

City College Plymouth

Inspection report

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| Provider reference | 130649 |
| Published date | November 2008 |

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| Audience | Post-sixteen |
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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

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

The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

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

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: health, social care and early years; science and mathematics; engineering; construction; hairdressing and beauty therapy; and arts, media and music technology.

Description of the provider

1. City College Plymouth (formerly Plymouth College of Further Education) runs courses with substantial numbers in almost all of the sector subject areas and offers qualifications from pre-entry to degree level. There are around 250,000 residents in the city of Plymouth, Devon, with another 100,000 people in the travel to work area. Census data show the city's minority ethnic population to be lower than in the south-west region as a whole. Plymouth ranks in the top 25% of local authorities with the greatest levels of economic deprivation. Wages are lower than the national average; unemployment rates are above the regional and national average. Almost 25% of the student body is drawn from areas of the city considered high in economic deprivation.
2. The further education work of the college is concentrated on two main sites at King's Road and the Goschen Centre. In 2006/07 there were almost 5,000 full-time equivalent learners at the college on long courses at levels 1 to 3. Just under half of these were aged 16 to 18. Around 40% of students aged 16 to 18 studied at level 3. The GCSE results of Plymouth's school leavers were broadly in line with the national average in 2006/07 but there is wide variation in the GCSE results of the city's schools. Almost all of the secondary schools in the city have sixth forms, and so the college faces significant competition for students at the end of their GCSE studies. Nevertheless, the college is Plymouth's largest A-level provider. Student numbers at the college in these qualifications have declined over the past three years, whereas numbers studying equivalent vocational qualifications have increased. In 2006/07 the numbers of students completing BTEC national diplomas outnumbered those completing A levels by three to one.
3. The college has a large apprenticeship contract of some 800 learners, mainly in the areas of engineering and construction trades, and around 200 learners in their Entry to Employment programme. Around 450 adults study through Train to Gain. The college makes part-time provision for approximately 350 learners aged 14 to 16 from local schools. The college has achieved the Training Quality Standard for employer responsiveness. The specialist provision inspected accounts for over half of the college's long course provision.
4. In March 2008 Ofsted inspected the work of the Dame Hannah Rogers Trust's provision for adult learners with severe physical disabilities and learning difficulties. Inspectors judged the provision inadequate. City College Plymouth is due to take over the management of this work from January 2009.

Summary of grades awarded

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Effectiveness of provision | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Capacity to improve | Good: Grade 2 |
| Achievement and standards | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Quality of provision | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Leadership and management | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| <i>Equality of opportunity</i> | <i>Good: contributory grade 2</i> |

Sector subject areas

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Health, social care and early years | Good: Grade 2 |
| Science and mathematics | Inadequate: Grade 4 |
| Engineering | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Construction | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy | Good: Grade 2 |
| Arts, media and music technology | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. This is a satisfactory college with good capacity to make further improvements. There has been effective management action to improve student retention, rightly recognised by the college as the prime concern for a number of years. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall but are good for apprentices in work-based learning and for learners aged 14 to 16. Success rates, particularly at level 3 for learners aged 16 to 18, remain an area for improvement, although there has been a strong trend of improvement in overall long course success rates over the past four years. Students demonstrate high levels of practical and work-related skills development.
6. The quality of provision is satisfactory but is good for learners aged 14 to 16. Work-based learning is both well managed and successful. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A significant proportion of lessons remain no better than satisfactory, as is recognised by the college. There is a wide range of practical support for teachers to improve the quality of lessons, and this is starting to have an impact. Lesson planning to meet learners' individual needs more fully is an area for development. Target-setting in individual learning plans (ILPs) is insufficiently rigorous to enable learners to fulfil their potential. The college correctly identifies that the quality of key skills provision requires greater consistency and is one of a number of areas where existing good practice is insufficiently shared. The quality of provision in science and mathematics remains inadequate since the last inspection.
7. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs of learners is good and the provision is both wide and inclusive. Educational and social inclusion are good. There is strong collaborative and partnership working. Guidance and support for learners are good; learners are able to make well informed choices as a result of good information, advice and guidance arrangements.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-assessment is broadly accurate. The college acknowledges the improvements needed in the effectiveness of quality improvement at curriculum level. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The college's accommodation is good with industry-standard resources. There has been effective action to improve the financial position of the college.
9. Plans to take over the management of the adult provision of the Dame Hannah Rogers Trust are well considered and appropriate. There have been significant improvements in accommodation and resources since the last inspection in March 2008.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The capacity to make further improvements is good. The college's development plan and policies are thorough. Strategic and business planning is closely focused on local and national priorities. The quality of staff and resources is good, and financial management is strong. Governors have relevant expertise and assess the impact of improvements to raise standards. Managers monitor performance closely and in most curriculum areas this is leading to increased learner success. Self-assessment is well established, evaluative and accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Overall success rates demonstrate a strong trend of improvement over the last four years; the college has taken effective action to address some unsatisfactory student retention rates. The arrangements for observing lessons are reliable and accurate, and support for teachers to improve the quality of lessons is starting to lead to improvements in the quality of delivery. Comprehensive arrangements for quality assurance are clearly having a positive impact on performance although they are not yet fully effective across every area of the curriculum.

