

Northbrook 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, care and early years; engineering; information and communication technology (ICT); hospitality and catering; visual and performing arts and media; literacy, numeracy and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; and business, administration and law.

Description of the provider

1. Northbrook College is a medium sized further education college located at two sites in Worthing and one at Shoreham Airport. It manages two skills centres in Littlehampton and Kingston Buci, in partnership with local schools. The college offers predominantly vocational courses from entry level to higher education. Further education courses constitute about 75% of all college provision.
2. In 2007/08, 1,742 full-time and 4,212 part-time further education students attended the college with 1,762 learners enrolled on adult and community learning provision. Students aged over 19 constituted 59% of full-time equivalent learners and 65% of all enrolments on further education courses. Around 40% of students aged 16 to 18 and 25% of adult learners were enrolled on level 3 courses. At 5%, the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is higher than the local population. Two-thirds of adult learners were female but over half of 16 to 18 year-old students were male.
3. The college offers courses in 13 of the 15 sector subject areas. The largest of these, in terms of full-time equivalent learners, are visual and performing arts and media, preparation for life and work, engineering, and health, care and early years. Retail, public sector, finance and business services and health services are the main employment sectors. Unemployment rates in Worthing are below national and regional averages. The college hosts the aeronautical engineering Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE), leads the CoVE in business, management and finance in partnership with City College Brighton and is a partner in three other CoVEs in hospitality and technology.
4. There are over 500 learners on Train to Gain programmes, nearly 400 learners on apprenticeship programmes and over 300 students aged 14 to 16 taking college courses as part of the increased flexibility programme. The college also offers learndirect provision in ICT and Skills for Life.
5. The college's mission is 'to be a centre of excellence for vocational and personal learning, helping people succeed and achieve their potential'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: contributory grade 3</i>

Sector subject areas

Health, care and early years	Good: Grade 2
Engineering	Good: Grade 2
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Hospitality and catering	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Visual and performing arts and media	Good: Grade 2
Literacy, numeracy and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business, administration and law	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. The overall effectiveness of the college is satisfactory and capacity to improve is satisfactory. Over the last two years the college has improved success rates for long courses, which are now satisfactory overall. Adult learners achieve better than those aged 16 to 18, especially at levels 1 and 3. While success rates for students aged 16 to 18 at level 3 have improved over several years, they remain below the national average. Success rates for work-based learning and students aged 14 to 16 are good. Students develop good practical and vocational skills and most enjoy their college experience.
7. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall and good in visual and performing arts and media, engineering, and health, care and early years. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The college has improved the rigour and accuracy of its lesson observation process but this has been slow to effect improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. A significant proportion of teaching remains no more than satisfactory and the college has not been successful in reducing the proportion of inadequate teaching observed.
8. The range of provision to meet the needs of students, employers and the wider community is satisfactory. The college is responsive to employers' needs and has developed productive partnerships with schools, employers and other providers. There are too few opportunities for cross-college enrichment activities for full-time students. Educational and social inclusion is satisfactory but equality and diversity are not always promoted sufficiently through teaching and the curriculum.
9. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Students value the good pastoral and welfare support they receive. Insufficient use is made of data to set targets for students and monitor their progress. Teachers do not always use the outcomes from initial assessment in lesson planning to meet individual needs and abilities.
10. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Re-structuring since the last inspection has increased the focus on raising standards across the college. Improved quality assurance procedures are leading to improvements but are not always implemented consistently across the college. The college has good arrangements for responding to identified concerns for the protection of young people or vulnerable adults but deficiencies in administrative systems mean that not all records of vetting and training are up-to-date. The college has advanced plans to re-develop its accommodation on a single site.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Capacity to improve is satisfactory. The college has successfully reduced a significant financial deficit and good progress has been made in developing the college accommodation strategy. Success rates have improved. They are now

satisfactory and are good in work-based learning. The college's self-assessment makes broadly accurate judgements about students' achievements and the quality of provision. Clear quality assurance arrangements are in place but they are not yet impacting consistently on standards across the college. Use of data to monitor performance has improved but insufficient use is made of data to determine the progress made by students. The rigour of lesson observations has improved recently but the progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning has been slow. The overall quality of support and academic guidance, judged good at the last inspection, is now satisfactory. Personal and welfare support for students remains good.

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

12. Effectiveness of steps taken by the college to promote improvement is satisfactory. The curriculum has been rationalised and provision is more responsive to students' needs. Success rates have improved. Management and performance of work-based learning are now good. Use of data in raising standards has improved and is satisfactory. The rigour of lesson observation procedures has improved. Quality assurance systems have improved and are generally effective in identifying key strengths and areas for improvement.

