It has continued to invest significant resources to maintain high standards since the last inspection and the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The college has pushed the boundaries in developing innovative

and creative practice in lessons which supports highly effective learning and the development of students' independence and responsibility for their work. It has recently developed a teaching and learning academy, which brings together support for teachers and their professional development, the work of the teacher education department, lesson observations and several innovative cross college initiatives. Six professional tutors, identified as excellent classroom practitioners provide very good support to teachers and take forward the sharing of good practice.

15. A comprehensive menu of staff development provides a wide range of opportunities from weekly bite size sessions on specific topics to department and whole college development days. A comprehensive lesson observation system includes four types of observations; formal graded lesson observations with robust moderation procedures that inform performance management, creative observations when teachers are encouraged to try out innovative ideas and have professional debate, developmental observations to support grade improvements and peer observations to share good practice. Managers at all levels have a very detailed view of the many strengths and ways in which they can further develop lesson delivery. Teachers are encouraged to undertake research projects on effective learning and publish these in the staff magazine.
16. Lessons are exceptionally well planned with a wide range of activities, professionally produced handouts and excellent use of information learning technology (ILT). Teachers engage and motivate students to have ambitious aspirations and produce work of a very high quality. Innovative starter activities ensure students are quickly focused on the lesson. Teachers use very effective questioning to check on learning and probe the depth of students' knowledge and understanding. This is backed up by very regular written and practical assessments with comprehensive teacher feedback. Students enjoy their lessons, contribute enthusiastically and speak very highly of the support they receive from staff in and out of lessons. Students are very well prepared for examinations and beyond.
17. The range of provision has extended since the last inspection and is outstanding. The college has worked hard to develop courses that meet local needs and provide students of all abilities with appropriate study opportunities. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. Links with local schools and the college's contribution to the 14 to 19 agenda are exceptional. It has developed a broad range of vocational courses for pupils in Key Stage 4, including the provision of salons and motor vehicle workshops in two local schools and a construction academy in partnership with schools to take vocational delivery into the community and make it more accessible. A range of taster courses and programmes to re-engage young people who are at risk of dropping out of school are very successful. The majority of full-time students are aged 16 to 18 on advanced level courses and the choices available are extensive with over 40 AS and A level courses, 20 vocational national diplomas and level 3 NVQ programmes. Opportunities for adults have been developed to meet local and national priorities. The college works very well with employers and is expanding its work-based learning and Train to Gain provision.

18. There is a very strong emphasis in developing the full potential of students. All full-time students complete key skills qualifications and develop their confidence in research and presentation skills. The range of enrichment activities is exceptional with over 50 cross college activities and high levels of participation. As students commented: 'there is something for everyone and if not suggest it and, if it is reasonable, the college will help you to organise it.' Cross college theme weeks cover safe living, stress management and cultural awareness. A variety of clubs provide extra support for more vulnerable groups, such as young parents and students who are living independently. In addition, all subjects offer well considered enhancement opportunities such as clubs, trips, visiting speakers and fun activities to build and develop students' portfolio of experiences, many of which are externally accredited and develop very good employability skills. Students' views on all aspects of college life are regularly collated and used very well to drive forward continuous improvements.
19. Guidance and support are outstanding. At Runshaw every learner really does matter. The college places a great deal of time, effort and expenditure in supporting students. Pre-enrolment advice and guidance are of exceptional quality and ensures students are on the right course and that support is in place straight away. Staff from the college visit local schools and obtain a pen portrait of all those who have enrolled at the college; along with very good induction activities, this helps students quickly settle into college and make the most of their time. Personal tutors closely monitor academic progress and personal development with regular one-to-one reviews. Students who are at risk of dropping out of college or who are falling behind with their work are quickly identified and supportive action is taken. Student review boards closely scrutinise learners' progress. Communication and liaison with parents are outstanding. Group tutorial sessions cover a wide range of topics, which are closely mapped into the five themes of Every Child Matters. The system is backed up by pastoral support workers and learning mentors. Students value the inclusive nature of additional support, which includes students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities, able, gifted and talented students and those who are falling behind with their work. For many students the exceptional support they receive has changed their lives; an adult student spoke of Runshaw restoring her faith in the education system. Advice and guidance for students wishing to progress to higher education is excellent. The college have developed an extensive range of links with local community groups, external agencies and employers to support students in achieving their ambitions.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: Grade 1

20. Inspectors agreed with the college judgement that leadership and management are outstanding. Inspirational leadership and strong management at all levels create a very clear sense of direction and purpose. Curriculum management is outstanding. The learner experience and the quality of teaching and learning are at the heart of every aspect of the college.