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

11. The college has made satisfactory progress in securing improvements since the last inspection. The quality of provision in work-based learning and in hairdressing and beauty therapy is now good. However, key areas for improvement from the last inspection remain as works in progress. Construction provision has improved to the point where it is now satisfactory, but science and mathematics provision remains inadequate. Unsatisfactory teaching has been successfully addressed but there remains a significant proportion of lessons that are no better than satisfactory. Success rates have risen over the past four years but are broadly average overall and are low for learners aged 16 to 18 at level 3. Quality improvement arrangements are not yet fully effective at curriculum level.

Key strengths

- high levels of practical and work-related skills development
- well managed and successful work-based learning provision
- wide and inclusive range of provision
- strong collaborative and partnership working
- good information, advice and guidance for learners
- effective management action to improve retention rates
- wide range of practical support for teachers to improve the quality of lessons
- good accommodation and industry-standard resources
- effective action to improve the college's financial position.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- success rates, particularly at level 3, for learners aged 16 to 18
- the rigour of target-setting in individual learning plans
- the consistency of the quality of key skills provision
- the significant proportion of lessons that remain no better than satisfactory
- lesson planning to meet learners' individual needs more fully
- the quality of provision in science and mathematics
- the effectiveness of quality improvement at curriculum level
- the sharing of existing good practice across the college.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

12. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall, as recorded in the college's self-assessment. They are good in work-based learning and for learners aged 14 to 16. At the last inspection retention and pass rates for learners aged 16 to 18 were either at or slightly above national averages. For adults, retention rates were at or slightly above average but pass rates were low at levels 2 and 3. Over the past four years, the overall long course success rate for both groups of learners combined shows a significant improvement, bringing success rates closer to the national average; however, this measure of success remained below average in 2006/07 and, from college data for 2007/08, rose to a point in line with the national average for the previous year.
13. The trend in improvement in success rates is stronger for adults than for learners aged 16 to 18 over the past four years, while national averages have also been rising. In 2007/08 success rates for adults were broadly average for the majority of learners, those studying at levels 1 and 3, but were above average at level 2. For learners aged 16 to 18, success rates were broadly average for learners studying at levels 1 and 2. However, success rates for this group of learners at level 3 were low and have been well below average for the past four years. These learners account for almost 40% of full-time equivalent (FTE) learners aged 16 to 18 and around 20% of all FTE learners on long courses in the college. In graded qualifications at level 3 those students who pass their awards generally make less than expected progress relative to their results on entry. Success rates for learners from different groups, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are broadly in line with those for the college as a whole.
14. The self-assessment acknowledges that retention has been the prime concern for the college for several years. The improvement in retention rates over the past four years demonstrates the successful impact of college strategies to tackle this issue. However, in 2007/08 retention rates were still only satisfactory for almost two thirds of adult learners on long courses and were below average for learners aged 16 to 18 at level 3.
15. Learners enjoy their studies and the standard of their work is good. They develop high levels of practical and work-related skills and work safely. Attendance is satisfactory. Key skills success rates are improving but remain low. As a result learners are only adequately equipped for their future social and economic well-being. Progression into employment or further study is good.

16. Achievement and standards in work-based learning are good. Success rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy are particularly strong. Both overall and timely success rates have been significantly above average in two of the past three years. College data for 2007/08 indicate that framework success rates continue to improve across the provision.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

