

Walsall 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
- specialist provision in: health, social care and childcare; engineering and motor vehicle; construction; hairdressing and beauty therapy; visual arts; and foundation programmes.

Description of the provider

1. Walsall College was established in 1952. It is a large further education college. In Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, there are 2 adult education colleges and 21 schools for learners aged 11 to 18. There are 9 other colleges in a 15 mile radius. The college has four main campuses within Walsall.
2. The college offers courses in all the sector subject areas, except land-based provision. About one third of its learners study on level 1 provision and one fifth on level 3. Most learners are from Walsall, Wolverhampton and Birmingham. The college recruits 57% of its learners from areas of deprivation.
3. Many learners aged 16 to 18 come from schools with relatively low GCSE pass rates. The proportion of learners aged 15 achieving 5+ A* to C GCSEs in Walsall is 50% compared with the national average of 59.25% and the proportion gaining 5+ A* to C GCSEs, including functional English and mathematics is 35% compared with the national average of 45.5%.
4. According to college data for 2006/07, approximately 10,000 learners enrolled, of whom 38% were aged 16 to 18. Nearly 62% of learners studied on a part-time basis. Nearly 58% were female and over 25% were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 14% of local people from black and minority ethnic communities. About 280 learners aged 14 to 16 followed college courses on a part-time basis. The number of learners on work-based learning programmes was about 480 and on Train to Gain was 530. The college has a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in care. The college's mission is: 'We are striving to become a nationally renowned centre for vocational and technical excellence. We are committed to transforming the local economy through industry-focused skills and knowledge'.

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>Outstanding: contributory grade 1</i>

Sector subject areas

Health, social care and childcare	Good: Grade 2
Engineering and motor vehicle	Good: Grade 2
Construction	Good: Grade 2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Outstanding: Grade 1
Visual arts	Good: Grade 2
Foundation programmes	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The overall effectiveness of provision is good. This agrees with the college's judgement. Achievement and standards are good. Most success rates have improved significantly during the last three years and are high. Apprenticeship and Train to Gain success rates have also improved and are high but advanced apprenticeship success rates are low. Most learners make good progress, produce good work and enjoy college. Learners aged 14 to 16 achieve satisfactorily but few progress to college courses at 16. Attendance is satisfactory.
6. Teaching and learning are good. Most lesson planning is thorough. Work-based learners develop their vocational skills well. The best lessons challenge learners and they benefit from the very good use of information and learning technology (ILT). In the less effective lessons, teachers' organisation is weak and the range of learning activities is narrow. The internal lesson observation system is very effective. Staff analyse learners' additional learning needs thoroughly and arrange support promptly. Teachers assess learners' work thoroughly.
7. The approach to educational and social inclusion is good. The college engages well with learners from diverse social backgrounds and areas of high deprivation. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good, and of employers is excellent. Enrichment is very good. The curriculum is limited in some areas.
8. Learners receive good advice, guidance and support. The group tutorial structure is effective and promotes the Every Child Matters themes well. Managers make too few observations of tutorials to inform improvements. Support for deaf learners and those with dyslexia is very good.
9. Leadership and management are good. The management of work-based learning is also good. The college promotes equality of opportunity outstandingly well. Quality assurance systems are good. Self-assessment is mostly accurate. Performance management systems are underdeveloped. Governors are very effective. Value for money is good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college has good capacity to improve. Particularly good leadership and management have resulted in significantly improved success rates which are mostly high. The college has addressed the issues identified at the last inspection successfully. The action plan relates well to the self-assessment report and managers monitor actions to completion.
11. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, although strengths are overstated in a few cases and some areas for improvement are not identified sufficiently. Managers apply the good quality assurance processes rigorously. The college is at the centre of Walsall's regeneration plans. The strong

collaborative links forged with strategic partners, employers and community groups, place the college on an excellent platform to promote further improvements.