21. Performance monitoring is outstanding. The college has a healthy record of meeting and, in many cases, exceeding targets. There is an exceptional focus on quality improvement. Self-assessment is rigorous and inspectors agreed with all of the college's judgements. Managers receive accurate and timely data weekly to monitor student attendance, retention and achievement. Any issues are quickly identified and effectively dealt with. In addition to the formal monitoring systems, senior managers carry out daily informal 'walks' through the college. They are actively involved in teaching and the management of curriculum areas, often testing out college systems and always listening to what the learners say. Work-based learning is well managed. Communication across the college and with employers is excellent. Robust performance management has led to rapid improvement in work-based learning since the college became involved in this work four years ago.
22. There is excellent promotion of equality of opportunity and an ethos of respect throughout the organisation. The college sets and achieves challenging targets for equality and diversity; for example, it has taken successful action to improve the achievement of male students and these are now significantly above the national average. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve at or above the college's overall rate. There is significant focus on equality and diversity within the curriculum and enrichment activities. The college's Skills for Life strategy is very effective; for example, in work-based learning and Train to Gain where workers from Eastern European countries receive excellent language support. The college complies with legal requirements regarding equal opportunities legislation. Arrangements for health and safety are robust and the college meets government requirements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults.
23. Partnership working is very strong. Since the last inspection the college has made significant progress in its work with schools and employers. It also has effective links with the voluntary sector and a range of other organisations.
24. Governance is outstanding. Governors set a clear strategic direction for the college, which is highly responsive to local and national priorities. The board monitors the performance of curriculum areas closely. It is also highly evaluative of its own performance.
25. Staff are very well qualified and highly motivated. They work hard within a culture of high expectations, backed up by strong support and an excellent programme for staff development. Accommodation, specialist equipment and learning resources are all of a very high quality. Resources are very well deployed to prioritise teaching and learning and learner enjoyment; for example, there is extensive resource devoted to additional study support and to enrichment activities. Financial management is excellent and 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.

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	04/05	345	74	65	9	1,133	69	62	7
	05/06	253	80	69	11	848	71	65	6
	06/07*	311	83	N/A		525	70	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05								
	05/06								
	06/07*			N/A				N/A	
NVQs	04/05	58	78	68	10	26	85	67	18
	05/06	54	93	73	20	18	78	74	4
	06/07*	36	89	N/A		-	-	N/A	
Other	04/05	287	74	64	10	1,107	69	62	7
	05/06	199	76	69	7	830	71	65	6
	06/07*	275	83	N/A		525	70	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 to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	04/05	804	76	61	15	1,207	69	60	9
	05/06	815	83	66	17	899	76	66	10
	06/07*	825	85	N/A		847	76	N/A	
GCSEs	04/05	329	74	64	10	286	73	63	10
	05/06	357	84	68	16	196	74	67	7
	06/07*	347	84	N/A		215	73	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	22	68	67	1				
	05/06	20	90	69	21				
	06/07*	1	100	N/A				N/A	
NVQs	04/05	120	80	57	23	149	80	61	19
	05/06	172	78	65	13	220	73	67	6
	06/07*	159	85	N/A		183	80	N/A	
Other	04/05	333	77	61	16	772	66	60	6
	05/06	266	86	66	20	483	78	65	13
	06/07*	318	86	N/A		449	79	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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	04/05	7,300	89	68	21	652	69	58	11
	05/06	6,925	92	71	21	699	71	63	8
	06/07*	7,593	91	N/A		715	73	N/A	
A/A2 levels	04/05	2,493	98	86	12	16	75	69	6
	05/06	2,284	98	87	11	37	70	72	-2
	06/07*	2,325	98	N/A		35	69	N/A	
AS Levels	04/05	3,874	87	66	21	19	53	52	1
	05/06	3,701	91	67	24	37	70	55	15
	06/07*	4,346	89	N/A		31	74	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	192	73	61	12				
	05/06	111	85	66	19				
	06/07*	-	-	N/A				N/A	
NVQs	04/05	39	92	63	29	122	72	56	16
	05/06	39	95	71	24	168	77	63	14
	06/07*	53	81	N/A		223	74	N/A	
Other	04/05	702	72	60	12	495	68	59	9
	05/06	790	75	65	10	457	69	64	5
	06/07*	869	80	N/A		426	73	N/A	

* college data

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes managed by the college

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	6	100	48	100	34
		timely	6	100	31	100	22
	05/06	overall	37	76	55	68	45
		timely	39	72	35	64	28
	06/07	overall	38	84	66	79	59
		timely	38	74	44	71	39
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	52	77	51	73	39
		timely	58	67	29	64	22
	05/06	overall	89	58	59	55	53
		timely	90	38	38	37	35
	06/07	overall	102	69	66	67	62
		timely	106	52	47	52	45

Note 'At the time of the inspection - LSC data for 2006-07 had yet to be fully validated'

- * 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

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2006/07		70	71

- * 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'