17. The quality of provision, and teaching and learning, are satisfactory overall, which does not reflect the college's more optimistic evaluation. However, they are good for learners aged 14 to 16 and in work-based learning.
18. In the last two years, the college has developed and implemented a comprehensive and practical strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The strategy is well resourced, clearly embedded in the college's work and appreciated by teachers. It is starting to lead to improvements. However, as the college acknowledges, there is still much to be done to raise standards of teaching and learning. For example, standard approaches to lesson planning and schemes of work are not used effectively in all areas of the college. Inspectors observed well planned lessons where teachers and students had clear aims and met these well. In a significant minority of lessons, planning was less effective and students' learning was diminished as a result. Target-setting in individual learning plans, to help students to fulfil their potential, is not sufficiently clear or stretching.
19. In the majority of lessons, students were making at least satisfactory progress. Teachers displayed good knowledge of their subjects. Assessments are fair and generally accurate. The quality of written feedback to students, an issue at the last inspection, has improved.
20. The college correctly identifies that standards of teaching and learning in key skills require further improvement. There are some good examples of teachers developing key skills in their vocational lessons, but much of the key skills work observed by inspectors was judged to be satisfactory. There have been workshops for teachers focusing on key skills during 2008, but attendance at these training sessions has been poor. The identification of, and provision for, additional learning needs are satisfactory.
21. Responsiveness to the needs and interests of learners, employers and external partners is good. The college has highly effective and productive partnerships with a wide range of employers, schools and local support agencies. It offers substantial full- and part-time provision in line with local and national priorities, including a significant work-based learning offer and courses for learners aged 14 to 16. The college's enterprise development centre has strong links with local businesses and provides individually-tailored training to meet local employment needs. Good, collaborative work with schools has been effective in

engaging them in the development of flexible programmes for learners aged 14 to 16 and diplomas for learners aged 14 to 19. The college makes a positive contribution to developing the skills of the local workforce through its very effective relationships with large public sector organisations such as the local authority and the National Health Service trust.

22. Enrichment is satisfactory overall. In some areas it is good. Learners are offered opportunities to participate in a wide variety of activities, including sports, team building activities, fund raising for charity and individual events such as Fair Trade fashion week.
23. Educational and social inclusion are good. The college knows its local community well. It has made very effective use of its strong partnerships to recruit learners from under-represented groups such as asylum seekers and hard-to-reach young people. Support for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties is good. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is higher than that of the city's population.
24. Guidance and support for learners are good. Potential learners are able to make well informed course choices. Induction adequately prepares learners for the requirements of their programmes. Learners receive a thorough introduction to health and safety, and equality and diversity. The college provides good support for its learners including counselling, childcare and an extended bus service. Specialist support services are offered in a flexible way to meet the needs of learners who are following programmes at the college's satellite centres. Learners at risk of leaving a programme before completion are identified early and supported well. The college has made significant improvements to its arrangements for tutorial support to provide a consistent offer to all learners. However, these arrangements are not yet well established. Tutorial arrangements and content vary in quality.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

25. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but are good in work-based learning. The principal, governors and senior managers have set a clear direction for the college, with a strong focus on improvement. Staff have a good understanding of the college's priorities and targets and of their role in improving outcomes for learners. Targets are well planned but are not always sufficiently challenging to meet the college's ambitions for its learners. Progress has been made in many key areas, but significant areas for improvement from the last inspection remain as work in progress. The college has successfully addressed its acknowledged problems with student retention rates. Long course success rates have improved over the past four years so that they are broadly average. However, they remain low for learners aged 16 to 18 at level 3.

26. Self-assessment is well established, evaluative and generally accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement, although there are a number of instances of over-grading. Quality improvement arrangements are clear and comprehensive. They are not yet fully effective across the range of the college's work, as is recognised in self-assessment, and there remains some unsatisfactory provision. The college's lesson observation system accurately reflects the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Support for teachers is starting to lead to improvements. Arrangements for the sharing of good practice are under-developed.
27. The college manages its resources well. Financial management is robust and sustained investment in resources is effectively planned. Accommodation is well-maintained and teaching and study areas are well equipped. Overall success rates and levels of attendance demonstrate satisfactory value for money. Governors' involvement has increased since the previous inspection and their monitoring of performance is satisfactory. A broad range of initiatives, including participation in college decision-making, student governors and a funded sabbatical student president, is developing a high level of learner involvement. Staff recruitment, selection and training are good. The college has a strong commitment to staff development, including continuous professional development, to meet individual needs and college priorities. The college's links with other organisations are good. Responsiveness to employers is good, particularly in the development of new programmes to meet employers' needs. The college is contributing effectively to community cohesion.
28. The promotion of equality and diversity is good in most areas of provision. Staff are provided with a wide range of guidance to support the successful embedding of equality and diversity in their teaching. Students engage well with equality and diversity practice. The college has produced a suitable race equality policy. Detailed monitoring and analysis of performance by different groups of learners is carried out, with appropriate action planning for improvement. Arrangements for reviewing progress and publishing the outcomes are satisfactory.
29. Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements. Training has taken place for the majority of staff, governors and volunteers with a planned programme for those still to attend.
30. The college has particularly good access arrangements for students with restricted mobility or specific physical needs. The college has made an effective response to the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) revised code of practice for post-16 providers, with appropriate amendments to its equal opportunities policy and procedures. Plans to take over the management of the adult provision of the Dame Hannah Rogers Trust are well considered and appropriate.