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

12. The college has made good progress in promoting improvement since the last inspection. Pass rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on levels 1 and 2 courses are now well above the national average. Staff apply quality assurance systems rigorously and have brought about steady improvements in teaching and learning, especially in those areas where poor teaching was identified during the last inspection. The setting of targets to improve learners' achievement is satisfactory. The uptake of additional learning support in literacy and numeracy has increased significantly and tutorial arrangements are now effective.

Key strengths

- significant improvements in most success rates to high levels
- high and improving apprenticeship and Train to Gain success rates
- good teaching and learning
- good arrangements for lesson observations
- highly effective learner involvement strategy
- outstanding promotion of equality and diversity, which benefits all learners
- very effective collaborative partnerships, especially with employers
- outstanding hairdressing and beauty therapy provision.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low advanced apprenticeship framework completion success rates
- underdeveloped performance management systems
- the balance of emphasis on strengths and areas for improvement in the self-assessment report
- the quality of the literacy and numeracy provision.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Learners aged 14 to 16

Satisfactory: grade 3

13. Achievement and standards are good and this agrees with the college's self-assessment. Most success rates have risen significantly in the last three years, except for adults on very short courses. According to college data for 2006/07, success rates are very high on level 1 courses and for adults on level 3 provision and are high on level 2 courses. Success rates on short courses are close to the national average. Retention rates are high for adults on levels 1 and 3 courses and for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 2. They are just below the national average for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses. Pass rates are high on level 1 courses for learners aged 16 to 18, but are low for these learners on short (5-24 weeks) courses. The proportions of learners gaining high grades are low, except for adults on level 1 courses and learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses. The progress made by learners compared with their prior attainment on entry to the college is good, but is very variable.
14. Success rates for learners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds have risen significantly since the last inspection and most are close to those of learners from a white background. Learners from black Caribbean and black other backgrounds, however, have success rates just below their national averages. Learners receiving additional learning support have higher success rates than those not receiving support. Most learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities succeed well, except for the few learners with mental health, mobility and multiple difficulties. The success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 are satisfactory. Their progression to the college at age 16 is low. Key skills success rates have improved in the last three years and are above the national average.
15. The apprenticeship framework and timely completion success rates have risen and are high, whereas the framework completion success rates for advanced apprenticeships are low. Train to Gain success rates have risen and are very high.
16. The overall standard of learners' work is good. It is very high in hairdressing and beauty therapy and in visual arts. Work-related skills are high in health, social care and childcare and in work-based learning. The strong vocational focus of the college enables many learners to achieve good economic well-being. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good. Learners enjoy their courses and college life.

Quality of provision Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Learners aged 14 to 16 Satisfactory: grade 3

17. The quality of provision is good and this agrees with the college's self-assessment. Teaching and learning are good. This also agrees with the self-assessment. Most lesson planning is thorough. Trainer assessors and employers in work-based learning develop learners' vocational skills particularly effectively. Most learners enjoy their lessons.
18. In the best lessons, teachers provide clear introductions and explanations and take good account of learners' individual learning needs. Their questioning checks learners' understanding effectively. Lessons are challenging and the use of ILT to improve learning is very good.
19. In the less effective lessons, teachers' organisation is weak and the range of teaching and learning approaches is narrow. Teachers do not motivate and stimulate the interest of learners. They do not meet individual learners' needs and the use of ILT is poor. In work-based learning, written learning targets are insufficiently precise to help learners improve.
20. Arrangements to observe the quality of teaching and learning are good. Advanced practitioners observe all teachers and provide comprehensive feedback. Managers' analysis of lesson observation outcomes is particularly thorough. In order to maintain the accuracy of observation judgements, observers receive regular training, conduct paired observations and hold thorough moderation meetings. Observations do not cover the training which employers provide in the workplace.
21. The procedures to identify learners' additional learning needs are thorough and learners receive support promptly. The uptake of additional support is high. The range of support to meet learners' additional learning needs is wide.
22. The assessment of learners' work is accurate. Most staff assess learners' prior knowledge effectively to plan learning. Managers and staff hold regular meetings to ensure the consistency of assessment and verification. Reports to parents, guardians and carers on learners' performance are helpful.
23. The college's responsiveness to the needs and interests of learners and employers is good, which agrees with the self-assessed judgement. Excellent engagement with employers leads to the development of innovative courses which enhance learners' vocational skills and meet industry's needs.
24. The college has a carefully considered curriculum which provides good progression routes from entry level to foundation degrees. The provision is slightly limited in construction and visual arts. The college provision for learners aged 14 to 16, whilst satisfactory, is being redesigned to be more closely aligned with its academies.

