

St Vincent College

Inspection report

Provider reference 108387
Published date January 2009

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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, public services and care; science and mathematics; sport and travel; arts and media; and languages, literature and culture.

Description of the provider

1. St Vincent College is a medium-sized sixth form college situated in Gosport, Hampshire. Two other sixth form colleges, a school with a sixth form and three general further education colleges are fewer than 10 miles away. Gosport is situated at the end of a peninsula and served by limited road and transport links. The college was established as an open access community sixth form college in September 1987 as the result of a reorganisation within the Gosport area of two 11-18 schools and two 11-16 schools. On its establishment, St Vincent was given the brief to widen the participation of students aged 16 and

over. Courses for students aged 16 to 18 are mostly delivered on the main campus. Courses for adults take place on the main campus, in seven community venues and through a learndirect contract.

2. The college has provision in all 15 sector subject areas. The number of full-time equivalent students in 2006/07 was 1,505. Of these, 75% were aged 16 to 18. Over 3,600 students were on roll accounting for over 8,994 enrolments. Of the number on roll, 47% were male. Almost 90% of students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than in the local population. At the time of the inspection, 3,623 students had enrolled on long courses. For students aged 16 to 18, 76% study on long level 3 courses and just over 10% study on long level 2 courses. For those aged 19 and over, 40% take long level 2 courses and the remainder study on long level 1 and 3 courses in almost equal proportions.
3. The proportion of school pupils who achieved five or more GCSEs at A* to C in 2007 in Gosport was 46.4%, almost 16 percentage points below the England average. None of the three main feeder secondary schools in Gosport achieved above the local or national average in 2007. In Gosport, about three-quarters of students stay in education after the age of 16, slightly below the Hampshire average. Five of the most deprived wards in Hampshire are within the Gosport area and have high levels of unemployment and a high proportion of residents under the age of 15. Almost one third of students on A-level courses attend from these areas. The college enrolls students with a wide range of prior achievement, with many students achieving below national averages at GCSE. Students' average attainment on entry for AS-level courses has declined in each of the three years to 2007/08. Just under half of students aged 16 to 18 are in receipt of an education maintenance allowance (EMA).
4. The college's mission is 'to inspire all students to achieve their full potential'.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Health, public services and care | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Science and mathematics | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Sport and travel | Good: Grade 2 |
| Arts and media | Good: Grade 2 |
| Languages, literature and culture | Good: Grade 2 |

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. St Vincent College is a good college. Since the last inspection, St Vincent College has sustained the quality of its provision during a period in which it faced a possible merger and a weakened financial position. Over the last three years, the college has improved success rates whilst students' average GCSE point scores on entry have declined. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall success rates remain below the national average for sixth form colleges. Success rates are high at level 1, for many A-level subjects and on most vocational courses. On level 3 courses, students generally make the progress that is expected of them. They make good progress on courses at level 2 and below. The standard of students' work is high. Success rates are below the national average for key skills, some level 2 courses and for some AS-level subjects.
6. Teaching and learning are good. Challenging and stimulating teaching is matched closely to students' needs and abilities, enabling them to contribute confidently and participate well in learning. Learning support is good, providing very effective support in lessons. Assessment is good. The use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning is insufficient.
7. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. The college successfully raises educational aspirations and participation of the community by offering a diverse and responsive curriculum with good progression from level 1 and below to level 3, with some courses at level 4. Provision for adults includes well planned off-site courses, leading to qualifications and increasing employability in the most deprived areas. Provision for students with severe and moderate learning difficulties is well established. Recruitment from schools where GCSE results and attendance are below the national average is high. The college successfully recruits students from under-represented groups, including those who would not normally go to college, and secures application to university from students whose families have little experience of higher education. Just under 50% of students are in receipt of an education maintenance allowance. Students mix well across ability ranges and contribute strongly to the community of the college.
8. The extent to which the college meets the needs and interests of students and employers is good. Enrichment opportunities are excellent. Guidance and support are good. Good individual support enables students to achieve their potential and has significantly improved attendance. Careers guidance is good, contributing to the high levels of progression.
9. Leadership and management are good. The college has good strategic leadership that raises educational aspirations and participation within its local community. Quality assurance is good. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Governance is satisfactory. The current range of skills on the governing

