

Gateshead College

Inspection report

Provider reference 130551
Published date January 2009

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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.

Description of the provider

1. Gateshead College is a large general further education college (GFE). In 2008, the college moved to a new purpose built £36.5 million campus in the Gateshead Quays. The college also has a specialist sports academy based at Gateshead International Stadium and an automotive centre of excellence and is the lead partner in a purpose built construction academy. Within a 15 mile radius of the college there are seven colleges and four universities. Eight of the ten local schools have sixth form provision and a City Technology College offers programmes to 11 to 18 year olds.
2. During 2007/08, the college had 7,120 enrolments, of which 2,272 were for full-time long courses and 3,530 part-time long courses. The majority of full time learners are 16 to 18 year olds, with adults making up 93% of all part-time enrolments. In 2007/08, 8% of the college's learners were from minority ethnic groups. Most learners study at levels 1 to 3. Programmes are offered in all sector subject areas apart from agriculture, horticulture and animal care. In October 2008, 913 apprentices were on programme in five sector subject areas. The college holds a large train to gain (T2G) contract.
3. Gateshead's industrial base has changed markedly in recent years. There are still pockets of high social deprivation. Over a quarter of the local population live in areas ranked among the 10% most deprived in the country, and the borough itself is ranked among the 20% most deprived in England. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups is 1.6%. Gateshead has a large Orthodox Jewish Community. Unemployment is slightly above the national average but below the regional average. In 2007, 45% of Year 11 school leavers in Gateshead obtained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including maths and English, which is slightly lower than the national average. The number of school leavers not engaged in education, employment or training reduced from 12% to 10% in 2007 but is above the national rate of 8.2%.
4. The college holds Investors in People, is Matrix accredited and has three Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in business and management, logistics and automotive work. The college's mission is to enable individuals, businesses, communities and organisations to succeed through learning and skills.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: contributory grade1</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

5. The effectiveness of provision is outstanding. Since the last inspection the college's strategy for improvement has facilitated the building of four imposing specialist learning centres and increased participation rates for 16 to 19 year olds and for adults on T2G programmes, whilst significantly improving both the quality of provision and success rates. Achievement and standards are outstanding. The success rate of learners aged 16 to 18 is outstanding. Adult success rates are high at levels 2 and 3. Literacy and numeracy success rates are outstanding. Learners improve their attitude towards learning and develop relevant skills well. Progression between courses and into higher education is very good, as is retention, achievement and attendance.
6. Work-based learning is outstanding. Success rates on the apprenticeship and T2G provision are outstanding. Learners benefit from excellent learning resources, very good teaching and highly supportive employers. They develop very good occupational skills and make good use of the excellent progression opportunities available to them. Learners' pastoral and vocational needs are very well supported by the college and employers. The college's responsiveness to employers and their learners is outstanding.
7. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Most lessons are of a very high quality, are well planned, differentiated to meet individual need and set learners suitably challenging targets. Teachers are provided with good support to improve their teaching. The lesson observation system is very accurate and sharing of good practice is endemic. Information and learning technology (ILT) is excellent, is well used, and enhances learning significantly. Learners' progress is monitored closely. The 'Every Child Matters' themes are effectively integrated into the tutorial system.
8. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The range of provision is wide and meets the needs of learners, including those not in education, employment or training, well. The college attracts a diverse range of learners. Partnership working with many organisations is strong. It is a major factor in the successful engagement of hard to reach learners, the adult unemployed and adults with learning disabilities. The range of opportunities for the 14 to 16 age group is very good and a high proportion progress to full time provision at age 16. Initial assessment is comprehensive and accurate and leads to excellent support. Transition arrangements for all learners, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very good.
9. Learners benefit from outstanding support, advice and guidance. This support has a significant impact on attendance, retention and achievement rates. Careers advice is outstanding. The range of welfare services and specialist external agencies used is extensive and has a significant impact on learners' attainment and life chances.