Sector subject area

Health, social care and early years

Good: Grade 2

Context

31. The college offers courses in health, social care, and childcare, from entry level to foundation degree. Currently, 682 learners aged 16 to 18 and 2,742 adults are engaged, mainly part-time, on national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and other vocationally-related qualifications (VRQs) in health and social care. In childcare, 93 learners aged 16-18 follow full-time courses and 217 adults are working towards NVQs levels 1 to 3, or VRQs. There are 54 adults on access to higher education programmes and 35 learners aged 14 to 16 undertaking courses in childcare.

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses
- effective teaching promoting high professional standards of care
- rigorous monitoring and assessment
- good provision meeting employers' and learners' needs
- high progression rates
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- low retention rates on a minority of courses.

Achievement and standards

32. Learners' achievement is good. Success rates have improved on most courses and are well above the national average. Retention, however, is low on the level 1 BTEC introductory certificate in health and social care and the level 2 intermediate certificate in counselling. Achievement in key skills is satisfactory. Learners aged 14 to 16 make good progress and achieve well. Attendance is good. Progression rates to employment and further study are high. The standard of learners' work is generally good but some written work lacks grammatical accuracy. Students are developing good vocational skills which they use effectively in a wide range of professional settings.

Quality of provision

33. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good professional skills which they use to make lessons interesting and vocationally relevant. In a childcare lesson, students were encouraged to draw upon their own workplace experience to explain the roles and responsibilities of a nursery assistant. They subsequently linked this well to legislation on equality and diversity. Lessons are generally planned well and accommodate successfully different learning styles. Teaching in the workplace is good. Students have good economic awareness.

34. Assessment and monitoring of progress are good. Students receive good feedback on their overall progress and know what skills they have to improve. Assessment of work-based programmes is of a high standard. Initial assessment is good and support is quickly put in place for learners with specific needs. However, some in-class assessment does not sufficiently focus on individuals' progress.
35. Programmes and activities meet learners' and employers' needs well. There is a broad range of courses and levels, with flexible delivery to meet the needs of work-based learners. A very high proportion of learners progress through course levels. Enrichment is good and learners can take additional vocationally-related qualifications to enhance their employment profile. Partnership arrangements with local employers and schools are strong.
36. Support and guidance are good. The tutorial programme is vocationally relevant and contributes to students' personal and social development. Students receive good individual academic support. Some individual learning plans, however, do not set sufficiently challenging targets. Learners are fully aware of equality and diversity issues as well as health and safety issues.

Leadership and management

37. Leadership and management are good. Strategies to improve success rates have generally been successful. Staff have taken appropriate action to address weaknesses in under-performing courses. Management of partnership arrangements is good. There is a high level of employer satisfaction with the college's responsiveness to their needs. Weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been partially addressed. Key skills are now satisfactory, but retention rates are still low on a few courses. The strategies in place to address this are beginning to have a positive impact. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate.

Science and mathematics

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

38. The college offers courses in science and mathematics from levels 1 to 4. There are 121 students on level 2 courses, of whom 33 take first certificate programmes such as forensic science. In addition 88 students study GCSE mathematics; of these, 37 are on day-time courses and the remainder study part-time in the evening. A total of 113 students take AS levels in biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics and psychology. Thirty-six students are engaged on A2 courses in biology, mathematics, physics and psychology. A further 25 students take the national diploma course in forensic science. Around 80 students take access to higher education science programmes; approximately half of these attend part-time in the evening. Adult learners account for around 40% of enrolments.

Strengths

- good specialist resources and laboratory accommodation
- good induction and enrolment arrangements in 2007/08.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on most courses
- insufficient opportunities for students to use information and communication technology (ICT)
- ineffective target-setting in individual learning plans
- few subject enrichment activities for students
- ineffective quality assurance.

Achievement and standards

39. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Success rates at all levels have been poor over the past four years and declined in 2007/08. Retention rates are generally below national averages but in 2007/08 were satisfactory in AS biology, AS psychology and GCSE mathematics. Pass rates continue to be below recent national averages and well below in some A-level courses. However, achievements in 2007/08 were good in GCSE science, and satisfactory in A-level psychology and access to higher education.
40. Value-added data show that students on advanced courses achieve at or below expected levels. Too few students progress from AS to A level each year. The standard of students' work is satisfactory and they make good progress when undertaking practical work and small group activities.

Quality of provision

41. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned, and students take part in a good range of group and individual activities that promote

learning. Practical work is carried out safely, engages learners' interest and develops appropriate analytical skills. However, in some lessons, plans are not adhered to and learning objectives are not met. Teachers make good use of projectors and interactive whiteboards to enliven teaching and learning. Students, however, have too few opportunities to use ICT in lessons and laboratories.