body limits its ability to scrutinise fully all aspects of the college. Value for money and financial management are satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. The college's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Success rates show a steady and sustained improvement whilst students' attainment on entry has fallen. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the self-assessment report is broadly accurate. The college accurately evaluates the quality of its teaching and learning. Managers monitor closely courses where performance is lower than expected. Quality improvement plans contain clear actions to raise standards. Quality assurance is good but the implementation and monitoring of action plans at course level vary across the college. Management information is accurate and used well as an improvement tool.
11. The college has faced much uncertainty about its future since the last inspection. Senior management has successfully guided the college through a period of reorganisation, financial constraint and staffing reductions without a negative impact on the quality of provision. One key senior post remains vacant. At the time of inspection, the governing body had several vacancies, limiting its range of expertise to scrutinise fully all aspects of the college, especially finance.

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

12. The college has made satisfactory progress to promote improvement since the last inspection. It has maintained and developed all the key strengths. Pass rates on AS-level courses have improved overall but in some subjects remain low. The progress students make in relation to their prior attainment has improved and most now make satisfactory progress at level 3 and good progress at level 2. The college has improved its arrangements for tutorials. It has introduced specialist tutors and restructured the tutorial programme to monitor students' progress more effectively. However, the availability and use of ILT remains an area for improvement. Although the college has invested in more equipment, its use is mostly restricted to presentations rather than to enhance learning. Students' achievement of key skills remains low despite improvements in individual tests and portfolio completion.

Key strengths

- high success rates at level 1, on many A-level courses and most vocational courses
- challenging and stimulating teaching and learning matched closely to students' needs and abilities
- diverse and responsive curriculum, offering good progression
- outstanding educational and social inclusion
- good individual support, enabling students to achieve their potential
- good strategic leadership to raise aspirations and participation in education within the local community.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the need to raise success rates on key skills, level 2 and AS-level courses
- the further investment in, and use of, ILT to enhance learning
- the consistency in the implementation and monitoring of improvement action plans at course level
- the range of skills of the governing body
- the financial position of the college.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, and in agreement with the self-assessment report, the college has sustained steady improvement in its overall success rates for all students, whilst the average GCSE point score on entry for students aged 16 to 18 has declined. In 2007/08, the rate of improvement increased for both age groups, taking success rates for adults above the national average for 2006/07 and bringing the success rates for students aged 16 to 18 closer to the national average. Overall, retention rates have improved and are now very near the national average. Over the last three years, the college has improved students' progress. Most now make satisfactory or better progress based on their prior attainment. The standard of students' work is high. They develop and apply good practical, creative and analytical skills in lessons. The college has improved the success rates of males. Students in receipt of additional support achieve well.
14. Success rates for all students on long level 1 courses are significantly above the national average. At level 2, they are low for students aged 16 to 18 and around the national average for adults. Most students aged 16 to 18 take GCSE and vocational courses and the rate of improvement for these courses was high in 2007/08, taking success rates to the national average of 2006/07. Success rates were low for the small proportion of 16 to 18 students taking national vocational qualifications (NVQ). For adults, success rates declined for GCSEs, mainly as a result of low retention rates in mathematics, but improved significantly for NVQs.
15. Overall success rates at level 3 are below the national average for sixth form colleges for both age groups, mainly as a result of low success rates on AS-level courses. Many of these students have very low GCSE attainment when compared to other sixth form and tertiary colleges. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 on AS-level courses are at the national average when compared to colleges with similar student attainment on entry. Success rates on A-level courses are high for both age groups. They have been similar to the high national average for sixth form colleges for students aged 16 to 18 over the last three years and in 2007/08 improved to substantially above the national average of 2006/07 for adults.
16. Success rates are high on many vocational courses. Success rates are high with good achievement of higher grades on many first and national diploma courses, especially in public services, sports, media and performing arts. Most students on these courses perform significantly better than would be expected from their GCSE grades.
17. Progression of students to higher education and employment is good. Students' progression to higher level courses in the college is good. Overall attendance for 2007/08 was satisfactory at 84%, a significant improvement on the previous year.