25. Enrichment is very good. All learners benefit from the provision and they value it highly. The highly effective learner involvement strategy enables learners' full participation in shaping the college environment. The effective course representative system ensures concerns are addressed swiftly. Learners make a good contribution to the life of the college and the community.
26. The approach to educational and social inclusion is good. College initiatives in areas of high deprivation engage new learners from diverse social backgrounds successfully, enabling them to gain new skills and confidence. Partnerships with community organisations widen participation effectively. The strong focus on anti-bullying, led by learners, contributes well to a safe learning environment.
27. Guidance and support for learners are good, which does not agree with the college's judgement of outstanding. Very good information, advice and guidance and effective initial assessment ensure learners study appropriate programmes. Induction is very effective in preparing learners for course and health and safety requirements. The college reinforces equality and diversity very well through a strong emphasis on a respect agreement. Learners receive good career and progression advice.
28. The well managed and comprehensive range of welfare services supports learners effectively. A 'support register' identifies learners needing pastoral support effectively. The college provides very good support for learners with a range of additional learning needs. Support for deaf learners and learners with dyslexia is very good.
29. The well structured group tutorial programme promotes the Every Child Matters themes usefully. This includes the good reinforcement of healthy lifestyles. Individual tutorials have a common learner record, which learners and tutors use well to set course goals and specific targets. Tutorials are monitored by an appropriate audit, but managers make too few observations of tutorials to inform improvements.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

*Equality of opportunity
Learners aged 14 to 16*

*Outstanding: grade 1
Satisfactory: grade 3*

30. Leadership and management are good. This agrees with the college's self-assessment grade. The management of work-based learning is good. The acting principal and senior managers have managed a major restructuring of provision very successfully. They have set a very effective strategic direction and take a strong lead in the regeneration of the local area. Managers work very responsively with local strategic and community groups and employers. They are aware of the need to improve the management of the provision for learners aged 14 to 16, judged as satisfactory, and are developing this provision with schools for 2008/09. Leaders and managers have raised

expectations and have instilled a professional culture, focused on learners and raising standards. Curriculum management is good.

31. Quality assurance systems are good. Staff teams set high standards and challenging targets to measure their performance and comprehensive audits ensure these are met. Management information systems are effective. The internal lesson observation system is thorough. Self-assessment is broadly accurate, although in a few cases strengths are overstated and areas for improvement are not always identified sufficiently.
32. Managers have invested significantly in raising the skills of staff. Staff development opportunities are extensive and enable staff to share good practice. Performance management systems have improved since the last inspection, but are underdeveloped. Only just over half of business support staff have received appraisals. The evaluation of the impact of staff development activities is not yet implemented fully.
33. Equality of opportunity is outstanding. The college's response to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability 2002 Act (SENDA) is excellent. Managers and governors give equality and diversity a high priority and embed them within the regular monitoring, review and self-assessment procedures. This has led to significant improvements in success rates for learners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, and for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Links with local community groups have widened participation for vulnerable and hard-to-reach learners. Managers monitor the performance of learners by gender, disability and ethnic background thoroughly. Safeguarding procedures comply with current guidance and staff and governors have received appropriate training. Health and safety procedures are comprehensive and implemented effectively.
34. Governors provide high levels of support and challenge and are rigorous in their scrutiny of college performance. They have a wide range of expertise and are instrumental in ensuring the college's continued development. The proportion of female governors is low.
35. Financial management is sound. Success rates on many courses are high. Value for money is good. Managers have maintained acceptable standards of accommodation. Through the development of its academies and highly successful links with employers, managers have secured outstanding industry-standard equipment and resources. The investment in information and communication technology (ICT) equipment is significant, but in some areas learners have insufficient access to computers.