10. Leadership and management are outstanding. The strategic leadership from governors and senior managers is outstanding. A college culture of ownership and accountability for the learners' experience has been established. The college makes a major contribution to economic and social regeneration. Curriculum and financial planning and management and the financial position are strong and the college provides outstanding value for money. Improvement strategies have been very effective. Although many areas have improved significantly, the pace of improvement in a few areas has been slower. Accommodation is fantastic and learning resources are excellent.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

11. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. Challenging targets are set and exceeded. Performance management is rigorous. Success rates have improved significantly. Resources benefit from substantial financial investment. Team working is excellent and good practice shared. Management information is accessible and accurate and used well by staff. Staff are encouraged to innovate to improve provision and are well supported. Improvement strategies are very effective. Self-assessment is accurate. Arrangements to challenge and validate the judgements made in the self-assessment report are not sufficiently rigorous in a few areas.

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

12. The college has made outstanding progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Strengths have been built upon and areas for improvement addressed effectively. Partnership working has improved and underpins the provision well. The quality of teaching and learning, and guidance and support for learners, have improved and are now outstanding. Financial investment has secured high quality accommodation and learning resources. Success rates have improved, significantly so for learners aged 16 to 18. The access to, use and reliability of management information have improved significantly. The monitoring of students' progress is much improved.

Key strengths

- outstanding success rates in many areas of provision
- learners' good skills development
- excellent teaching and learning
- exemplary and responsive partnerships to increase participation
- the wide range of provision providing excellent progression routes
- outstanding support for learners
- strong strategic leadership from governors and senior managers
- very strong financial and curriculum planning
- very effective improvement strategies
- fantastic accommodation and learning resources
- the very significant contribution to economic and social regeneration.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the slower pace of improvement in a few areas.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

13. Inspection agreed with the college's evaluation that achievement and standards are outstanding. The success rate on long courses for learners aged 16 to 18 is consistently outstanding. Success rates at levels 2 and 3 consistently place the college in the top 10% of GFE colleges. The overall long course success rate for adults is high; well above the national averages. The majority of adults follow level 2 programmes where the success rate is well above the national average. Retention and pass rates have improved and are high overall for both age groups. Basic and key skills success rates are outstanding, over 90% for learners aged 16 to 18 and nearly 80% for adults. Attendance is very high.
14. Apprenticeship overall success rates have improved and were outstanding in both 2006/07 and 2007/08. The overall success rate for advanced apprentices is also high. The overall success rate for T2G learners was outstanding in both 2006/07 and 2007/08. A high proportion of learners complete their programmes in the planned time.
15. Success rates are particularly good on the college's partnership provision. Young apprenticeship success is a very high and a high proportion progress into further training or education. The success rate on college provided programmes for key stage 4 pupils is high and a high proportion progress to further education or training. Programmes provided at a local Jewish girl's school have a very high success rate. A thriving partnership linked to the Princes Trust and providing qualifications for learners at risk of leaving education and training has a very high success rate.
16. Many learners enter the college with low levels of attainment and skill. Learners' attitude to their learning significantly improves whilst on programme as do their self-esteem and aspirations. A high proportion progress onto more advanced college programmes and some into higher education. For example, a learner who entered the college with no qualifications is currently completing a PhD.
17. Learners develop particularly good vocational skills. They are able to carry out work accurately and produce work to a high standard. They are confident and most have a good understanding of the technical knowledge associated with their trades. Learners are conscientious and well behaved and have a good understanding of health and safety.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

18. The quality of provision is outstanding. The college successfully engages, motivates, teaches and supports its learners. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Inspectors found compelling evidence to confirm the college's own assessment that learners make very good progress in lessons and that most lessons are of a very high quality. The excellent development opportunities for

teachers provided by the college's advanced lecturers underpin the high quality of provision. Teachers regularly use innovative techniques and share resources of the highest quality. Teachers have high expectations of learners and set targets which are matched well to each student's needs. Learners respect teachers, try hard, behave well and are proud to be Gateshead college students. The lesson observation system is accurate and brings about improvements through sensitive performance management and a culture that instils the sharing of good practice. Considerable investment has resulted in excellent ILT that has a positive impact on learning. Learners receive good support in the learning resource centres on each of the college's sites. Many staff develop resources and techniques that are recognised as national exemplars of good practice. Internal and external verification show that assessment is fair and accurate. Formal and informal feedback to learners identifies clearly how good their work is and how to improve.