Key strengths

- good development of students' practical and work-related skills
- good provision in visual and performing arts and media, engineering, and health, care and early years
- high success rates in work-based learning
- good pastoral support and welfare provision for students
- effective partnership working with schools, employers and community groups
- a positive and enjoyable learning environment, valued by students.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates on level 3 courses for students aged 16 to 18
- the relatively high proportion of satisfactory teaching and the small amount of teaching that remains inadequate
- the use of data to set and monitor challenging targets to improve students' progress
- increasing cross-college enrichment opportunities for full-time students
- poor quality and outdated accommodation on the Broadwater site
- the promotion of equality and diversity through teaching and the curriculum
- the rigour and consistency of quality improvement procedures across the college
- ensuring the administrative records for safeguarding and staff training are up-to-date.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

13. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall, as recorded in the college's self-assessment report. Success rates on long courses in 2007/08 improved at all levels for both 16 to 18 year-olds and students aged over 19. Success rates for adult learners are better than for those aged 16 to 18. They were broadly in line with national averages for students aged 16 to 18 at levels 1 and 2. Despite a steady trend of improvement, they remained below average at level 3, where they have been below average for each of the last four years. Success rates for adult learners were above average at level 3, well above average at level 1 and broadly in line with the national average on level 2 provision.
14. The college acknowledges that retention rates have been a cause for concern over recent years, particularly for 16 to 18 year-old students. Senior managers regularly monitor retention rates and there are early indications that in-year retention rates are improving in most areas in 2008/09.
15. The college's analysis of the performance of different ethnic groups and by gender has identified some areas of underperformance. For example, overall success rates for males are lower than for females at all levels. Success rates for Black African, Chinese and students of mixed race were significantly lower than the college average. The college has set targets to raise achievement in these underperforming groups but it is too early to determine the impact. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well.
16. The college acknowledges that it has not made sufficient use of value-added data to set targets for students or to monitor their progress. Course level data indicate that in 2007/08 students made broadly satisfactory progress relative to their prior attainment but there was considerable variation between different courses.
17. Success rates on work-based learning programmes have improved significantly since the last inspection and were above the national average in 2007/08. Overall success rates on Train to Gain courses were good in 2007/08 but too many learners did not complete within the expected time. Current college data indicate that these timely success rates are improving. Students aged 14 to 16 achieve well and over 90% progressed to further education, training or employment in 2007/08. Adult learners on adult and community programmes develop good skills. Much of their work is of a high standard and a high proportion progress to further courses in the college.

18. Success rates in key skills dropped sharply in 2007/08 to below the national average. The college has introduced improved systems to monitor students' progress on key skills but at the time of inspection it was too early to determine how much progress was being made towards achieving the challenging targets set. In areas where key skills are well integrated into the vocational work, for example in hospitality and catering, success rates are high.
19. The standard of students' work is satisfactory, with many students developing good practical and vocational skills. Attendance has improved over the last few years and is satisfactory. The majority of students enjoy college and value the care and support provided. The college does not have a fully centralised record of students' destinations.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

20. The quality of provision is satisfactory, as identified in the college's self-assessment. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The quality of lessons observed both by inspectors and college observers ranges from outstanding to inadequate. As recognised by the college, too much teaching is no better than satisfactory and a small proportion remains inadequate. The best teaching is characterised by imaginative activities, high levels of student enjoyment and rapid learning. Students focus well when working independently and make good progress. Such lessons were observed throughout the college but particularly in visual and performing arts and media, health and early years and in adult and community learning. In weaker lessons teachers do not successfully meet the needs of students of different abilities, students work too slowly on individual tasks and over-long presentations by teachers fail to hold students' interest.
21. Students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are developed well when these are interwoven into the relevant vocational context; where this is not the case, students struggle to see the relevance of key skills. Learning support assistants provide valuable individual help to students in lessons. Many teachers make good use of information and learning technology (ILT) resources in their teaching, although in some lessons the use of ILT is pedestrian and adds little value to learning. Assessment is satisfactory.
22. The college has a broadly accurate view of the quality of teaching and the internal lesson observation system is increasingly effective as a means of seeking to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders recognise, however, that there remain some inconsistencies both in the process of lesson observations and in the quality of feedback given to teachers. College quality assurance procedures have not yet been fully effective in minimising the amount of poor teaching. The extent to which students are prepared for living and working in a multicultural and diverse society is not evaluated through the lesson observation scheme.