18. Success rates on key skills remain low. In 2006/07, the overall college success rate was significantly below the national average. In 2007/08, more students were successful in individual key skills tests and more had completed their portfolios.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

19. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good, in agreement with the self-assessment report. The college has maintained the high quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Both the internal and external lesson observation schemes accurately evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Course teams make good use of the findings of lesson observations to raise the quality of teaching. Teachers match closely their students' abilities to their teaching. They use individual targets well to plan productive, challenging, and often lively, lessons that enable students to contribute confidently and participate fully. Individual and group work are effective, with a good focus on skills' development. Teachers make good use of lesson content to raise students' understanding of equality and diversity through topical debate. In a few lessons, teachers do not check learning sufficiently to stretch the more able students.
20. The use of ILT to enhance learning remains insufficient. Since the last inspection, the college has increased its ILT resources. Teachers mostly use ILT as a presentation tool rather than as an interactive learning resource to complement the content of lessons. Some subject areas make good use of the college's virtual learning environment (VLE).
21. Learning support is good. Students' additional support needs are assessed accurately and early in their course. Initial assessment identifies learning difficulties and determines the correct level of support. Learning support assistants work very effectively with teaching staff to provide good support.
22. Assessment is good. Feedback on assessed work is generally positive and provides students with clear guidance on how to improve their work. Some feedback is informal and does not identify sufficiently how students could raise the standard of their work.
23. The extent to which the college meets the needs and interests of students and employers is good. The college offers a diverse and responsive curriculum with good progression routes from levels 1 to 3. Since the last inspection, it has expanded vocational provision at levels 1 and 2. At level 3, the good range of academic courses is supplemented by relevant vocational options in many areas. It has academies to develop specialist skills and a sixth form academy that promotes high achievement.
24. Productive and well established local partnerships have developed new provision and increased recruitment. Responsive provision in deprived communities focuses on employability skills and vocational qualifications for adults.

25. Students take advantage of the excellent curriculum and cross-college enrichment opportunities that enable them to make a positive contribution to the Gosport community. Participation in enrichment is high. The student council actively promotes fundraising and social events. The college recognises that it could provide more work experience and placement opportunities to students.
26. Guidance and support are good. Students benefit from comprehensive welfare services as well as referral to specialist agencies for wider support. Events for prospective students ensure that they make well informed choices and complement the good induction that enables students to settle quickly into their studies.
27. Tutorial support is good. Good individual support enables students to achieve their potential. A team of specialist tutors provides comprehensive tutorial support that monitors and shares students' targets for attendance, punctuality and progress. Teachers, tutors and parents/carers value highly the prompt referral process that raises concerns in relation to individual targets. The group tutorial programme includes good content that promotes students' health, safety and personal development through the Every Child Matters themes, general studies or key skills.
28. Careers guidance is good and helps to raise students' aspirations. Support for students applying to higher education is very good. Regular and well attended events take place for students progressing to employment.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

29. Leadership and management are good. The principal has provided strong and dynamic leadership during a period of much uncertainty in which the college faced a possible merger and a weakened financial position. Senior management successfully resolved the financial deficit through timely and decisive action that has maintained the quality of provision, although the financial position of the college remains fragile. The principal, senior managers and governors have adhered strongly to the college's purpose of providing education and training to students of all ages and abilities. Good management has contributed to sustained improvements in students' achievement since the last inspection.
30. Curriculum management is good. Following recent changes to the management structure, communication and accountability have improved substantially. The management information system provides accurate, accessible and well used data that have been used effectively to improve performance at all levels.
31. Quality assurance is good. The self-assessment process is comprehensive, involving all staff and making good use of the student involvement strategy. The self-assessment report contains much evaluative detail and is broadly accurate. Thorough lesson observations and internal and external quality

reviews, linked to the annual assessment of staff performance, result in clear action plans that identify good practice and areas for improvement. The sharing of good practice forms a regular part of course team meetings. However, the implementation and monitoring of improvement actions varies considerably at course team level.

32. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The college plays an important role in raising educational aspirations and participation in further education in the local community. Demonstrating its commitment to widen participation, the college enjoys strong and productive links with local schools, the 14-19 consortium, support agencies and employers. Improved marketing and high profile activities have resulted in an increase in the number of applications from more able students whilst still recruiting young people who might not normally participate in further education.
33. The college meets the statutory requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) and the Equality Act 2006. It provides a safe and welcoming environment in which to study. Appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place for the protection of children and vulnerable adults, and all staff and governors have received relevant training. The introduction, in June 2008, of a comprehensive single equality scheme identifies clearly how the college embraces its duty to promote equality both in the classroom and as an employer. The promotion of equality in lessons is good.
34. The college analyses closely the success rates of students by different groups. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is slightly above the local representation. Through its 'challenge to succeed' programme, the college has been particularly successful in raising the success rates of boys on level 3 courses from below the overall college average in 2006/07 to just above in 2007/08, especially on AS-level courses. At the same time, it has increased the higher grade achievement of girls at level 3.
35. Governance is satisfactory. The well informed governors are strongly supportive of the college and participate fully in its quality improvement processes. However, the college acknowledges that an exceptional number of vacancies in the governing body reduces its expertise.
36. The quality of accommodation and resources is good. Teachers are suitably qualified. Staff development is good with clear links to appraisal and quality reviews. Financial management is satisfactory. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

37. The college offers full-time courses, mainly for students aged 16 to 18, in health and social care at levels 1 to 3 and in childcare and public services at levels 2 and 3. Sixteen students study on courses at level 1, 62 at level 2 and 85 at level 3. Most health, care and childcare students are female and most public services students are male. Forty-three students follow the NVQ in children's care, learning and development at level 2 and 38 at level 3. Ten students take the NVQ in care at level 2 and 16 at level 3. Fifty-seven students take counselling courses. Twelve students are on the level 1 Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) course, delivered in a local community centre.

Strengths

- high pass rates on the first diploma in public services and on the NVQ in children's care, learning and development
- good teaching to develop work-based skills
- very good range of provision to meet the needs of employers and the community.

Areas for improvement

- low retention rates in health and social care
- insufficient ILT resources on childcare courses.

Achievement and standards

38. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall success rates are satisfactory on most courses. Pass rates are high on the first diploma in public services and NVQs in children's care, learning and development, exceeding the high national averages by more than five percentage points on most courses. Students on the national diploma in public services make much better progress than would be expected from their GCSE results. Retention rates are low in health and social care, with some courses at least 10 percentage points lower than the national average.

39. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Students develop good work-based skills. In public services, they apply their team working skills well to the design of obstacle courses. They supervise other students carefully, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as they try out the courses. Attendance is good, particularly on public services courses. Students arrive punctually, behave well and enjoy their lessons.

Quality of provision

40. Teaching and learning are good. Students benefit from well planned lessons that contain a variety of activities, use thought-provoking materials and relate learning to current vocational practice. They develop a good awareness of equality and diversity in lessons and participate confidently in topical debates. Childcare students demonstrate much sensitivity to the language used to describe children with learning disabilities. Assessment is good. Teachers regularly check students' understanding in lessons. Students receive useful feedback on their assignments. ILT resources on childcare courses are insufficient. None of the classrooms contain interactive whiteboards. Childcare students are unable to gain the skills they need to use this equipment in their school placements.
41. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of students is good. The range of courses for employers is very good. Employed NVQ care students benefit from the particularly flexible arrangements that enable assessment to take place in accordance with shift working. The college has established part-time courses in community centres in childcare and care that have enabled students to progress well into employment or to higher courses.
42. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Students benefit from regular tutorial support that monitors their progress effectively. Adult students on courses in the community receive good guidance before they start childcare and care courses.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following the management reorganisation, curriculum managers have implemented effective actions to raise standards. The overall self-assessment report is broadly accurate and makes effective use of the evaluative course level reports. The quality improvement plan contains detailed actions that have led to improvements in provision. Managers monitor underperforming courses closely. Lesson observations accurately identify key developmental priorities. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