19. The monitoring of learners' progress has improved significantly since the last inspection and is excellent. Meticulous record keeping, careful planning and frequent one to one tutorials are at the heart of this process. Electronic individual learning plans (eILPs) have been introduced and have improved the accessibility of information and developed learners' sense of ownership of their learning programme.
20. As self-assessment notes, the curriculum range and activities to meet the needs of learners are outstanding. The wide course range and clear progression routes meet the needs of learners, employers and the community well and focus on local and regional priorities. Partnership working with the community, employers, agencies and other training providers significantly enhances the range and responsiveness of the provision, particularly so for hard to reach learners. The range of provision for young people not in education, employment or training and those at risk of joining this group is outstanding. Progression from this group into full-time provision is high. There is a wide range of provision for adults, including those not in work and those with learning disabilities. The range of provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 is very good; learner numbers have increased and are now high. The college's responsiveness to employers' needs is outstanding. There are excellent opportunities for local businesses to access high quality training opportunities. Employers are closely involved in curriculum design. Course and general enrichment is good overall, and very good in some areas. Activities are well planned, well managed and linked to the 'Every Child Matters' themes. The college is particularly responsive to the views of learners when developing the curriculum and meeting their needs. The college recognises that slower progress than normal has been made in implementing improvements to some aspects of the pastoral curriculum. For example, learners negotiate some of the programme content. The college is extending its links to specialist staff to match learners' requests.
21. Support, advice and guidance are outstanding. Initial assessment is comprehensive and accurately identifies additional support needs. Potential students receive impartial and accurate advice and a very high proportion subsequently enrol. Support arrangements have a significant impact on attendance, retention and achievement rates. Careful and effective

arrangements are in place to ensure that learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make a smooth transition from school to college. Outstanding careers advice is given to learners throughout their programmes of study. Exit advice is particularly successful. A high proportion of those who apply for places in higher education are successful. The wide range of welfare support services are well used by learners and links with specialist external agencies are well established and effective. Welfare services have had a significant impact on improving not only educational attainment, but also the life chances of learners.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: grade 1

22. Leadership and management are outstanding a judgement which agrees with the college's self-assessment. Strong strategic leadership from governors and senior managers positions the college very well to continue to grow and develop. The college strategic plan is underpinned by clear core values that are well understood by staff. Strategic partnerships are exemplary. The college's involvement in many exciting initiatives makes a significant contribution to the economic and social regeneration of the local area. The college is the preferred partner in very high profile cultural developments, works exceptionally well with major employers, is developing foundation degrees with a local university and is a key partner in the innovative development of a public services academy. Working with schools, the LSC and local authority vocational provision for 14 to 19 year olds has expanded rapidly and is contributing very effectively to reducing the number of young people not in education, employment and training.
23. Improvement strategies have been very effective in improving the quality of the provision. Success rates have improved. Enrolments of learners aged 16 to 18 have increased significantly at levels 1 and 2, allied with dramatic improvements in success rates, which are now outstanding. Very effective management of innovative arrangements to improve teaching and learning have improved quality. Inspectors agree with the grades awarded by the college in its self-assessment report. In a few areas, where the pace of improvement has been slower, the analysis and evaluation in the self-assessment report is insufficiently detailed to support improvement planning.
24. Arrangements for curriculum and financial planning are very strong. The regular reviews of curriculum are highly responsive to the needs of the local community, the region and employers. Very strong arrangements for the efficient deployment of resources have secured investment in exciting capital developments. The college sets and exceeds challenging targets such as those for learner numbers and employer engagement. The college provides outstanding value for money.
25. Accommodation and resources to support learning are fantastic. The recently opened Baltic Campus and the Construction Skills Academy, along with those

already developed for sport and automotive engineering provide very high quality vocational learning environments, together with excellent social spaces and informal learning areas. Staff are well qualified and experienced. The management of health and safety is thorough. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements and are robust. A nominated governor with relevant expertise provides very effective monitoring and challenge to ensure procedures are rigorous. The college provides an exceptionally well-designed, welcoming and safe environment for learners, staff and visitors.