23. Responsiveness to the needs and interest of students is satisfactory. Links with employers are generally good and the college has worked well with schools and other providers to broaden opportunities for both young people and adults. This includes flexible provision such as e-learning to meet the needs of employers with students outside the area. Work-based learning provision is good and there is a significant and growing Train to Gain programme. A successful and expanding offer for 14 to 16 year-olds is highly regarded by partner schools. The college curriculum offer from entry level to higher education presents most students with clear progression routes.
24. The range of curriculum enrichment is variable, with good provision in the arts. Cross-college extra-curricular enrichment activities do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to volunteer, take part in sporting activities or make positive contributions to the college and local community.
25. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Although buildings are accessible to those with restricted mobility, the nature of the Broadwater site means that such students sometimes require assistance. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is higher than that of the local area. The college responds well to specific community needs; for example, running bespoke courses for hard-to-reach groups such as carers.
26. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Initial assessment effectively identifies additional learning needs and most students receive prompt analysis and feedback. Occasionally, late confirmation of course timetables delays allocation of in-class support. Access to dyslexia diagnostic testing and adaptive equipment is sometimes slow. Students receiving additional learning support have success rates at or above college rates. Initial assessment outcomes are not always used well to inform teaching strategies to meet students' individual needs. Arrangements for the transition of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from school to college are underdeveloped. Work-based learners and those on Train to Gain receive good support and make good progress.
27. The tutorial system has improved, with a common timetable and resources for group tutorials, but is not implemented consistently. Staff are supported to become more confident in delivery of topics such as diversity and sexual health education. Tutorials include six-weekly student progress reviews which are valued by students but there has been insufficient use of data to set and monitor targets. Students receive good pastoral and welfare support from tutors, pastoral learning mentors and specialist staff such as counsellors and nurses. Students receive appropriate initial advice and guidance for college courses, careers and higher education.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: grade 3

28. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as identified by the college self-assessment. Since the last inspection the college has re-organised senior and departmental level management. Managers at all levels now share a clear sense of purpose. Staff are well informed about developments and priorities and there is a much clearer focus on raising standards. Success rates have improved and were satisfactory for the college overall in 2007/08. Following curriculum review, provision is more responsive to the needs of learners and employers. Effective management of learners' progress in work-based learning has significantly improved their success rates.
29. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Regular review of provision by senior managers is thorough and effective in identifying underperformance and enabling earlier intervention to secure improvement. Quality assurance procedures have been effective in raising standards overall but are not yet impacting consistently across the college. Use of data to monitor performance has improved and is now satisfactory although there is insufficient use of data in setting targets for individual students and monitoring their progress. Course and departmental self-assessments identify strengths and areas for improvement but vary in quality and do not always record trends in performance clearly. Self-assessment does not focus sufficiently on the performance of different groups of students or the impact of the quality of teaching on learning.
30. Although internal lesson observation procedures are now more rigorous, progress in improving teaching and learning has been slow. Clear appraisal procedures are in place but use of lesson observation grades to inform appraisal discussions is a recent development and has not yet been implemented for all teachers. Teachers have good access to training and development opportunities. Training has focused well on areas such as managing behaviour and improving attendance and retention but attention to teaching and learning and sharing of good practice has been more limited. Teachers are appropriately qualified in their areas of expertise but the proportion with teaching qualifications is lower than average.
31. Governance is satisfactory. Following the last inspection, the progress the college initially made in improving performance was modest. Governors are now more actively involved in setting the strategic direction of the college and in monitoring standards. The college has been successful in reducing significant financial deficits whilst continuing to invest well in resources. Financial management is satisfactory. Expenditure is carefully controlled and governors' oversight of financial matters is good. Average class size is below the sector average and the college recognises the need to increase enrolments in order to continue to improve cost effectiveness. With satisfactory success rates overall,

however, the college provides satisfactory value for money. Plans for relocating the college to one site and much needed replacement of very poor accommodation are well advanced.

32. Governors have not, however, been sufficiently involved in ensuring the college complies with all of its statutory requirements. Policies and action plans are in place to promote equality and diversity and the college meets its obligations under race equality, disability and gender equality legislation. Although detailed analyses have been conducted, routine monitoring of the impact of race equality measures is relatively recent. Good use is made of tutorial arrangements to promote equality and diversity but its promotion through teaching and the curriculum is inconsistent.
33. Statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding have not been fully met. The college has clear safeguarding policies and procedures and good arrangements for providing welfare support and for responding to identified concerns over the safety or welfare of young people or vulnerable adults. Incidences of harassment or bullying are dealt with quickly. Staff checks and vetting procedures are carried out but weaknesses in the administration of the system have resulted in delays in the completion of checks for a number of recently appointed staff. Key staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding arrangements and new staff receive guidance on safeguarding through induction but records of all training are not complete.