42. Assessment is satisfactory. Assessment planning has recently been improved and teachers have clear guidelines to follow to meet the college requirements for monitoring and assessment. Written feedback on students' work is not specific enough to help students to make improvements. Targets in individual learning plans are often generic and do not indicate to students exactly what they need to do to improve.
43. The curriculum meets learners' needs and interests adequately. It provides a good range of vocational opportunities at levels 2 and 3. There were, however, too few subject enrichment activities in 2007/08. Enrolment criteria have recently been reviewed and more consistently applied. Arrangements for initial guidance and induction were much improved in September 2008. Tutorial support and target-setting have been improved and students appreciate one to one meetings.

Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Weaknesses identified at the previous inspection still remain. Recently appointed senior managers are focused on bringing about change and improving learners' outcomes. They have substantially improved quality assurance procedures and curriculum planning, but it is too early to judge the impact on learners' success rates. Management information is much improved. Team working and sharing of practice is developing. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. However, the judgement on teaching and learning is too generous. Laboratories and classrooms are modern and well resourced. There is strong emphasis on safe working practices in the laboratories. Equality of opportunity is promoted well.

Engineering

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

45. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses at level 1 to level 3 in engineering, automotive technology, electronics, production manufacturing and welding. Most of the provision is part-time. At the time of the inspection there were 1,331 learners on engineering courses and some 500 on automotive courses. Around half of learners are aged 16 to 18. In addition, there are almost 500 apprentices on work-based learning programmes and 67 adults on Train to Gain programmes.

Strengths

- high standard of student work
- effective use of student activities to support learning
- good academic support for learners
- effective employer links
- comprehensive range of industrial-standard equipment
- effective management action to improve success rates.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on too many courses
- planning to meet the individual needs of learners
- insufficient use of short-term targets in individual learning plans.

Achievement and standards

46. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall success rates are steadily improving and in 2006/07 were at the national average. College data for 2007/08 indicate further improvement. However, on some qualifications at all levels success rates are too low. The standard of most students' written and practical work is good. They work enthusiastically on industrial-standard training tasks, developing a good level of competence in using specialist tools and equipment.

Quality of provision

47. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the most effective lessons teachers encourage students to develop their own knowledge and understanding through well-planned learning activities; for example, in one level 2 marine engineering lesson, learners worked in small groups using a variety of learning resources, including the internet, to develop a thorough understanding of the hazards associated with welding.
48. Frequently lesson planning is weak. The learning outcomes often lack sufficient detail and do not adequately take into account the needs of the more able or least able learners. In some lessons the learners are not sufficiently engaged and there are some inappropriate teaching strategies, such as copying notes.

49. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory. They receive good written and oral feedback on what they need to do to improve. However, individual learning plans are under-developed. They show only the long-term goal and fail to identify any of the interim learning goals required to achieve the qualification.
50. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners is good. There is a good range of provision that enables learners to build on their achievement and progress to a higher level or employment. The college is responsive to local employers with a good short course and in-company training programme.
51. Guidance and support for learners are good. Tutors are responsive to learners' needs and arrange extra learning sessions for those who need more time to complete their work. Reports to employers are particularly effective in identifying the skills for which learners will need support in the workplace.

Leadership and management

52. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers are clear about their roles and responsibilities and have taken effective action to significantly improve overall success rates. Managers now monitor performance very closely and take effective action to address inadequate progress. To a large extent, all the weaknesses identified in the last inspection have now been addressed, although some success rates are still too low.
53. Accommodation has been improved and specialist workshops updated with a good range of industrial-standard tools and equipment. The self-assessment report identifies most of the strengths, but demonstrates insufficient reflection and evaluation on areas for improvement. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Construction

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

54. The provision comprises programmes in trowel and wood trades, plastering, painting and decorating, electrical installation, plumbing, heating and ventilation, air-conditioning and refrigeration, construction and civil engineering services, and technician studies from levels 1 to 3. At the time of inspection, there were 2,604 enrolments. The majority of learners are adults on part-time provision. Included in this total are 245 work-based learners, of whom the majority are advanced apprentices, and 74 Train to Gain learners. An introductory programme in construction crafts accounts for 47 learners aged 14 to 16 from six local schools.

Strengths

- high success rates on NVQs in 2007/08
- well managed and delivered practical programmes
- strong employer links
- high rates of progression throughout a wide range of provision
- good progress in improving the quality of provision.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on advanced apprenticeships
- insufficient focus on the needs of individual learners in theory lessons.