Sector subject areas

Health, social care and childcare

Good: Grade 2

Context

36. Full-time and part-time courses are available for teaching assistants and learners in health, social care and childcare from entry level to higher education. Of approximately 2,400 learners, 1,900 are part-time, 1,880 are adults and 600 learners are aged 16 to 18. About 80 learners are on level 1 courses, 320 on level 2, 250 on level 3 and 30 on level 4 courses.

Strengths

- high success rates on part-time courses
- good acquisition of workplace skills
- good teaching and learning
- very effective application of assessment and verification
- very effective leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- low pass rates on levels 1 and 2 courses
- insufficient access to ICT in lessons
- unsatisfactory accommodation for some early years learners.

Achievement and standards

37. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Adult part-time courses, including the certificate in nutrition and health, certificate in preparation for childcare and national vocational qualifications in early years, and health and social care, have high success rates. Pass rates on introductory and first diploma courses in health and social care are low.

38. Learners acquire good workplace skills. They develop in confidence and use their initiative to plan and meet children's needs. They apply their background knowledge to their work setting well. Employers value highly their learners' ability to meet clients' needs in different settings. The standard of learners' written work is satisfactory. Learners make good progress. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

39. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons well and imaginatively and maintain learners' interest. In health and social care lessons, learners participate well in role play to practise the skills required in their work settings. A childcare lesson made good use of case study material to discuss the safeguarding of young children. Teachers enable learners to reflect on their practice in work settings and to use their experiences well to contribute to group work. Learners are highly motivated. Learners have insufficient access to

ICT in lessons. They are unable to undertake independent research to support their learning.

40. Assessment and verification are very effective. Teachers provide detailed written feedback and learners are very aware of their progress. Teachers plan the regular assessments well.
41. The provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. The college has a comprehensive range of courses to meet both learners' and employers' needs. Learners can progress from entry level to level 4 qualifications. Enrichment activities are satisfactory and meet learners' needs.
42. Learners receive good support to help them with their work. Initial advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners with additional needs receive good support. Tutorials are satisfactory and learners value the opportunity to speak individually with staff.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are good. Managers have a strong focus on quality improvement. They set clear directions for their highly motivated staff and have effected improvements. Advanced practitioners and the subject learning coach share good practice very well. Some classroom accommodation for childcare courses is unsatisfactory; it is cramped with poor access. The self-assessment process is inclusive and is broadly accurate. The CoVE is managed effectively. The partnerships based on it are thriving and they lead to initiatives which meet the needs of employers. Learners benefit from the resources obtained through the CoVE.

Engineering and motor vehicle

Good: Grade 2

Context

44. Courses in engineering at levels 1, 2 and 3 are available through part-time day, evening and block release attendance. Full-time motor vehicle courses are offered at levels 1 and 2. Of the 240 full-time learners, 29 are adults and 5% are female. Of the 632 part-time learners, 470 are adults and over 8% are female. Vocational courses are offered for 13 school pupils. Approximately 100 learners are on work-based apprenticeships, of whom 3% are female.

Strengths

- high success rates on motor vehicle level 1 courses
- very high success rates for engineering apprentices
- excellent application of ILT in motor vehicle theory lessons
- good links with industry
- good management actions to effect change
- good design and prototyping resources.

Areas for improvement

- low success rate on national certificate in electrical/electronic engineering
- insufficient range of motor vehicles to meet industry standards.

Achievement and standards

45. Achievement and standards are good. The success rate on the level 1 diploma in motor vehicle studies is high, and on the level 1 certificate in automotive vehicle maintenance is very high. The success rate on the national certificate in electrical/electronic engineering at level 3 is very low. The progression to higher level college engineering courses is good. The success rate for engineering apprentices is very high. Many engineering apprentices progress to the advanced level. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. The standard of apprentices' work is good. Learners' attitude and behaviour are very good.