Sector subject area

Health, care and early years

Good: Grade 2

Context

34. The college offers courses at levels 1 to 4 in early years and at levels 2 to 4 in health and social care. Of the 487 learners currently enrolled, 345 are adults and 79 are aged 16 to 18. More than half of all students are studying early years courses, with 182 health and social care and 46 on counselling courses.

Strengths

- very high success rates on most courses
- much good teaching and learning
- sound assessment and exemplary feedback to students
- productive teamwork across the curriculum area.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on the level 3 diploma in childcare and education
- unsatisfactory arrangements for carrying out individual student reviews.

Achievement and standards

35. Achievement and standards are good. In 2007/08, success rates on all but two courses were well above the national average. Standards of students' work are high. Most students achieve high grades. However, success rates on the level 3 diploma in childcare and education are poor and pass rates on this course have declined to below the national average over the last three years.

Quality of provision

36. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use practical approaches which engage students and ensure that their different learning needs are met. Good links with vocational practice enthuse students and help them to understand and learn theoretical concepts. Skilful, directed questioning appropriately challenges learners to demonstrate their progress. In the weaker lessons, tasks are not well managed. There is no extension work for those who finish their work more quickly, outcomes are not fully discussed and opportunities for learning are missed. The use of ILT is limited. Teachers do not check students' understanding sufficiently.
37. Assessment is good. Students know how and when they should plan and write assignments. They receive exemplary feedback on their work, through written comments and verbal feedback, which enables them to improve their work. Internal verification and moderation of assessment is well managed. Students' progression to more advanced courses or related employment is good. The

early years curriculum meets students' needs well but there is no level 1 provision in health and social care.

38. Support for students is good. Students receiving additional learning support achieve well. They value the support and help they receive from their teachers and tutors. Students undertake individual reviews of their progress at least once a term. These lead to individual targets for improvement and the outcomes are recorded and monitored. However, some students feel that the arrangements for carrying out the reviews during designated group tutorials limit their value. Other students in the tutorial group observed were present during the individual reviews and there is a lack of privacy. Reviews are sometimes interrupted by other students.

Leadership and management

39. Curriculum leadership and management are good. Students' achievements are high. Staff work well in course and programme area teams. They see their managers as supportive and helpful. There are good communications between teams and between teachers and personal tutors. Regular meetings are held at team, departmental and college levels and staff feel well informed and able to express their views. All course team members contribute to course reviews which inform the accurate departmental self-assessment report and quality improvement plan.
40. Equality and diversity are well promoted through the curriculum, though action taken to recruit more male students to early years courses has not been successful. Despite some poor accommodation, classrooms are well equipped and enhanced with high quality displays of students' work.

Engineering

Good: Grade 2

Context

41. The college offers courses in aeronautical, motor vehicle, mechanical and electronic engineering. At the time of the inspection, there were 570 students of whom 378 were full-time. Around 40% percent of students are adults. There are 82 apprentices and 89 advanced apprentices on work-based learning programmes. There are 27 female students and 13 aged 14 to 16. The college hosts a CoVE in aeronautical engineering.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses and apprenticeship frameworks
- high standards of students' practical work
- very good resources at the Shoreham site
- effective tracking and monitoring of students' progress
- productive partnerships with schools and industry.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on level 2 performing engineering operations
- insufficient use of initial assessment outcomes to inform teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

42. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on aeronautical courses are very high, exceeding 90%. Success rates on motor vehicle programmes are high at levels 1 and 2. Students aged 14 to 16 progress well to full-time courses. Apprenticeship framework success rates have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Success rates are low on the level 2 performing engineering operations course.
43. Students enjoy practical lessons and produce work of a high standard. Aeronautical students accurately diagnose instrumentation faults and stress cracks in airframes. Young apprentices produce neat riveted repairs. Motor vehicle students carry out servicing and inspection with care and diligence. The department celebrates success with awards to motivate and inspire students. Attendance, punctuality and behaviour are good. Health and safety are well managed.

Quality of provision

44. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students enjoy lessons and take pride in their work. Those on specialist courses, such as aeronautical engineering, are highly committed to their studies and strive to achieve as well as they can. Teachers have good occupational skills, which they use well to enthuse students, illustrate theory and develop practical skills. The college intranet is used effectively in lessons and to provide access to learning materials from

home and the workplace. However, too many lessons fail to take individual students' needs and abilities into account. Teachers do not make sufficient use of initial assessment information to plan lessons to provide challenge for learners according to their abilities. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good and assessment in the workplace is well managed. Target grades are not set for students on level 3 technician courses.

