

South Devon College

Inspection report

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| Provider reference | 130648 |
| Published date | December 2008 |

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Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Background information..... | 3 |
| Summary of grades awarded | 5 |
| Overall judgement..... | 6 |
| Key strengths and areas for improvement..... | 7 |
| Main findings..... | 8 |

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. South Devon College is a medium-size general further education college serving the district towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham, collectively known as Torbay, and the rural areas of South Devon. The main college campus is situated in Paignton. There is a training centre in Newton Abbot which focuses on work with employers and Entry to Employment provision (E2E). There is another E2E centre in Torquay. Three main adult and community learning centres are run in partnership with community colleges. They are located in Brixham, Paignton and Torquay.
2. The college offers courses in all sector subject areas (SSAs). Pre-entry courses are provided in all areas and many SSAs offer courses at level 4. Higher education provision has been developed in partnership with the universities of

Plymouth and Exeter. The college holds a centre of vocational excellence in construction trades and it has achieved the Training Quality Standard. The college offers work-based learning programmes in construction, motor vehicle, plumbing, engineering, marine engineering, electrical installation, hairdressing and hospitality. The college also offers Train to Gain courses and adult and community learning.

3. Torbay is characterised by extremes of wealth and poverty and it is the poorest performing economy in the South-West. There are small pockets of severe deprivation often surrounded by relative affluence. The attainment of 5 or more GCSEs graded A* to C at Key Stage 4 in 2007, at 60.9%, was slightly below the national average of 62%.
4. Approximately 7% of learners are from minority ethnic groups. This is 2% higher than in the local population.
5. The college's mission statement is 'South Devon College: inspiring our community through learning for all'.

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

6. South Devon College is an outstanding college. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates on long qualifications are high for learners of all ages. They are equally high for male and female learners and for White British and minority ethnic learners. Learners receiving additional learning support and looked after children have higher success rates than the average for the college. The standard of learners' work is generally good with some that is outstanding.
7. Teaching and learning are good. Learners enjoy their lessons and participate well. Teachers plan learning skilfully and know the needs of their learners. Teachers use information learning technology (ILT) very effectively to enhance learning. Most lessons fully engage learners and learning is good. Lessons meet individual learning needs. Assessment is rigorous and feedback helps learners to improve. Weaker lessons are not appropriately demanding and include insufficient checking of learning.
8. The needs and interests of learners are outstandingly met. The extensive range of courses and choice facilitates a high proportion of learners' progression through the levels from entry level to level 4. Enrichment provision is outstanding and many learners participate in activities. The diverse heritage backgrounds of guest speakers provide positive minority ethnic role models. A wide range of enrichment events raises learners' awareness of different cultures. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding.
9. Guidance and support are outstanding. Pre-enrolment information, advice and guidance are highly effective at enabling learners to choose the right course. Induction helps learners very effectively to settle into their courses quickly. Well focused support services are readily available. The tutorial programme is well designed and learners' progress is reviewed very effectively. Careers advice is highly effective.
10. Leadership and management are outstanding. Demanding targets for improvement are set, rigorously monitored and largely achieved. The quality assurance framework is comprehensive and sharply focused on any underperformance against college expectations. Governors are highly effective critical friends of the college, prudent and self-reflective. Equality of opportunity is outstanding and scrupulously embedded throughout the curriculum.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

11. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. The thoroughness and accuracy of the self-assessment process are outstanding, providing a clear agenda for improvement. Judgements are well supported by appropriate evidence. There is a strong focus on self-assessment in all aspects of the

college's work. Detailed and effective quality improvement plans underpin the whole process. The drive for improvement is pursued with energy and determination. Course reviews are thorough and lead to clear improvements. The college's priorities are appropriate and take full account of local needs. The traffic light framework for monitoring the progress towards and achievement of objectives is exceptionally effective. Managers and governors quickly identify areas where targets may not be met and take prompt and effective corrective action. Resources are allocated and professional development is planned to support the achievement of college objectives. The financial implications and educational case for the next phase of the college's development have been well thought through.

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

12. The effectiveness of steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection is outstanding. Highly effective leadership and management have secured improvements in all the key areas identified in the last inspection. Success rates are high for learners of all ages. Retention rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses are now in line with national rates. Retention and pass rates on AS-level and A-level courses have risen significantly and are above national norms. Average class sizes have risen steadily. Accommodation is now of high quality. Network facilities in ICT are good. The college now monitors effectively those learners who do not take up learning support. The breadth of provision is now outstanding. The overall effectiveness of the college is outstanding.

Key strengths

- high success rates
- highly effective use of information learning technology which enhances learning
- extensive curriculum range that meets the needs and interests of learners
- outstanding educational and social inclusion
- outstanding support
- outstanding governance, leadership and management
- outstanding capacity to improve
- outstanding equality of opportunity
- excellent accommodation and resources for learning.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the rigour of lesson observations.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grade:

Train to Gain

Good: Grade 2

13. Achievement and standards are outstanding and the grade identified in the college's self-assessment report is accurate. The overall success rate is high and it has improved at a faster rate than the national average since the last inspection. The success rate for long qualifications in 2007/08 for learners of all ages is high at nine percentage points above the 2006/07 national average. Success rates are high in most SSAs. They are above average on short courses and high on very short courses. Retention and pass rate trends have improved markedly since the last inspection. Average attendance was very good in 2007/08, at 89%. Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 are high and they are good on Train to Gain programmes. Progression rates for E2E learners are good. Apprenticeship framework completion rates, including timely completion rates, are outstanding. The overall success rate in key skills, at 70%, is high. The college has made particularly good progress in improving success rates in key skills at levels 1 and 2 for the high numbers of learners taking them.
14. The proportion of male learners on long qualifications, aged 16 to 18, is much higher than for female learners. Success rates are equally high for male and female learners of all ages even though nationally, male success rates are lower. Twenty-five per cent of the college's full-time equivalent learners study courses in construction and engineering and success rates are high in these areas. The value added score for the college's small A-level provision is positive but not significantly high. Learners receiving additional learning support have a higher success rate than the average for the college. The proportion of minority ethnic heritage learners exceeds that of the local community, but it is small. The success rate for all minority ethnic groups of learners combined has parity with White British learners. There is no trend of significant underperformance by any particular minority ethnic group. Learners studying English for speakers of other languages have high success rates. Success rates for looked after children are very high.
15. Progression rates for full-time learners between the levels are high with 72% progressing from level 1 to level 2 and 62% progressing from level 2 to level 3. Learner destination rates to further learning, employment and higher education are also high.
16. The standard of learners' work is generally good with some that is outstanding. Many learners confidently demonstrate practical and workplace skills that are at least good and they are knowledgeable about their subjects. Learners are articulate and sociable. Advanced learners critically analyse complex tasks very effectively. Safe practices are implemented by learners in practical areas and many learners adopt healthy lifestyles. Learners enjoy their learning.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

17. The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good and inspectors agree with the college's self-assessment grade. Teachers plan and manage learning skilfully and effectively. Many lessons include a variety of learning activities and focus well on the learning and attainment of individuals. Teachers use a good range of methods to fully engage learners and check and reinforce learning. Key skills, including the wider key skills, are carefully integrated into courses and developed very effectively in lessons. Excellent use is made of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to support learning. A strong ethos of mutual respect is evident. Equality of opportunity and awareness of different cultures is promoted well in lessons. Teaching and learning on apprenticeship programmes, Train to Gain and E2E are also good. Accommodation and specialist resources are excellent and teachers make very effective use of ILT to enhance learning. A minority of lessons lack appropriate organisation, pace and challenge and include insufficient checking of learning.
18. Assessment and internal verification are well planned and rigorous. Initial assessment is effective and the outcomes are used well by teachers to set learners' individual learning goals. Comprehensive records are kept of learners' progress and achievement. Learners' work is marked regularly and teachers provide constructive comments to help learners improve their performance. Clear reports on learners' progress are regularly sent to parents, guardians and employers. Employers who provide placements for apprenticeships support learners well in the workplace and contribute very effectively to learners' reviews.
19. Learners' additional learning needs are clearly identified and supported well. Tutors and curriculum learning assistants work effectively together to provide well structured support for learners with additional learning needs. Additional support needs are well documented and learners' progress is monitored regularly and effectively, with appropriate targets set for improvement.
20. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are comprehensive and well established. Lesson observation records are analysed and used to plan and provide good support for development needs. Good use is made of other colleges and external agencies to evaluate and moderate teaching observations but the quality of observed lessons is sometimes over graded.
21. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The curriculum is extensive. Courses are available in most SSAs from entry level to level 4. Curriculum planning and review are very responsive to meeting the needs of learners, employers, the local community and Government requirements. The college readily embraces collaboration with schools. It provides the new creative and media diploma at levels 1 to 3 and successful courses for school students aged 14 to 16.
22. Enrichment activities are outstanding and take-up is high. The innovative programme involves many international and national visits for learners as well as sporting, cultural and charitable events. Activities are planned carefully to

enable learners, including those with disabilities and part-time learners, to participate. Visiting speakers and events enrich learners' awareness of different cultures and they include positive role models from different ethnic heritages. Learners make a very positive contribution to the college and external communities and they are well prepared to achieve economic well-being.

23. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. The college works effectively with partners to successfully include learners from under-represented groups. Effective arrangements include flexible start times, easy access to computers and the VLE and high quality support for learners. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is higher than in the local population. Programmes for learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are good.
24. Guidance and support are outstanding. The college provides a wide range of services to meet the individual support needs of learners. Pre-enrolment information, advice and guidance are highly effective at enabling learners to make well informed choices about course selection. Induction very effectively prepares learners for their courses. Individual learner needs are identified accurately and prompt support is provided. Overall success rates for learners receiving additional learning support are high and above the college average. Personal tutors provide very good support and review learners' progress effectively. The tutorial programme is well designed and resourced with an excellent range of adaptable materials. Learners benefit from the particularly effective integration of tutorials within courses. Through tutorials and other aspects of the curriculum they learn how to promote their health and stay safe. Attendance and punctuality are rigorously monitored. Support services are well planned and readily available for learners. Childcare is available in the college nursery. Arrangements for advice and guidance for progression to further education and training, employment or higher education are thorough and effective. Connexions staff are based on-site and links with other specialist agencies are very good. The college has a very strong commitment to equality and diversity which is reflected in the outstanding support arrangements.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: Grade 1

25. Leadership and management are outstanding. Success rates are high and learners are very well supported. The college enthusiastically celebrates the achievements of learners and staff. Clear roles, responsibilities and structures promote high degrees of accountability. Demanding targets for improvements are monitored closely and largely achieved. The detailed management calendar of key meetings supports very effective communication.
26. Quality assurance is outstanding. The framework for quality assurance is comprehensive. The self-assessment report is very accurate. Thorough course reviews lead to tangible improvements. Targeted observation of teaching and

learning promotes the sharing of good practice. However, the college's evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning can be too generous. Links between lesson observations, appraisal and professional development are strong. Learners and stakeholders value the many opportunities to contribute to decision making and to express their views.

27. A lucid and shared vision seeks to inspire the community through learning for all. The expectation that learners can and will achieve is prevalent throughout the college's work. Appropriate strategic priorities draw on the views of staff and take account of the needs of the local community and employers. Governors are fully involved in setting the strategic direction of the college. Progress towards, and achievement of, targets are monitored thoroughly. Data about learners, their progress and achievements are accurate and used well. Financial information is robust and timely.
28. Equality of opportunity is outstanding, including its response to race equality, gender and disability legislation. The promotion of equality of opportunity is highly effective. The numerous displays, posters, focus groups and events illustrate how fundamental equality of opportunity is to the life of the college. Discrimination, harassment and bullying are not tolerated in any form. Training is comprehensive. The college seeks and acts on the views of learners and stakeholders from different backgrounds, including those with disabilities. Impact assessments are thorough. Equality of opportunity and diversity are scrupulously embedded within the curriculum. Achievement data and complaints are analysed closely for equal opportunities issues. The scrutiny of data relating to staff is less well developed. The college fully meets government requirements in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. Procedures are well documented and implemented and training is good.
29. Expectations of, and support for, staff are high. Continuing professional development is comprehensive.
30. Specialist equipment and resources are of very high quality. Accommodation is imposing. Its imaginative design engenders a sense of pride and promotes a highly purposeful atmosphere. Plasma screens provide a live insight into the work in training kitchens and workshops. The college was built at a very low cost indeed. With high success rates, value for money is outstanding. Financial management is very strong.
31. Governors are highly effective. They support and monitor the college very well but do not shy from challenging managers when appropriate. They are prudent and self-reflective. The college is held in very high esteem by its local community. Partnerships with schools and employers are very productive.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, 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 |
| All Long - Level 1 | 05/06 | 859 | 81 | 69 | 12 | 1148 | 69 | 65 | 4 |
| | 06/07 | 1103 | 84 | 74 | 10 | 880 | 76 | 70 | 6 |
| | 07/08 | 1064 | 84 | N/A | | 555 | 79 | N/A | |
| GNVQs/ AVCEs | 05/06 | 9 | 67 | 73 | -6 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| | 06/07 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 100 | ... | ... |
| | 07/08 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| NVQs | 05/06 | 147 | 79 | 72 | 7 | 69 | 81 | 74 | 7 |
| | 06/07 | 132 | 85 | 75 | 10 | 62 | 74 | 75 | -1 |
| | 07/08 | 146 | 79 | N/A | | 65 | 86 | N/A | |
| Other | 05/06 | 703 | 81 | 69 | 12 | 1079 | 69 | 65 | 4 |
| | 06/07 | 971 | 84 | 74 | 10 | 817 | 76 | 70 | 6 |
| | 07/08 | 918 | 85 | N/A | | 490 | 78 | N/A | |

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, 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 |
| All Long - Level 2 | 05/06 | 996 | 68 | 66 | 2 | 1056 | 67 | 66 | 1 |
| | 06/07 | 1075 | 72 | 70 | 2 | 1254 | 75 | 69 | 6 |
| | 07/08 | 1335 | 79 | N/A | | 1106 | 79 | N/A | |
| GCSEs | 05/06 | 234 | 65 | 68 | -3 | 151 | 73 | 67 | 6 |
| | 06/07 | 183 | 61 | 71 | -10 | 149 | 83 | 70 | 13 |
| | 07/08 | 232 | 77 | N/A | | 88 | 83 | N/A | |
| GNVQs/ AVCEs | 05/06 | 28 | 71 | 69 | 2 | 3 | 67 | 68 | -1 |
| | 06/07 | 42 | 79 | 73 | 6 | 10 | 50 | 71 | -21 |
| | 07/08 | 46 | 89 | N/A | | 9 | 56 | N/A | |
| NVQs | 05/06 | 239 | 70 | 65 | 5 | 296 | 69 | 68 | 1 |
| | 06/07 | 217 | 70 | 68 | 2 | 348 | 70 | 69 | 1 |
| | 07/08 | 280 | 79 | N/A | | 454 | 77 | N/A | |
| Other | 05/06 | 495 | 68 | 66 | 2 | 606 | 64 | 65 | -1 |
| | 06/07 | 633 | 76 | 70 | 6 | 747 | 76 | 69 | 7 |
| | 07/08 | 777 | 79 | N/A | | 555 | 80 | N/A | |

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, 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 |
| All Long - Level 3 | 05/06 | 784 | 67 | 71 | -4 | 866 | 68 | 64 | 4 |
| | 06/07 | 945 | 73 | 73 | 0 | 813 | 68 | 68 | 0 |
| | 07/08 | 1090 | 77 | N/A | | 969 | 79 | N/A | |
| A/A2 Levels | 05/06 | 69 | 93 | 87 | 6 | 23 | 87 | 72 | 15 |
| | 06/07 | 80 | 84 | 87 | -3 | 29 | 76 | 76 | 0 |
| | 07/08 | 103 | 93 | N/A | | 33 | 82 | N/A | |
| AS Levels | 05/06 | 248 | 51 | 67 | -16 | 73 | 64 | 55 | 9 |
| | 06/07 | 295 | 66 | 69 | -3 | 58 | 71 | 59 | 12 |
| | 07/08 | 322 | 74 | N/A | | 45 | 87 | N/A | |
| GNVQs/AVCEs | 05/06 | 25 | 60 | 66 | -6 | 7 | 71 | 57 | 14 |
| | 06/07 | 9 | 33 | 59 | -26 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| | 07/08 | 15 | 73 | N/A | | 2 | 50 | N/A | |
| NVQs | 05/06 | 45 | 73 | 71 | 2 | 192 | 72 | 63 | 9 |
| | 06/07 | 37 | 84 | 74 | 10 | 193 | 64 | 69 | -5 |
| | 07/08 | 65 | 85 | N/A | | 248 | 83 | N/A | |
| Other | 05/06 | 397 | 72 | 65 | 7 | 571 | 67 | 64 | 3 |
| | 06/07 | 524 | 75 | 70 | 5 | 533 | 69 | 69 | 0 |
| | 07/08 | 585 | 75 | N/A | | 641 | 77 | N/A | |

Table 4

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

| 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 | 3 | 67% | 48% | 67% | 34% |
| | | timely | 3 | 67% | 31% | 67% | 22% |
| | 05/06 | overall | 14 | 79% | 53% | 71% | 44% |
| | | timely | 14 | 64% | 34% | 57% | 27% |
| | 06/07 | overall | 6 | 67% | 64% | 67% | 58% |
| | | timely | 6 | 50% | 43% | 50% | 37% |
| Apprenticeships | 04/05 | overall | 17 | 76% | 51% | 47% | 39% |
| | | timely | 17 | 65% | 29% | 35% | 22% |
| | 05/06 | overall | 48 | 77% | 58% | 77% | 52% |
| | | timely | 55 | 44% | 38% | 44% | 34% |
| | 06/07 | overall | 72 | 79% | 65% | 78% | 61% |
| | | timely | 65 | 72% | 47% | 71% | 44% |

Note

- * 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'