Achievement and standards

55. Learners' achievement is satisfactory overall. Success rates were high on NVQ courses in 2007/08. Success rates in key skills have doubled and are now high. Success rates on full-time courses have been low but are improving. Framework success rates on the advanced apprenticeship programme are now improving, having been below the national average for the last three years. Framework success on the apprenticeship programme is broadly average.

56. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory overall, and it is good in the workplace. Some learners have recently achieved recognition in regional skill competitions. Rates of progression throughout the wide range of provision are high. Progression into construction for learners aged 14 to 16 from schools link courses is good.

Quality of provision

57. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Practical lessons are good and in these teachers make good use of short-term target-setting. Teachers use practical sessions well to illustrate and reinforce learning points from theory lessons. However, in theory lessons, the range of teaching and learning strategies is limited. Lessons do not meet the needs of individual learners adequately, and

teachers make insufficient checks that learning has taken place before moving on to the next objective.

58. Monitoring of learner progress is good in most areas. Assessment is satisfactory. Some programmes provide on-demand assessment from dedicated work-based assessors, and employers value these arrangements highly.
59. The broad range of provision and progression opportunities meet the needs of learners and employers well. Consortium and partnership arrangements are strong. Learners from both wood- and trowel-trade areas broadened their personal and vocational skills when they visited a European college for two weeks last year. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory overall, with support being particularly effective in practical lessons. Initial assessment identifies adequately any additional learning needs, and specialist support staff respond promptly to identified needs.

Leadership and management

60. Leadership and management are good. Many successful actions to improve provision have been implemented since the last inspection; however, the full extent of these improvements has yet to have an impact on success rates in all areas. Communication within the sections and with senior staff is good. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Accommodation and resources to support learning are satisfactory at all sites. Teachers are appropriately qualified and new teachers are supported well. All staff use management information effectively. Sharing of good practice across all sections is at an early stage of development. The standard of course reviews is good. Self-assessment is broadly accurate but overstates the strengths of the provision.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Good: Grade 2

Context

61. The college offers courses in hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapies. Courses offer progression from entry level to foundation degree. There are 300 full-time students. Around two-thirds are aged 16 to 18. There are 339 part-time students, and around half are aged 16 to 18. The college makes provision for 40 learners aged 14 to 16 on a level 1 programme and for 90 work-based learners. Just over half of all students are in beauty and holistic therapies with the remainder in hairdressing.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- very high success rates on work-based learning programmes
- high levels of students' practical skills on many courses
- good teaching and learning
- extensive and good quality work experience provision
- high levels of progression through a well-planned curriculum
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- slow progress towards achievement in 14-16 provision on level 1 hairdressing
- insufficiently rigorous short-term personal targets in individual learning plans.

Achievement and standards

62. Learners' achievement is good. Success rates in hairdressing at levels 1, 2 and 3 have improved consistently since 2005 and are above the national average. Beauty therapy level 2 success rates exceeded national averages for the last two years and at level 3 have been at or above the national average for the last three years. Pass rates on the NVQ in nail services at levels 2 and 3 are outstanding. Success rates for work-based learning apprentices are very high. Key skills success rates exceed national averages at 65%. There has been low retention on beauty therapy level 1 for the last two years, though all those who stayed, passed. The standard of students' written work is good. Students demonstrate well-developed practical skills and good client care. There is very slow progress towards achievement on level 1 hairdressing for learners aged 14 to 16. The college has taken appropriate action to address this issue.

Quality of provision

63. Teaching and learning are good. The majority of lessons demonstrate effective management of learning and harmonious student-teacher relationships. Teachers supporting practical sessions are skilled in enabling students to develop confidence in their abilities. Assessment and monitoring of learners'

progress are good. Student tracking is effective in measuring students' progress. Reception staff are well qualified and efficient.

64. Programmes and activities meet students' needs well. There is an extensive and good quality work placement programme in both hairdressing and beauty therapy, enhancing employment prospects. The hair salons are spacious and used well but lack sufficient inspirational images to stimulate ideas. The hair and beauty product range reflects industry in its breadth and quality. There are good progression routes from entry level to foundation degree courses, and rates of progression through the levels are high, particularly in beauty therapy.
65. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Individual learning plans lack sufficient detail; targets often do not meet the needs or take into account the prior attainment of individual students. A tutorial scheme of work has yet to be fully effective.

Leadership and management

66. Leadership and management are good. There is a strong team ethos where all staff strive wholeheartedly to raise student achievement. Lesson observation reports carried out by non-subject specialists do not identify technical areas for development. Weaknesses around poor pass rates on level 1 and poor retention rates on level 2 hairdressing identified at the last inspection have been fully addressed. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Teachers and managers are aware of students' individual needs and list them on lesson plans, but need to do more to recognise them in teaching, learning and assessment. The self-assessment report is self-critical and broadly agrees with the inspection findings.