45. The specialist provision meets students' and employers' needs well. Students benefit from high quality accommodation and industry standard engineering training resources at the Shoreham site. Classrooms, laboratories and workshops are bright and well equipped. The aviation and motor vehicle fleet is very good and represents current production models. A good range of industrial visits, projects and events enrich learning.
46. Support for students is satisfactory and good for work-based learners. Initial assessment is undertaken early and identifies individual needs. Additional learning support is provided promptly and students are appreciative of the help from tutors and teachers.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are productive partnerships with the aviation and motor industries and close links to motor sport. Apprentices benefit from good training opportunities in the workplace. Quality improvement is satisfactory. Individual course performance is closely monitored and students' achievements are good. Internal verification is rigorous. Teaching and learning observations are accurate and linked to appraisal and staff development but the pace of improvement in the quality of teaching is slow. New teachers have good recent industrial experience and are well supported. Equality of opportunity is appropriately reinforced within work-based reviews.

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

48. The college offers full-time ICT courses for around 60, mainly 16 to 18 year-old, students and part-time provision for 30, mainly adult, students. Courses range from level 1 to higher national diploma. Student numbers have declined from around 500 enrolments in 2005/06, mainly as short specialist courses have been withdrawn or offered through learndirect, individual learning or at other locations. In 2007 ICT became part of the business, computing and professional department.

Strengths

- high standard of students' work
- very productive and enjoyable learning
- good and well used resources.

Areas for improvement

- low retention on national diploma IT practitioners' course
- insufficient staff training on some of the software used by students.

Achievement and standards

49. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students' work is of a high standard. Students have a clear understanding of appropriate computing concepts and confidently debate finer points with other students and tutors. Level 1 and 2 pass rates have been high in most years, with a good proportion of high grade achievement.
50. Success rates on full-time courses have varied over recent years but recent improvements have brought them to a position either at or above national averages. Retention rates on the national diploma IT practitioners' course are low. Learndirect success rates have improved consistently over the past three years to a satisfactory level.

Quality of provision

51. Teaching and learning are good. Nearly all students are engaged in very productive and enjoyable learning. They are given very helpful guidance and direction by tutors, fully understand course requirements and use the ICT resources well. Resources are good. With the exception of one inadequate room, classrooms are spacious, well equipped and effectively laid out; tutors make good use of the space. Additional resources, experienced tutors and a range of support staff all contribute to a positive learning environment. Assessment is rigorous and students have a good understanding of assignment requirements.

52. The range of full-time courses is appropriate, allowing students to progress through levels, with a satisfactory number eventually moving to higher education or employment.
53. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Additional support is effective and there is good liaison between tutors and support staff. Individual and group tutorials help students' development and a rigorous routine review system aids student performance. One of the learndirect centres has a particularly helpful review system, designed by local staff. Pre-course advice is particularly helpful and there is appropriate careers guidance. Tutors understand their role in safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-assessment is accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Following significant structural and staff changes, there is now clear, positive leadership. Staff welcome being part of the enlarged department. A very rigorous system for routine course reviews is beginning to impact positively on students' success. However, planned activities to improve teaching and learning are being implemented too slowly. Learndirect management is good, with comprehensive analysis of data and full involvement of staff leading to improvements that have helped raise success rates.
55. Teacher and organisational training are satisfactory. There is insufficient training to ensure that staff have an appropriate level of competency in some of the common software applications used by students.
56. Promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Aspects are covered in planned group tutorials, on an individual basis in reviews, through group sessions where there have been issues and as part of routine course work, such as analysing and improving accessibility of websites.

Hospitality and catering

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

57. The college offers National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses from level 1 to level 3 and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma and award programmes. The provision includes professional cookery, food and drink service, multi-skills and hospitality supervision. At the time of the inspection, there were 42 students aged 16 to 18 and 13 adults on full-time programmes with 29 part-time students, of whom 12 were adults. The college also offers NVQ level 1 provision for 34 students aged 14 to 16, from six local schools.

Strengths

- high success rates on level 1 and 2 courses
- high key skills success rates
- very good provision for students aged 14 to 16.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on level 3 national diploma
- underdeveloped individual learning plans
- insufficient employer links to improve provision.

Achievement and standards

58. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates at levels 1 and 2 have improved and are now above national averages but they were low on the BTEC national diploma. All students aged 14 to 16 achieved the NVQ level 1 qualification. Attendance is good and in-year retention rates are high. Key skills success rates for ICT and communications are high. Students develop good practical skills and demonstrate good personal and social skills in their working environment. They are successful in both local and national competitions. Students are well motivated and enjoy their studies and progression to employment is good.