26. Governance is very strong. Governors are carefully selected to ensure they represent the community and bring a range of skills and experience which are used very effectively to support the delivery of the college's strategy. They have set a very clear educational character for the college that is well focused on providing the highest quality experience for learners. Governors monitor closely the quality of the provision for learners through their robust academic standards committee. They have a very good understanding of where the rate of improvement in a few areas is slower and they provide appropriate challenge to managers to drive improvement.
27. The college's response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 and the Equality Act 2006 is outstanding. Equality has a very high profile at all levels of the college and in the operation of the governing body. The college has explicit aims and values which relate to equality that are embedded in all aspects of its operations. Policies have been reviewed very effectively in consultation with governors, staff and learners and a Single Equalities Policy has been produced. Equality impact assessments have been carried out for all aspects of the policy and appropriate plans put in place to address gaps. Staff understand college policies well, as a result of ongoing training and effective promotion. Governors monitor closely the impact of all college policies. For example, the financial and general purpose committee carefully scrutinises the impact of human resource policies on staff performance. Good management of pastoral support systems helps students to learn tolerance and understanding. This is reflected in their mature behaviour and responsible attitudes.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 1	05/06	999	78	68	10	1503	69	67	2
	06/07	1423	88	73	15	829	70	71	-1
	07/08	1596	94			808	75		
GNVQs/ AVCEs	07/08
NVQs	05/06	146	72	70	2	77	70	71	-1
	06/07	173	75	73	2	39	72	77	-5
	07/08	97	78			48	88		
Other	05/06	853	79	67	12	1426	69	67	2
	06/07	1250	90	73	17	790	69	70	-1
	07/08	1499	95			760	74		

... too few starts to warrant inclusion

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 2	05/06	700	73	65	8	2203	76	66	10
	06/07	998	80	69	11	2199	75	70	5
	07/08	1171	84			1905	79		
GCSEs	05/06	63	63	69	-6	171	67	67	0
	06/07	40	78	71	7	102	72	70	2
	07/08	61	93			82	72		
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	4	100	67	33	1	100	65	35
	06/07	7	29	70	-41	2	50	63	-13
	07/08	23	74			...			-
NVQs	05/06	189	75	64	11	1326	85	69	16
	06/07	307	68	66	2	1525	77	71	6
	07/08	274	71			1134	82		
Other	05/06	444	74	63	11	705	62	65	-3
	06/07	644	87	69	18	570	71	70	1
	07/08	813	88			689	77		

... too few starts to warrant inclusion

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 3	05/06	562	64	68	-4	1052	61	62	-1
	06/07	651	70	70	0	886	74	67	7
	07/08	772	74			868	76		
*A/A2 Levels	05/06	48	100	86	14	30	63	74	-11
	06/07	103	86	84	2	20	60	77	-17
	07/08	73	90			15	87		
AS Levels	05/06	84	86	64	22	50	62	57	5
	06/07	143	71	64	7	27	78	59	19
	07/08	102	89			22	77		
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	72	49	67	-18	6	0	54	-54
	06/07
	07/08
NVQs	05/06	18	78	66	12	433	54	65	-11
	06/07	31	68	75	-7	230	70	71	-1
	07/08	38	61			324	61		
Other	05/06	340	56	62	-6	533	68	62	6
	06/07	374	65	68	-3	609	76	66	10
	07/08	559	70			507	85		

... too few starts to warrant inclusion

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the college 2004/05 to 2007/08

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	54	83	48	65	34
		timely	62	35	31	31	22
	05/06	overall	125	81	53	72	44
		timely	122	43	34	45	27
	06/07	overall	164	72	64	71	58
		timely	175	53	43	52	37
	07/08#	overall	85	74	69	78	64
		timely	74	44	47	61	42
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	20	50	51	20	39
		timely	13	15	29	8	22
	05/06	overall	49	63	58	59	52
		timely	45	20	38	18	34
	06/07	overall	122	87	65	85	61
		timely	140	71	47	70	44
	07/08#	Overall	202	87	67	88	64
		timely	193	74	48	83	51

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

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

When available and validated by the LSC – From Gateway - QSR WBL period 12 report

Table 5

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the college 2006/07 to 2007/08

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	51	100
		timely	66	77
	2007/08	overall	262	96
		timely	248	83

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