Arts, media and music technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

67. The college offers courses in art and design, performing arts, music practice, music technology, media and film studies. All areas except art and design offer courses at levels 2 and 3. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18. There are 101 students studying AS and A-level art, media and film studies. Around the same number study vocational courses in performing arts and music practice, and 52 students are enrolled on vocational media courses. Music technology courses are run in partnership between the college and a commercial company. There are 242 students, which account for approximately 45% of enrolments.

Strengths

- high success rates on music technology courses
- high pass rates
- good development of students' practical and technical skills
- well-planned curriculum meeting students' needs and supporting progression
- effective curriculum management in music technology.

Areas for improvement

- low retention rates on several courses
- insufficient focus on learning in lesson planning
- insufficiently precise targets in individual learning plans.

Achievement and standards

68. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Success rates on music technology courses are outstanding. Pass rates are high on almost all courses. However, retention rates remain below average on several courses. They have declined on first and national diploma performing arts courses for four successive years. Improving in-year retention rates on the first year of courses provide early indications that strategies to improve retention are beginning to have an effect.
69. Students' work is of a good standard and they acquire good technical and practical skills. Media students often work on projects for external clients. Performing arts and music students perform in professional venues. Art students develop good drawing skills using a variety of media. The college's partnership with a commercial company enables music technology students to develop a good understanding of the music industry.

Quality of provision

70. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Many teachers have relevant vocational or industry experience. They provide good individual support in lessons. However, in a few lessons observed, teachers did not manage whole group

demonstrations or discussions effectively. Lesson planning is too often focused on tasks and activities, rather than on what students are expected to learn.

71. Assessment feedback enables students to improve their work. However, the college has only recently begun to set achievement targets for A-level students and this process is not yet fully in place for those on vocational courses.
72. The curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of students and provides good progression routes to higher education and employment. Students enjoy the good range of curriculum opportunities, including visits to galleries, theatres and media studios.
73. Guidance and support are satisfactory. The college identified weaknesses in student support and has put new procedures in place from September 2008. Initial assessment has improved so that students now receive prompt support. Targets in individual learning plans are not sufficiently precise to monitor progress and support improvement. The tutorial system has been revised to ensure that monitoring students' progress is carried out consistently, but it is still too early to determine the impact of these changes.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recently appointed managers are beginning to bring about the necessary improvements. They have a good understanding of strengths and areas requiring further improvement. Self-assessment is largely accurate. Curriculum management in music technology has been particularly effective in raising student achievement, through the use of an excellent electronic tracking and assessment system.
75. Equality of opportunity is promoted well through specific events and curriculum content. Students using wheelchairs are fully integrated into performing arts lessons. The music technology curriculum has been adapted to include those with low prior attainment.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, 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 |
| All Long - Level 1 | 05/06 | 1444 | 73 | 69 | 4 | 667 | 63 | 65 | -2 |
| | 06/07 | 1606 | 84 | 74 | 10 | 996 | 72 | 70 | 2 |
| | 07/08* | 1001 | 77 | N/A | | 600 | 70 | N/A | |
| GNVQs/ AVCEs | 05/06 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| | 06/07 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| | 07/08* | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| NVQs | 05/06 | 71 | 62 | 72 | -10 | 29 | 90 | 74 | 16 |
| | 06/07 | 93 | 73 | 75 | -2 | 56 | 84 | 75 | 9 |
| | 07/08* | 92 | 75 | N/A | | 86 | 81 | N/A | |
| Other | 05/06 | 1373 | 74 | 69 | 5 | 638 | 61 | 65 | -4 |
| | 06/07 | 1513 | 84 | 74 | 10 | 940 | 72 | 70 | 2 |
| | 07/08* | 909 | 77 | N/A | | 514 | 66 | N/A | |