Quality of provision

59. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching of practical skills is good. Teachers have good industrial experience which they use well to illustrate the relevance of skills being learnt. Lesson planning does not take sufficient account of the different needs of learners or all the intended outcomes. Some students do not have a full understanding of theory to support their practical work. The quality and range of resources in kitchens are satisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory and students receive useful comments on their performance to help them improve.
60. The range of programmes is satisfactory to meet the needs of students although there are few opportunities for students to achieve useful additional

qualifications. Students are involved in a good range of activities outside of college, such as visits, competitions and exhibitions, which broadens their experience. Formal links with industry are underdeveloped and do not inform the curriculum planning sufficiently. Informal links are well established through the work placement programme. There are very good links with local schools, with good provision for 14 to 16 year-olds.

61. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Pre-course information is good and students' induction into the college is satisfactory. Learning support needs are identified and appropriate support provided. The tutorial system provides good personal support and students' progress is monitored effectively. Individual learning plans (ILPs) are underdeveloped and do not involve learners sufficiently in setting targets towards achieving their qualification.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication between managers and teachers and with senior managers has improved. Roles and responsibilities are established with teachers taking more responsibility for individual programmes or areas within the department. The college has improved the rigour of internal lesson observation and revised the curriculum to improve the quality of provision. Self-assessment is broadly accurate. Actions for improvement are identified but are not clearly monitored at present. There is insufficient use of data to review the progress and achievement of different groups of students. The promotion of equality and diversity through teaching and the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Visual and performing arts and media

Good: Grade 2

Context

63. The college offers first and national diplomas at levels 2 and 3 in a wide range of art and design, media, performance and technical production disciplines. A mixed discipline course caters for students aged 14 to 16. The provision is extensive: around 640 students follow these courses each year, most of whom are aged 16 to 18. The large majority of students take qualifications at level 3.

Strengths

- high success rates in 2007/08 on most courses
- much stimulating teaching
- very effective use of outstanding resources and facilities
- good enhancement of performance students' experiences by innovative use of cross-disciplinary projects
- good use of working practitioners to provoke and inform students' work
- effective transformation of culture and attitudes across two departments.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on national diplomas in music practice and theatre production and on certificate in craft and design
- slow pace of learning in a minority of lessons.

Achievement and standards

64. Achievement and standards are good. In 2007/08, students' success rates were above or well above the national average on all but three of the 14 long courses. This was a marked improvement on many results in 2006/07. High in-year retention rates indicate that these improvements are secure. However, in 2007/08 only about one third of the students on the national diploma in music practice and just over half of those on the national diploma in theatre production achieved their qualification. Students make excellent progress to reach high standards on the diploma in foundation studies but make less effective progress, relative to their starting points, on a few other courses.
65. Students develop a strong personal expressive voice in their chosen discipline and the necessary technical skills to support it. They soon become passionate about the creative possibilities afforded them. Much work draws directly from industrial practice and aspires to professional standards. Art and design students have an assured grounding in the manipulation of a wide range of media. Performance and production students operate confidently within the framework of a production company. Students across the art forms demonstrate a growing capacity to become critically reflective practitioners.

Quality of provision

66. Teaching and learning are good and students enjoy their courses enormously. Project briefs and lessons are well planned. Teachers create stimulating working environments within which students' independent learning and individual creativity thrive. Outstanding resources and equipment are very well used. Students' learning benefits from the professional knowledge and artistic experience of their own teachers, the regular interactions they enjoy with visiting practitioners and the encounters they have with the work of higher education students with whom they share resources. Recently, cross-disciplinary projects have enhanced the experiences of performance students. In a minority of lessons, the pace at which students' practical work develops slows because teachers fail to intervene sufficiently often or quickly.
67. Additional learning support enables students with particular needs to succeed. Students' progress is carefully monitored and most of them receive detailed and useful feedback on their work.
68. The range of provision is now good but the college has been slow to establish a curriculum that meets the full needs of the local community.
69. Support and guidance are good. Students appreciate the dedicated, generous personal advice, guidance and care they receive from their teachers, tutors and technicians.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are good. Over the last two years, significant changes have been made to how the two departments are managed. Teachers and course leaders are now much more focused on how to ensure that students succeed. The area has been revitalised and high aspirations are evident amongst staff and students alike. Good teaching practices are identified and shared following insightful observations of lessons. However, the use of data and incisive self-assessment to inform change need further improvement.

Literacy, numeracy and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

71. At the time of inspection 321 students were studying on externally accredited, part-time literacy and numeracy courses, from entry level to level 2. Some 60 students aged 16 to 19 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were studying on full-time entry level and level 1 courses and 150 on part-time courses for adults. These courses are not externally accredited but students take literacy and numeracy qualifications.

Key strengths

- high success rates on level 1 provision
- good use of virtual learning environment to stimulate learning
- good leadership to improve provision in line with national priorities.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on entry level provision
- insufficient use of specialists in the initial assessment of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of the promotion of equality and opportunity and safeguarding training.

Achievement and standards

72. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are high on level 1 literacy and numeracy provision. Whilst success rates improved on entry level courses in 2007/08, they remained below the national average. Students on non-accredited provision achieve well. Attendance is satisfactory. Students' progress through the different levels of provision is satisfactory. Students' achievements are celebrated in a much appreciated awards ceremony.

Quality of provision

73. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In literacy and numeracy lessons students learnt best when teachers used a problem solving approach, enabling students to identify for themselves where they had made errors. The opportunities provided by the virtual learning environment are used well to stimulate learning.
74. In less effective lessons the management of groups with a wide range of abilities and prior attainment was poor. In literacy and numeracy lessons there is sometimes too much emphasis on the requirements for accreditation, rather than the overall development of skills. The processes for recording learning in non-accredited provision are satisfactory, with achievable targets. The overall records of learning on full-time courses do not accurately reflect what students

have achieved over time. The completion of ILPs on literacy and numeracy courses is sometimes no more than a mechanical copying of class aims.

75. The range of provision is satisfactory. Courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are being developed with an appropriate focus on employment or skills for independence. Extensive work experience is provided but tutors are not involved in the monitoring of the work placements.
76. Support for students is satisfactory. Although a qualified nurse assesses learners' medical needs, the initial assessment does not include specialist assessment of students who may need interventions, such as speech and language therapy. Adaptive equipment to assist students is not always provided promptly.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Over the past 18 months, clear leadership has resulted in improvements. Managers are clear what needs to be done to improve the quality of provision. Self-assessment is self-critical and evaluative, although the findings of observation of teaching and learning suggest some over-grading. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities now better reflects the national priorities in this area. There has been insufficient monitoring of teachers' understanding of the promotion of equality of opportunity through the curriculum and of the impact of safeguarding training.

Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

78. The college offers a national certificate course in business and professional qualifications in accounting at levels 2 and 3, law and management. There are 36 full-time and 323 part-time students. Over 270 adult learners are enrolled on accounting courses. Some 22 full-time and 12 part-time students take the national certificate in business.

Strengths

- high success rates on accounting courses
- good progression on professional courses
- good additional learning support for part-time students.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on BTEC national courses
- no level 1 or level 2 provision in business
- some inconsistent action plans, following individual reviews.

Achievement and standards

79. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. In 2007/08 overall success rates improved to around the national average. Success rates on accounting courses were high in 2007/08. Success rates on the BTEC national diploma in business are low. Success rates on the professional diploma in law declined in 2007/08 but remained in line with the low national average. Attendance is satisfactory. Although many adult students attend on a part-time basis and have many other commitments, punctuality to lessons is good.
80. Standards of work are satisfactory overall. On the full-time professional diploma in law course, students displayed high levels of analysis and understanding of complex legal principles. On accounting courses students worked well to complete challenging exercises within limited timescales.
81. Progression rates on accounting courses are good. For example, 80% of students on the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) foundation course progressed on to the AAT advanced certificate course at the college last year.

Quality of provision

82. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, students have opportunities to demonstrate and check their learning by taking part in interesting and challenging activities. Students make good progress in these lessons and they take responsibility for their own learning. In the less effective lessons teachers spend too much time simply giving out information and students are not actively engaged in their learning. Questioning is not always

effective and there is too little checking of students' learning, progress and understanding.

83. There is a good range of courses to meet the needs of part-time adult students. These courses are supported well by employers and students value the different attendance patterns available. There is currently no full-time provision for students who wish to study business courses at level 1 or level 2. Enrolments on level 3 full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 are currently low. Advanced plans are in place to offer level 1 and level 2 provision in partnership with local schools and the sixth form college from September 2009.
84. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Additional learning support needs are identified for full- and part-time students. Students who receive this support achieve well. The progress of full-time students is monitored effectively through regular, formal reviews of their work. These reviews enable students to be aware of how well they are doing but action plans are of inconsistent quality. Targets are too general and many action plans do not help students to know how to improve.

Leadership and management

85. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have a clear vision and direction for the department and self-assessment is effective in supporting improvement. For example, appropriate actions taken recently to raise the quality of teaching and learning are beginning to have impact. The revised curriculum for accounting has led to significant improvements in students' achievement. There is rigorous monitoring of course performance and action plans clearly identify areas requiring further improvement.

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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	05/06	608	66	69	-3	1305	76	65	11
	06/07	449	71	74	-3	824	78	70	8
	07/08*	478	73			746	84		
NVQs	05/06	69	86	72	14	7	100	74	26
	06/07	63	60	75	-15	10	60	75	-15
	07/08*	51	80			4	75		
Other	05/06	539	64	69	-5	1298	76	65	11
	06/07	386	73	74	-1	814	79	70	9
	07/08*	431	72			741	84		

* college data

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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	05/06	447	71	66	5	936	64	66	-2
	06/07	414	63	70	-7	1035	70	69	1
	07/08*	415	75			642	73		
GCSEs	05/06	28	61	68	-7	120	71	67	4
	06/07	17	76	71	5	115	76	70	6
	07/08*	20	80			98	71		
NVQs	05/06	145	68	65	3	372	79	68	11
	06/07	170	54	68	-14	542	68	69	-1
	07/08*	137	73			192	78		
Other	05/06	272	73	66	7	444	50	65	-15
	06/07	226	69	70	-1	378	71	69	2
	07/08*	233	76			346	71		

* college data

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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	05/06	594	62	71	-9	1414	62	64	-2
	06/07	512	65	73	-8	1185	72	68	4
	07/08*	560	70			1207	76		
A/A2 Levels	05/06	22	50	87	-37	14	100	72	28
	06/07	25	52	87	-35	3	67	76	-9
	07/08*								
AS Levels	05/06	1	0	67	-67	33	45	55	-10
	06/07	8	25	69	-44	52	46	59	-13
	07/08*	0	0			16	31		
NVQs	05/06	27	96	71	25	412	75	63	12
	06/07	27	63	74	-11	486	78	69	9
	07/08*	14	57			406	83		
Other	05/06	515	61	65	-4	954	56	64	-8
	06/07	452	67	70	-3	644	70	69	1
	07/08*	548	70			794	69		

* college data

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the provider/college 2006 to 2008.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	82	55	54	35	44
		timely	85	27	34	12	27
	06/07	overall	46	65	64	61	58
		timely	43	35	43	33	37
	07/08#	overall	45	87	68	82	63
		timely	38	66	48	66	44
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	110	59	58	56	52
		timely	94	29	38	28	34
	06/07	overall	67	58	65	58	61
		timely	57	39	47	39	44
	07/08#	Overall	76	76	68	76	63
		timely	80	59	52	59	50

* 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 (ILR)

When available and validated by the LSC 07/08 data from LSC P15 QSR

Table 5a

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider/college 2007 to 2009.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	74	75.5%
		timely	68	52.5%
	2007/08	overall	210	79.2%
		timely	157	41.25%
	2008/09 (5 months)	overall	171	19.3%
		timely	154	17.5%

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three 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

** NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection

Table 5b

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain skills for life programmes managed by the provider/college 2007 to 2009.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider skills for life rate**
Train to Gain (skills for life)	2006/07	overall	2	67%
		timely	2	67%
	2007/08	overall	10	71%
		timely	8	57%
	2008/09 (5 months)	overall	0	0
		timely	0	0

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three 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

** Skills for life qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection

Table 6

Outcomes on learndirect programmes 2007 to 2009.

Learning type	Year	Enrolments	Counted for data	Success rate (%)	Withdrawal rate (%)
All sectors	2006/07	986	784	50.9	13.1
	2007/08	695	624	70.0	8.0
	2008/09*	374	281	74.7	0.0
ICT	2006/07	409	311	41.8	18.0
	2007/08	242	216	65.7	12.5
	2008/09*	129	76	88.2	0.0
skills for life	2006/07	577	473	56.9	9.9
	2007/08	453	408	72.3	5.6
	2008/09*	245	205	69.8	0.0

Note: 2008/09* data is 'part year' only and is representative of the three months or greater of the UfI Sheffield contract year

Equality and diversity

2007/08	All Ethnic Groups	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese/Other	Mixed	Not Known	White	White Other
Enrolments	695	22	52	11	9	15	547	39
Completion rate (%)	92.3	94.4	91.3	100.0	62.5	91.7	93.0	86.5
Achievement rate (%)	73.2	76.5	85.7	80.0	40.0	36.4	72.9	75.0
Success rate (%)	70.0	81.3	72.0	80.0	25.0	40.0	70.4	72.7
Withdrawal rate (%)	8.0	6.3	8.0		37.5	10.0	7.2	15.2