Science and mathematics

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

44. The college offers AS and A-level courses in psychology, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics and applied science as well as GCSEs in mathematics and biology. Just over 530 students aged 16 to 18 attend as full-time students during the day and 125 adults follow courses in GCSE mathematics, biology or AS psychology, mainly in the evening.

Strengths

- high success rates in AS and A-level chemistry and physics
- high standard of students' written and practical work
- good support for students.

Areas for improvement

- low achievement on AS psychology and mathematics
- low achievement of high grades on GCSE mathematics
- insufficient monitoring of the progress of improvement action plans.

Achievement and standards

45. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are high on AS and A-level chemistry and physics. On AS and A-level courses retention rates have improved over the last three years and are mostly above the high national averages. Success rates on A-level courses are high and students achieve the grades that would be expected from their GCSE results. Pass rates on AS mathematics and psychology courses with the highest proportion of students have declined and are very low. On these courses students do less well than would be expected from their GCSE results. The achievement of high grades on GCSE mathematics is low. Many adults take this course, and whilst the pass rates are better than for younger students, the retention rate is poor.
46. The standard of students' written and practical work is high. Students present work neatly and most are confident in their use of scientific terminology. Students in A-level mathematics are fluent in their use of numerical calculations and algebraic manipulations. In practical lessons, students work safely and methodically, acquiring good laboratory skills. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is generally good.

Quality of provision

47. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are generally well planned and include a good range of learning activities. In the better lessons, teachers provide challenge and time for students to work through ideas for themselves as they solve problems. In many lessons, the use of questioning insufficiently challenges students to explain their understanding of concepts and processes.

Classrooms and laboratories are well equipped and provide a safe and inviting place in which to learn. Whilst teachers use data projectors and students have increasing access to online learning materials, often these are only used to present information rather than to enhance learning.

48. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. Teachers mark work accurately and thoroughly and provide detailed and encouraging feedback to help students to improve. Teachers monitor insufficiently students' completion of homework tasks.
49. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of students is good. The college has recently introduced an applied science double award course for advanced level students wanting a combined and more vocational option. Adult students benefit from good availability of GCSE mathematics lessons, during the day and evening and in a local community school.
50. Guidance and support are good. Teachers monitor students' progress closely through tutorials. Through the use of an online system, all teachers share students' progress reviews and attendance records. The use of target grades to monitor students' progress varies considerably across subjects.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Curriculum managers conduct a good and accurate analysis of the performance trends of each course, including results by gender, and value-added data. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. However, it fails to identify strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning, making it difficult to share good practice. Action plans contain much detail but the monitoring of progress is insufficient. The quality of individual course reviews varies considerably between subjects. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good.

Sport and travel

Good: Grade 2

Context

52. The college offers courses in leisure, sport, travel and tourism with progression routes for students from levels 1 to 3. Just over 140 students take full-time courses, mostly at level 3, and about 130 follow part-time courses. About two-thirds of students are male. A further 93 students take courses through the sports academy. Most students are aged 16 to 18.

Strengths

- good achievement of high grades on most vocational courses
- good development of practical skills
- good teaching of coaching and practical skills
- good support for students
- strong curriculum management to enhance the student experience.

Areas for improvement

- low achievement of high grades on AS and A-level physical education
- insufficient challenge in some AS and A-level theory lessons to meet the needs of more able students.

Achievement and standards

53. Achievement and standards are good. The achievement of high grades on most vocational courses is good. High grade achievement on the first diploma and national certificate in sport is significantly higher than the national average, with students making better progress than would be expected from their GCSE results. Success rates are high on additional coaching courses and sports awards. Success rates on most other full-time courses are around the national average. Over the last three years, the achievement of high grades on AS and A-level physical education has been low.

54. Students develop good practical skills with many of the sports academy students competing at local, county and national events. Progression from level 2 to 3 is high as is the proportion of students who progress to higher education. The standard of students' written work is high. They develop good leadership skills through the confident coaching and instruction of local junior school children in swimming skills. Effective monitoring of students' progress has significantly improved attendance and punctuality.

Quality of provision

55. Teaching and learning are good. The teaching of coaching and practical skills is good. Teachers plan lessons well and link the learning to practical assignments. Group work is particularly effective and contributes to students' enjoyment of their lessons. They are keen to contribute in lessons and share well their knowledge of, for example, the impact of the different food groups on the

body's performance or which muscle groups are affected by warm up activities. In some AS and A-level theory lessons, teachers do not always challenge the more able through the use of extension activities. In most lessons, students make good use of their independent learning skills.

56. Assessment and the monitoring of students' progress are good. Constructive feedback helps students to improve their work. Good initial assessment identifies literacy and numeracy needs well. Learning support is good and enables students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to participate in lessons.
57. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of most students is good. Curriculum enrichment is very good. Many students make a positive contribution to the community through coaching, refereeing and being lifeguards. The range of courses and sporting opportunities is good. Students' practical skills are enhanced as a result of the very good partnerships between the college, local schools, employers and the local community.
58. Support for students is good. Teachers and personal tutors contribute strongly to students' success through the careful monitoring of their progress against targets. Students enjoy the good tutorial programme that promotes their health and well-being.

Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management are good. Strong curriculum management has enhanced the student experience. Successful actions have already raised students' performance. Course reviews are comprehensive and contribute well to the accurate self-assessment report. The availability and use of data are good. Quality assurance of teaching and learning is effective. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Teachers make good links between sport, travel and diversity to foster students' better understanding of equality.

Arts and media

Good: Grade 2

Context

60. The college offers arts and media courses to 695 students, mostly at level 3. Of these, 315 follow art and design courses, 205 study media and 175 take performing arts courses. Most students are aged 16 to 18. Eighty-nine students complement their AS or A-level study with a vocational national certificate.

Strengths

- high success rates on AS-level communication studies, film studies, music technology and A-level art and design and music technology
- high success rates on most vocational programmes
- high standard of students' work in performing arts and textiles
- good teaching to stimulate students' creativity
- very wide range of enrichment activities to develop students' creativity
- good leadership by curriculum managers to raise success rates.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates in AS media studies and music
- insufficient ILT to enrich learning
- insufficient feedback to students on some assessed work.

Achievement and standards

61. Achievement and standards are good. Over the last three years, success rates have been consistently high on AS communication studies, film studies and music technology and on A-level art and design and music technology. Success rates are high on most vocational courses and demonstrate sustained improvement. Most students start their studies with substantially lower than average GCSE achievement. Progress is good on level 2 courses and very good in dance and textiles where most students achieve better than expected from their GCSE results. Success rates in AS-level media studies and music are low.

62. The standard of students' work is high. Students in performing arts perform with confidence and creativity, producing very good ensemble work. Students produce imaginative and experimental work in textiles. Punctuality is very good.

Quality of provision

63. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is good and stimulates students' creativity. Students work purposefully and enjoy their lessons. They contribute ideas freely and respond well to teachers' direct questioning. Teachers encourage students strongly to strive for high standards. In the best lessons, students work on imaginative projects to produce training videos in media or to reinterpret dance sequences from the last century. Students display high levels of responsibility in performing arts lessons and make good progress. Teaching

makes insufficient use of ILT to enrich learning. Few classrooms have data projectors, restricting students' access to valuable internet resources.

64. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are generally satisfactory. However, students receive insufficient feedback on some assessed work. Some feedback provides little guidance on how the student can improve. In some cases, students receive verbal rather than written feedback. Some assessment decisions in media are too generous.
65. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of students is good. Students develop their creativity through a very wide range of enrichment activities across all subjects. Performing arts and dance students teach sessions in a school as part of a youth dance project and music students perform live regularly. They benefit from many cultural visits. Students make very good use of rehearsal time and access to art studios outside of lessons.
66. Guidance and support are good and help students develop their confidence and study skills. Teachers provide good academic support. Tutorial support on full-time level 2 courses helps students develop good target-setting and interpersonal skills.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management are good. Good leadership by curriculum managers has raised success rates. Curriculum managers' self-assessment reports are largely accurate and contain comprehensive action plans. Managers have identified reasons for poor performance on specific courses and have taken successful action to bring about improvements. Course reviews in art and design analyse performance data well but in media the analysis and action planning is less developed. The promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum is satisfactory. At departmental level, it is insufficiently co-ordinated, with little analysis of student performance by different groups.

Languages, literature and culture

Good: Grade 2

Context

68. The college offers AS-level and A-level courses in English language, English literature, English language and literature and in French, German and Spanish. GCSE Japanese and NVQ Spanish courses are also available for students aged 16 to 18. It offers GCSE English for students of all ages. The college provides part-time language courses for adults. At the time of inspection, 229 students had enrolled on English and 62 on language courses.

Strengths

- high success rates on A-level English language and GCSE English
- much good teaching to engage and challenge students
- good curriculum support for students
- good curriculum management to improve success rates.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on AS English language and literature and A-level English literature
- insufficient development of AS-level students' independent study skills
- insufficient use of ILT to enhance teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

69. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates have been high on A-level English language and GCSE English over the past three years and for the small number of students following AS Spanish, A-level German and GCSE Japanese. Students on A-level English language and German achieve significantly higher grades than expected from their GCSE results. Retention rates on AS language courses are good. Success rates in 2008 were low for AS English language and literature and A-level English literature.

70. Students enjoy their lessons, gain in confidence and make good progress. In English lessons, most express their own opinions and ideas well and, at advanced level, demonstrate good analytical skills and a grasp of complex concepts. In language lessons, students demonstrate good understanding of the taught language and relevant grammar. Teachers make effective use of absence tracking processes and attendance has improved.

Quality of provision

71. Teaching and learning are good. Much teaching is engaging and challenges students with a variety of stimulating activities. Teachers display good subject knowledge. They structure lessons to ensure the learning responds to the different needs of students. They elicit students' own ideas and opinions through skilful questioning and in-depth discussion. In language lessons,

teachers make good use of the spoken language as a model for learning. Some students, however, use English too frequently in group or pair work. Students participate actively and enthusiastically in lessons and enjoy a good rapport with teachers. Assessment of students' written work is detailed and provides formative feedback to help them improve.

72. Many students on AS courses have not developed their independent study skills sufficiently. They do not take full advantage of learning and curriculum support or sufficient responsibility for their own learning. Many teachers use ILT insufficiently to enhance teaching and learning and do not make sufficient innovative use of available technology.
73. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of students is good. Curriculum enrichment is good and includes subject workshops, innovative examination preparation, cultural visits and clubs. Adult students benefit from courses designed to meet their language needs both at the college and in community venues.
74. Support is good. Students benefit from good curriculum support, including extensive individual support in lessons and good access to support materials on the college's virtual learning environment. Highly relevant tutorial activities help students remain safe and healthy and good careers advice prepares them for higher education or future employment.

Leadership and management

75. Leadership and management are good. Good curriculum management has improved success rates. Since the last inspection, many retention rates have improved, as have pass rates in GCSE English. Communication is very effective. Meetings focus strongly on teaching and learning, quality improvement and student support. The curriculum self-assessment reports accurately identify key strengths and areas for improvement. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and features strongly in the planning of courses and lessons.

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 | 474 | 74 | 71 | 3 | 350 | 54 | 57 | -3 |
| | 06/07 | 368 | 64 | 73 | -9 | 398 | 69 | 64 | 5 |
| | 07/08* | 244 | 85 | N/A | | 330 | 73 | N/A | |
| GNVQs and precursors | 05/06 | 18 | 56 | 78 | -22 | 1 | 100 | ... | ... |
| | 06/07 | 24 | 46 | ... | ... | 3 | 33 | ... | ... |
| | 07/08* | 16 | 69 | N/A | | ... | ... | N/A | |
| NVQs | 05/06 | 1 | 100 | ... | ... | 14 | 14 | ... | ... |
| | 06/07 | 1 | 0 | ... | ... | 11 | 27 | ... | ... |
| | 07/08* | 3 | 0 | N/A | | 4 | 25 | N/A | |
| Other | 05/06 | 455 | 74 | 71 | 3 | 335 | 56 | 57 | -1 |
| | 06/07 | 343 | 65 | 72 | -7 | 384 | 70 | 64 | 6 |
| | 07/08* | 225 | 87 | N/A | | 326 | 74 | N/A | |

* 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 | 764 | 71 | 78 | -7 | 316 | 65 | 65 | 0 |
| | 06/07 | 755 | 68 | 82 | -14 | 313 | 58 | 65 | -7 |
| | 07/08* | 382 | 76 | N/A | | 288 | 63 | N/A | |
| GCSEs | 05/06 | 463 | 76 | 82 | -6 | 137 | 61 | 67 | -6 |
| | 06/07 | 472 | 71 | 83 | -12 | 117 | 63 | 68 | -5 |
| | 07/08* | 155 | 83 | N/A | | 105 | 57 | N/A | |
| GNVQs and precursors | 05/06 | 65 | 60 | 77 | -17 | 1 | 0 | ... | ... |
| | 06/07 | 64 | 56 | 78 | -22 | 3 | 33 | ... | ... |
| | 07/08* | 48 | 58 | N/A | | 11 | 55 | N/A | |
| NVQs | 05/06 | 18 | 72 | ... | ... | 94 | 68 | 69 | -1 |
| | 06/07 | 4 | 75 | ... | ... | 121 | 64 | ... | ... |
| | 07/08* | 20 | 50 | N/A | | 108 | 75 | N/A | |
| Other | 05/06 | 218 | 64 | 70 | -6 | 84 | 69 | 62 | 7 |
| | 06/07 | 215 | 64 | 79 | -15 | 72 | 40 | 62 | -22 |
| | 07/08* | 159 | 78 | N/A | | 64 | 53 | N/A | |

* 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 | 2510 | 71 | 84 | -13 | 301 | 64 | 65 | -1 |
| | 06/07 | 2203 | 76 | 85 | -9 | 444 | 63 | 69 | -6 |
| | 07/08* | 2030 | 78 | N/A | | 349 | 65 | N/A | |
| A/A2 Levels | 05/06 | 673 | 91 | 93 | -2 | 34 | 71 | 78 | -7 |
| | 06/07 | 665 | 90 | 93 | -3 | 50 | 74 | 80 | -6 |
| | 07/08* | 518 | 91 | N/A | | 32 | 88 | N/A | |
| AS Levels | 05/06 | 1582 | 65 | 79 | -14 | 105 | 54 | 58 | -4 |
| | 06/07 | 1228 | 70 | 81 | -11 | 118 | 51 | 61 | -10 |
| | 07/08* | 1212 | 74 | N/A | | 107 | 56 | N/A | |
| GNVQs and precursors | 05/06 | 92 | 76 | 77 | -1 | 9 | 44 | ... | ... |
| | 06/07 | 36 | 86 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| | 07/08* | 44 | 66 | N/A | | 3 | 33 | N/A | |
| NVQs | 05/06 | 9 | 78 | ... | ... | 43 | 67 | 64 | 3 |
| | 06/07 | 10 | 70 | ... | ... | 100 | 62 | 72 | -10 |
| | 07/08* | 3 | 67 | N/A | | 104 | 65 | N/A | |
| Other | 05/06 | 154 | 48 | 79 | -31 | 110 | 73 | 62 | 11 |
| | 06/07 | 264 | 70 | 80 | -10 | 176 | 69 | 66 | 3 |
| | 07/08* | 253 | 70 | N/A | | 103 | 68 | N/A | |

* college data