* college data

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, 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 |
| All Long - Level 2 | 05/06 | 1251 | 61 | 66 | -5 | 2537 | 58 | 66 | -8 |
| | 06/07 | 1154 | 61 | 70 | -9 | 2258 | 68 | 69 | -1 |
| | 07/08* | 1425 | 74 | N/A | | 1949 | 78 | N/A | |
| GCSEs | 05/06 | 199 | 56 | 68 | -12 | 107 | 63 | 67 | -4 |
| | 06/07 | 154 | 57 | 71 | -14 | 70 | 57 | 70 | -13 |
| | 07/08* | 123 | 74 | N/A | | 89 | 73 | N/A | |
| GNVQs/ AVCEs | 05/06 | 132 | 70 | 69 | 1 | 22 | 77 | 68 | 9 |
| | 06/07 | 73 | 79 | 73 | 6 | 14 | 86 | 71 | 15 |
| | 07/08* | 47 | 62 | N/A | | 15 | 87 | N/A | |
| NVQs | 05/06 | 312 | 67 | 65 | 2 | 1295 | 63 | 68 | -5 |
| | 06/07 | 351 | 61 | 68 | -7 | 1114 | 61 | 69 | -8 |
| | 07/08* | 256 | 75 | N/A | | 860 | 77 | N/A | |
| Other | 05/06 | 608 | 57 | 66 | -9 | 1113 | 52 | 65 | -13 |
| | 06/07 | 576 | 60 | 70 | -10 | 1060 | 76 | 69 | 7 |
| | 07/08* | 999 | 75 | N/A | | 985 | 79 | N/A | |

* college data

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, 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 |
| All Long - Level 3 | 05/06 | 1528 | 63 | 71 | -8 | 2049 | 57 | 64 | -7 |
| | 06/07 | 1599 | 64 | 73 | -9 | 1807 | 64 | 68 | -4 |
| | 07/08* | 1453 | 65 | N/A | | 1977 | 69 | N/A | |
| A/A2 Levels | 05/06 | 238 | 79 | 87 | -8 | 40 | 75 | 72 | 3 |
| | 06/07 | 223 | 83 | 87 | -4 | 30 | 87 | 76 | 11 |
| | 07/08* | 159 | 77 | N/A | | 37 | 84 | N/A | |
| AS Levels | 05/06 | 610 | 59 | 67 | -8 | 71 | 55 | 55 | 0 |
| | 06/07 | 500 | 54 | 69 | -15 | 73 | 56 | 59 | -3 |
| | 07/08* | 504 | 53 | N/A | | 44 | 64 | N/A | |
| GNVQs/ AVCEs | 05/06 | 140 | 71 | 66 | 5 | 5 | 60 | 57 | 3 |
| | 06/07 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3 | 0 | 59 | -59 |
| | 07/08* | ... | ... | ... | ... | 5 | 0 | N/A | |
| NVQs | 05/06 | 71 | 75 | 71 | 4 | 666 | 56 | 63 | -7 |
| | 06/07 | 71 | 70 | 74 | -4 | 559 | 60 | 69 | -9 |
| | 07/08* | 64 | 80 | N/A | | 457 | 66 | N/A | |
| Other | 05/06 | 469 | 55 | 65 | -10 | 1267 | 57 | 64 | -7 |
| | 06/07 | 805 | 64 | 70 | -6 | 1142 | 65 | 69 | -4 |
| | 07/08* | 725 | 69 | N/A | | 1434 | 71 | N/A | |

* college data

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 | 167 | 70 | 48 | 49 | 34 |
| | | timely | 157 | 50 | 31 | 31 | 22 |
| | 05/06 | overall | 175 | 63 | 53 | 58 | 44 |
| | | timely | 161 | 53 | 34 | 48 | 27 |
| | 06/07 | overall | 194 | 61 | 64 | 57 | 58 |
| | | timely | 199 | 35 | 43 | 32 | 37 |
| Apprenticeships | 04/05 | overall | 130 | 62 | 51 | 46 | 39 |
| | | timely | 133 | 39 | 29 | 28 | 22 |
| | 05/06 | overall | 212 | 63 | 58 | 57 | 52 |
| | | timely | 220 | 41 | 38 | 37 | 34 |
| | 06/07 | overall | 188 | 71 | 65 | 70 | 61 |
| | | timely | 173 | 55 | 47 | 54 | 44 |

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

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

Table 5a - College data

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider/college 2007 to 2008

| Programme | End Year | Success rate | No. of learners* | college/provider NVQ rate** |
|-------------------|----------|--------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Train to Gain NVQ | 2006/07 | overall | 93 | 58% |
| | | timely | 93 | 58% |
| | 2007/08 | overall | 333 | 75% |
| | | timely | 327 | 68% |

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 6

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college 2006 to 2008

| Year | Number of leavers in the year | Achieved objectives rate* (%) | Progression rate** (%) |
|---------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 2005/06 | 330 | 74% | 57% |
| 2006/07 | 357 | 78% | 62% |
| 2007/08 | 388 | 79% | 61% |

For the full month of August, there were 63 leavers from the E2E programme. Achieved objectives and progression rate remain consistent with full year outcomes shown in the table above. Progressions were mainly into an Apprenticeship or FE course.

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

- * These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme
- ** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period.

Note: E2E 'achieved objective' and 'progression' rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection