

# NEW College Pontefract

Inspection report

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

#### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

## Description of the provider

1. NEW College Pontefract is a sixth form college, established in 1987, offering provision for approximately 30 high schools located in the area of North East Wakefield. The GCSE pass rate for five grades at A\* to C in the area served by the college is close to the national average but below the national average when English and mathematics are included. Wakefield has 13 out of its 17 wards in the highest quartile of deprived wards nationally. Approximately half of the students at the college are from disadvantaged postcodes. Approximately 4% of all students are from minority ethnic backgrounds which is twice that of the local population.
2. The college offers courses in 10 of the 15 sector subject areas. In the year beginning 2006, there were 1,594 students aged 16 to 18 on roll, predominantly full-time. Adults accounted for less than 1% of the college's enrolments. In 2006, 87.5% of students aged 16 to 18 were studying at level 3 and 12.5% at level 2.
3. The college's mission statement is: 'we achieve excellence by putting our students first'.

## Summary of grades awarded

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

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. Overall effectiveness is good. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates at level 3, which comprises the majority of the college's provision, improved in 2007 and are in line with national average levels. Pass rates on GCE A level courses are at the high national average. Students enjoy attending college and they achieve well; grades are above those predicted by prior attainment at Key Stage 4, although there is some variation in performance across subjects. Retention rates on GCE AS courses have been below average but are improving to around the average for similar colleges. Teaching and learning are closely monitored and are improving. Students receive high quality academic and pastoral support. The choice of subjects at advanced level and intermediate level is good and well suited to the needs and interests of learners. Enrichment activities are popular and contribute to students' enjoyment of college life. Leadership and management are good overall, but there are weaknesses in a few areas of curriculum management. Quality assurance arrangements have been strengthened. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, but there is variability in the quality of a few curriculum reports. Information systems provide timely and accurate data which are used well by senior managers and most curriculum leaders to monitor all aspects of college performance.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

5. The college demonstrates good capacity to improve its provision for students. There is a renewed and clear focus on the need to raise standards and achievement. The lesson observation process has resulted in much good and better teaching and learning, although more needs to be done to ensure greater impact in areas of underperformance. Targets are challenging yet realistic. Most of the actions to address weaknesses are clearly focused. Quality improvement measures have resulted in improved retention rates, especially on GCE AS courses. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate.

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

6. The college has made good progress in addressing areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. Pass and retention rates on key skills courses at level 2 have improved markedly. The college's well established lesson observation scheme indicates that most lessons are well planned. Pass rates at grades A\* to C in GCSE English are well above the national average. The proportion of students achieving a high grade pass in GCSE mathematics has been below the national average for two years. However, the most recent examination results indicate an improvement and high grade pass rates are now above the national average. The quality assurance process has been improved and strengthened. Governors have established a

quality and standards committee, they are involved in the moderation of the self-assessment report and regularly attend college events.

### Key strengths

- consistently outstanding achievement in GCE A-level English, psychology and law
- good progress made by many students
- much good teaching
- high quality support for students
- good additional learning support
- effective management action to improve performance in targeted areas.

### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- inconsistency in performance across subjects
- satisfactory and inadequate curriculum management in a few areas
- weaknesses in self-assessment in a few subjects.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

7. Achievement and standards are good; this agrees with the college's own judgement. The majority of students are following long level 3 courses including GCE AS, A level and applied GCE A level. Success rates for GCE A level 3 courses are in line with the high national average. Success rates for GCE AS courses are slightly below the national levels. The college has rightly identified that, in the main, this is due to low retention and is tackling this successfully. Since the last inspection, many learners have achieved grades at GCE A level that are higher than predicted from their prior GCSE grades. Performance is good in many subjects and in GCE A-level English, psychology and law it is consistently outstanding. However, the college is aware that there is too much variation across subjects. Performance in mathematics, art, music and performance studies is not good enough. Action plans are in place to address this issue. Success rates on level 2 courses are around the national average. In GCSE English, the proportion of students who gain a grade A\* to C is high. Key skills pass rates in information communication technology (ICT) at level 2 are high. Progression to further or higher education is good. Attendance at lessons is good at 91%.

### Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

8. Teaching and learning are good overall. The college has a well established lesson observation scheme. Outcomes of observations are analysed carefully and inform both individual teacher and college action plans. There is effective sharing of good practice through regular planned staff development activities and weekly best practice workshop sessions. However, the college is aware that there is still too much satisfactory teaching and that further improvements are needed. In the best lessons, teachers use a good range of teaching methods to make lessons interesting and to support learning. Lessons are well organised, purposeful and linked closely to what students have to do to pass examinations. Students are set individual targets which are challenging and their progress against these is monitored carefully. Most teachers provide students with clear feedback on how to improve their work.
9. The college offers a broad range of GCE AS and A levels which are well matched to the needs of its students. There are 38 different GCE AS and A level subjects, four applied GCE A levels, and 12 subjects offered at intermediate level. Students enjoy a broad variety of enrichment activities which include charity and voluntary work; participation rates are high. There is good access to extensive sports facilities to help keep students healthy, and plenty of opportunity to enjoy and achieve success through the various team sports. A newly established gifted and talented programme provides appropriate challenges for high ability students. Learning resources are generally of a good standard. Educational and social inclusion are good. The proportion of black and minority ethnic (BME) students at the college is



greater than that found in the local area. Partnership arrangements with several local 11 to 16 schools are effective; increasing numbers of school pupils aged 14 to 16 study AS mathematics and GCSE German or Spanish. The college has been successful in extending its work experience programme, further developing useful links with many local employers.

10. Inspectors agree with the college's own assessment that all students benefit from good advice, guidance and support from specialist staff in student services, subject teachers and personal tutors. Staff work very closely together to respond quickly to individual student needs. Relationships with feeder schools are good. Induction procedures help new students settle quickly into their courses and college life. Effective assessment of students' learning support needs is completed at enrolment and through self or teacher referral. Good arrangements are in place to meet students' additional and specific learning needs including dyslexia. The impact of additional support is monitored closely; data indicate that achievement of students receiving support are in line with their peers. Helpful information on career and higher education opportunities enable students to make informed choices about their future economic well-being. Support for students applying to university is very good. Students make a positive contribution to the college and wider community through various charitable events. Communication between staff and students are effective. There are good opportunities for students to express their views and exert influence on a range of matters including whether smoking should be allowed on the college campus. Although pastoral support for students is strong, the college is aware that quality of group tutorials is too variable and is taking action to tackle this.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grades:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Good: Grade 2*

11. Leadership and management are good overall. The governors and senior leaders set a clear direction for their college which is clearly communicated to all staff. Governance is effective. Governors scrutinise the full range of the college's work and ensure it is financially sound. The quality assurance framework covers all aspects of the college's provision. Recent, focused quality improvement actions have had a positive impact on some specific areas, most noticeably in improving retention in the current year. The approach to self-assessment has been improved and strengthened; it is well understood by all staff and is beginning to be embedded. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. However, the rigour with which some curriculum areas assess their own provision is variable, for example, the strengths identified are not always sufficiently significant. Action plans rightly focus on raising achievement but do not always identify actions to address weaknesses in other aspects of provision. The lesson observation process is well established and is leading to improvements. However, the college is aware that it has not had sufficient impact in a few curriculum areas.

12. Much curriculum planning, especially in English, psychology, law and business, is good and clearly focused on raising achievement further. Management information is accurate and timely and used effectively by many curriculum leaders to monitor all aspects of performance. However, leadership and management at curriculum level are satisfactory overall. In too many subjects there has been a persistence of satisfactory, and in some cases, weak provision. This is recognised at senior level and the issue is beginning to be addressed.
13. Human and physical resources are good. Teaching staff are well qualified and appreciate the wide range of staff development opportunities. The original accommodation is adequate; major building work has provided the college with many new, fit-for-purpose teaching facilities. Good value for money is achieved through the significant progress of most students, and the effective deployment of staff.
14. Equality of opportunity is good. The college monitors equality of opportunity and promotes diversity well. The college complies with child protection, race relations and disability discrimination legislation. The performance of different groups of learners is analysed and actions are taken to address underperformance.

## 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	47	70	64	6	52	60	56	4
	05/06	43	65	71	-6	25	44	56	-12
	06/07	35	74	*	*	...	...	...	...

\* not available

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	650	83	73	10	56	46	56	-10
	05/06	615	76	78	-2	20	60	64	-4
	06/07	578	81	*	*	3	100	*	*
GCSEs	04/05	489	86	78	8	11	73	65	8
	05/06	469	80	82	-2	13	46	66	-20
	06/07	472	82	*	*	3	100	*	*
Other	04/05	161	73	62	11	45	40	52	-12
	05/06	146	62	70	-8	7	86	61	25
	06/07	106	73	*	*	...	...	...	...

\* not available

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	5,551	83	82	1	44	75	59	16
	05/06	5,947	81	83	-2	50	66	65	1
	06/07	6,149	82	*	*	34	82	*	*
A/A2 Levels	04/05	1,869	92	92	0	18	89	76	13
	05/06	2,097	93	93	0	18	72	78	-6
	06/07	1,980	94	*	*	18	78	*	*
AS Levels	04/05	3,434	78	78	0	22	68	54	14
	05/06	3,603	74	79	-5	27	67	58	9
	06/07	3,934	77	*	*	16	88	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	245	85	74	11	1	0	...	...
	05/06	83	98	74	24	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	04/05	3	0	72	-72	3	67	56	11
	05/06	164	80	75	5	5	40	62	-22
	06/07	235	77	*	*	...	...	...	...

\* not available