Quality of provision

46. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In motor vehicle, the application of ILT is excellent. The software provides learners with animated images of complex components, enabling interaction and providing checks on learning. Teachers design lessons to promote problem-solving skills, encourage learners and provide suitable challenge for a range of abilities. Teaching in practical lessons is satisfactory. Work-based training is good. Apprentices advance quickly to complete complex tasks independently. Assessment is satisfactory and internal verification is robust.
47. The provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. The college has formed good links with industry which enrich the curriculum. Managers

have realigned the curriculum to meet local needs and provide flexible modes of attendance.

48. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Initial assessment and additional support arrangements are effective. Individual support from teachers in lessons is good and the monitoring of learners' progress, using review documentation, is good. The computerised assessment tracking system is good, providing ease of access to learners' data. There are, however, inconsistencies in the quality of target setting.

Leadership and management

49. Leadership and management are good. Managers have improved provision significantly since the last inspection. They have good links with industry. Teachers have good vocational experience and are well qualified. Resources for teaching engineering design and prototyping are good, providing enhanced modelling facilities. Accommodation is spacious. The process of risk assessment is underdeveloped and review dates are missed. The range of workshop motor vehicles is insufficient. Vehicles are outdated and some are no longer in a roadworthy condition, preventing learners from working to industry standards. Managers and teachers make good use of the management information system in planning and progress reviews. The promotion of equal opportunities is good.

Construction

Good: Grade 2

Context

50. Courses are available in trowel trades, wood occupations, painting and decorating, electrical installation and technician studies at levels 1 and 2. The number of enrolments is 650. Most learners are aged 16 to 18. Approximately 85 learners are on apprenticeship programmes and a few brickwork learners follow a Train to Gain programme. About 35 learners from 9 local schools attend an introductory programme in construction crafts.

Strengths

- high success rates in 2006/07
- good teaching and learning
- excellent resources to support learning
- particularly effective partnership arrangements
- highly effective actions to improve provision.

Areas for improvement

- low advanced apprenticeship success rates
- limited range of provision.

Achievement and standards

51. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates for 2006/07 are high. The certificate in electro-technology and the NVQ in decorative operations have very high success rates. Apprenticeship success rates are above the national average. However, success rates for the small number of advanced apprentices over the last three years have been below the national average and were very low in 2006/07. Key skills success rates have increased significantly in the current year, from a low success rate in 2006/07.

52. The standard of learners' work in college is satisfactory and for apprentices in the workplace is good. Learners make satisfactory progress. Progression from levels 1 to 2 is good. Learners' success is celebrated regularly within college and through external recognition in national competitions.

Quality of provision

53. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers manage and deliver lessons well. All lessons have detailed lesson plans with outcomes cross-referenced to other units. Teachers use group profiles and update them frequently. They use learners' preferred learning styles to inform lesson planning. Teachers state lesson aims and objectives clearly and refer to them frequently. They use a wide range of learning strategies to involve learners and check their understanding.

54. Accommodation and resources to support learning are excellent. All classrooms and workshops are resourced to a very high standard. In carpentry and joinery practical lessons, teachers make excellent use of electronic media to reinforce key learning objectives continually. Assessment is frequent and satisfactory. The monitoring of learners' progress is comprehensive and good.
55. The provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. The partnership arrangements covering national and local employers and higher education establishments are particularly effective in enhancing the curriculum. The range of provision, however, is limited to construction crafts at levels 1 and 2 and there are no plumbing courses.
56. Learners' support is good. Any additional needs are identified at initial assessment and are met promptly by specialist staff. Construction staff support numeracy and communication learning needs well and monitor progress through individual reviews effectively.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are good. Highly effective actions to improve provision since the last inspection have raised success rates and improved learners' experiences. Communication within the sections and with senior staff is good. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Resources are outstanding. Staff are well qualified and well supported to develop their skills further. Access to management information is available to all staff. The standard of course reviews is good. Data are used effectively to improve performance. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate; it clearly identifies strengths but understates areas for improvement.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

58. A range of full- and part-time hairdressing and beauty therapy courses is offered at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3. Some 570 full-time and 320 part-time learners are enrolled. Most learners are aged 16 to 18. Courses include nail treatments, advanced nail treatments, cosmetic make-up, Swedish body massage, and reflexology. Hairdressing and beauty therapy provision is offered to school pupils aged 14 to 16. Apprenticeships are available.

Strengths

- very high success rates
- excellent standards of creative work
- outstanding teaching and learning
- excellent focus on commercial training
- highly effective electronic tracking of learners' progress
- extensive range of learning opportunities
- particularly effective support
- excellent curriculum management.

Areas for improvement

- low advanced apprenticeship success rates.

Achievement and standards

59. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates are very high and have improved significantly over the past three years. Apprenticeship success rates are high, but success rates for the small number of advanced apprentices are low. Learners' progression is excellent, especially into employment. They are enthusiastic and take responsibility for setting their own challenging targets. Learners with learning difficulties have progressed to level 3.

60. Learners work creatively and to a very high standard, reflecting current commercial practices. Level 1 hairdressing learners have excellent manipulative skills, and beauty therapy learners carry out a range of luxury treatments confidently. Creative cutting on blocks is outstanding. Competition work is exemplary and is well used for publication and portfolios. Teachers set exemplary standards. Learners' personal presentation is stylish and professional. Salon etiquette is excellent.

Quality of provision

61. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers make lessons very interesting and motivate learners very well. Lessons start using entertaining recapitulation quizzes. Teachers present topics and demonstrations incrementally and they challenge learners' understanding at each stage effectively. Assessments are robust and teachers' feedback explains clearly how learners can make

improvements. Teachers pay significant attention to detail and commercial speed.

62. The provision to meet the needs and interests of learners and employers is outstanding. The focus on commercial training to meet employers' needs is exceptional. The college employs former learners as stylists in the busy commercial salon and learners benefit from observing their skills. Level 3 learners manage the salons very effectively and develop good business skills and financial understanding. Treatments in the beauty salons reflect the high standards in the spa industry and learners use a selection of products, including hair and skin treatments for people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Learners benefit from an extensive range of learning and enrichment opportunities, including community projects, training at prestigious commercial venues, overseas trips and fashion shows.
63. Guidance and support for learners are outstanding. Staff address learners' needs very effectively by providing flexible and additional support sessions. Tutorials are highly effective and include health, financial and lifestyle issues. An innovative electronic tracking system is highly effective in recording learners' assessments and progress, including additional support requirements.

Leadership and management

64. Leadership and management are outstanding. Through strong leadership and clear accountability, highly motivated teachers play an active role in improving learning. Retention has increased significantly. Excellent communication ensures all learners and employers are well informed. Staff embed health and safety, and equality and diversity aspects well throughout the provision. Through rigorous standardisation of lesson observations and sharing of best practice, learning is inspirational. Staff receive good support from mentors. The self-assessment report is generally accurate.

Visual arts

Good: Grade 2

Context

65. The college offers full-time BTEC introductory and first diploma courses in art and design at levels 1 and 2. At level 3, BTEC national diplomas in art and design, graphics, fashion and clothing and 3-D design, and the BTEC foundation diploma in art and design are available. Part-time courses are offered for learners with learning difficulties. Approximately 230 learners are on visual arts courses. About 180 learners are aged 16 to 18 and 45 are adults.

Strengths

- excellent standards of learners' work
- high success rates on levels 1 and 2 courses
- good teaching and learning
- innovative tracking of attainment to support learners' progress
- excellent integration of employer and gallery links to engage learners in professional practice
- strong curriculum leadership.

Areas for improvement

- low retention rates on level 3 courses
- insufficient rigour in course action plans.

Achievement and standards

66. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on BTEC introductory, first diploma and national diploma in art and design are high. Pass rates on the BTEC diploma in foundation studies are high. Success rates on the national diploma courses in fashion, 3-D design and graphics are low, largely because of low retention rates. The standard of learners' visual arts work is excellent. Their sketchbooks show experimental and conceptual development leading to good reflective practice. Their development of core drawing skills and their work with a wide range of materials are strengths. Graphics work is finished well to a professional standard.

Quality of provision

67. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons well and link art and design practice to professional and industrial contexts. They integrate the Every Child Matters themes well. For example, the introduction to design unit explores bullying leading to the design of an anti-bullying logo very effectively. Teachers use the virtual learning environment to monitor and track learners' progression particularly well. The assessment of learners' work is thorough and detailed and aids their progress.
68. The provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. The links with local schools, employers and galleries are excellent. A photography project,

called 'The Big Picture', with a local art gallery requires learners to use the change in local industry as the subject matter for visual images. A visiting artists scheme enhances learners' vocational experience. Learners have set up their own 'artists' press' to produce editions of prints to sell to the public. The range of full-time provision is good and enables learners to progress.

69. Guidance and support for learners are good. Tutorial provision is good. The effective one-to-one tutorial process ensures all learners receive support to progress. The learners' experience action planner enables learners to track their development on the course. All reviews use target-setting effectively. Initial assessment and guidance are thorough.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are good. Managers provide good strategic leadership and successful development of the curriculum towards new qualifications. The department has regular course team and management meetings which aid communication across courses. The self-assessment process is effective and the report identifies strengths and weaknesses well. Some course action plans, however, are underdeveloped and lack rigour. Specialist resources are very good. The studios are large and open and the wide range of specialist equipment is good.

Foundation programmes

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

71. Courses are available in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) from entry to level 2. These include intensive courses, short and long courses and part-time day and evening courses. Literacy and numeracy support is available for learners with hearing impairment, hard-to-reach learners aged 16 to 18 and cross-college learners. Approximately 1,550 learners are enrolled; two thirds studying literacy and numeracy and one third studying ESOL. Approximately half the learners are women and half are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Strengths

- high success rates on levels 1 and 2 literacy and level 1 numeracy long courses
- high success rates on ESOL courses
- good development of learners' skills in ESOL
- good teaching and learning in ESOL
- good literacy and numeracy support for learners with hearing impairment and hard-to-engage learners aged 16 to 18
- very effective management action to improve key skills and ESOL.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on levels 1 and 2 literacy and numeracy short programmes and level 2 numeracy long courses
- poor attendance and punctuality on several courses
- insufficient use of ILT
- insufficient challenge and extension activities for more able learners in literacy and numeracy
- narrow range of learning activities and resources on numeracy programmes
- insufficient monitoring to support quality improvement in literacy and numeracy short programmes.

Achievement and standards

72. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are high on levels 1 and 2 literacy and numeracy and level 2 numeracy long courses. Success rates are high on ESOL courses. The development of learners' language skills in ESOL courses is good. Learners develop their communication and literacy skills successfully. Most can attempt set tasks and demonstrate their newly acquired skills well. Success rates on levels 1 and 2 literacy and numeracy short courses and level 2 numeracy long courses are low. The development of learners' skills and their standards of work in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are poor on several literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses.

Quality of provision

73. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but are good on ESOL courses, where lesson planning is detailed and thorough. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods effectively to meet learners' needs. Teachers manage lessons well and learners benefit from regular checks on learning. Learners are well motivated and make good progress. The range of learning activities in numeracy lessons is narrow. Teachers do not plan for a wide variety of activities and are over-reliant on worksheets. They do not challenge the more able literacy and numeracy learners sufficiently. Learners have insufficient access to ILT.
74. The range of provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. In ESOL provision, the curriculum provides improved flexibility and accessibility for learners. Both unit and full qualifications are available to meet learners' requirements.
75. Guidance and support for learners are good. In particular, literacy and numeracy support for learners with hearing impairment and hard-to-engage learners aged 16 to 18 is good.

Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have improved key skills and ESOL provision. The key skills strategy is well considered and success rates have improved significantly. The monitoring of data to support improvement in literacy and numeracy short programmes is insufficient. The emphasis on improving teaching and learning is insufficient. The self-assessment process is inclusive, but the report has an over-emphasis on strengths and insufficient identification of areas for improvement.

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	1613	62	62	0	1673	48	61	-13
	05/06	1195	76	68	8	1029	72	67	5
	06/07*	1009	83	N/A	N/A	583	82	N/A	N/A
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	51	67	64	3	-	-	-	-
	05/06	30	47	70	-23	-	-	-	-
	06/07*	-	-	N/A	N/A	-	-	N/A	N/A
NVQs	04/05	196	71	66	5	79	76	71	5
	05/06	190	83	70	13	41	78	72	6
	06/07*	151	83	N/A	N/A	97	80	N/A	N/A
Other	04/05	1366	61	61	0	1591	47	61	-14
	05/06	975	76	67	9	987	71	67	4
	06/07*	858	83	N/A	N/A	486	83	N/A	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	1401	58	61	-3	1632	51	60	-9
	05/06	1347	68	65	3	2495	75	66	9
	06/07*	1166	75	N/A	N/A	2268	74	N/A	N/A
GCSEs	04/05	114	72	66	6	83	75	64	11
	05/06	97	66	69	-3	73	82	67	15
	06/07*	56	59	N/A	N/A	74	64	N/A	N/A
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	48	44	67	-23	54	91	65	26
	05/06	44	45	66	-21	-	-	-	-
	06/07*	41	66	N/A	N/A	12	58	N/A	N/A
NVQs	04/05	255	56	56	0	282	57	62	-5
	05/06	300	67	64	3	288	67	69	-2
	06/07*	263	82	N/A	N/A	576	82	N/A	N/A
Other	04/05	984	57	59	-2	1213	46	58	-12
	05/06	906	70	63	7	2131	75	65	10
	06/07*	806	74	N/A	N/A	1606	75	N/A	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	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	04/05	1396	55	66	-11	1207	49	57	-8
	05/06	1094	65	68	-3	1048	59	62	-3
	06/07*	942	73	N/A	N/A	1054	75	N/A	N/A
A/A2 Levels	04/05	134	77	85	-8	44	74	74	0
	05/06	136	74	86	-12	34	76	74	2
	06/07*	-	-	N/A	N/A	-	-	N/A	N/A
AS Levels	04/05	413	55	64	-9	89	51	53	-2
	05/06	134	44	64	-20	-	-	-	-
	06/07*	-	-	N/A	N/A	-	-	N/A	N/A
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	205	52	60	-8	37	32	52	-20
	05/06	139	66	68	-2	21	48	54	-6
	06/07*	-	-	N/A	N/A	-	-	N/A	N/A
NVQs	04/05	77	73	54	19	161	59	55	4
	05/06	87	85	66	19	154	79	65	14
	06/07*	94	87	N/A	N/A	178	78	N/A	N/A
Other	04/05	567	48	57	-9	876	46	57	-11
	05/06	598	65	62	3	832	56	62	-6
	06/07*	845	72	N/A	N/A	875	75	N/A	N/A

* college data

Table 4

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

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	College NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	College framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	26	62	48	46	34
		timely	29	48	31	38	22
	05/06	overall	41	24	53	20	44
		timely	46	15	34	13	27
	06/07	overall	43	58	64	44	58
		timely	50	38	43	36	37
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	139	47	51	38	39
		timely	137	18	29	13	22
	05/06	overall	264	56	58	52	52
		timely	270	44	38	39	34
	06/07	overall	194	71	65	69	61
		timely	180	61	47	57	44

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

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

Table 5

Success rates on work-based learning 'Train to Gain' programmes managed by the college 2007 to 2008.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	College NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2006/07	overall	532	88
		timely	259	88
	2007/08 (8 months)	overall	577	91
		timely	577	91

Note: 2007-08 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first 3 months or greater of the LSC contract year

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

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

*** Includes 'Train to Gain' long course NVQ provision, but not 'Skills for Life'