

# Huddersfield New College

Inspection report

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## Contents

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

## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Grading

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

The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](http://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. Huddersfield New College was established in 1974 following a reorganisation of secondary education in Kirklees. It is a sixth form college located to the north of the town on a 30-acre green field site. Within Huddersfield there is another sixth form college and a newly merged general further education (GFE) college. The population of the metropolitan borough of Kirklees, from which the college recruits most of its learners, is around 398,200. Kirklees is the 82nd most deprived local authority nationally out of 354. On the rank of employment scale, it is the 15th most deprived local authority nationally. On the rank of income scale, it is the 12th most deprived local authority nationally. There are 19 schools in Kirklees for learners aged 11 to 16; five schools for learners aged 11 to 18 and one school for learners aged 13 to 18. The pass rate for five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics in Kirklees schools is below the national average of 46.8%. Four of the college's 19 partner schools achieve pass rates for pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at A\* to C of below 30%. Significant numbers of learners enter the college with a much lower than average GCSE points score, placing the college in the bottom 10th percentile of sixth form colleges based on GCSE scores on entry. Eighty three per cent of learners at the college are recruited from schools in Kirklees.
2. Kirklees is a multicultural community and this is reflected in the college where 21% of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of residents in Kirklees from minority ethnic backgrounds is 14.4%, well above the national average of 5.4%.
3. The college had enrolled 2,115 learners by 1 October 2008, 211 more than the same date in 2007. Almost all are aged 16 to 18, studying on advanced level programmes, 54% are female. In 2007/08 around 50% of learners received an educational maintenance award. In the current year, 28% of learners come from economically and socially deprived areas and 15% have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
4. The college provides courses from foundation to advanced level covering a wide range of subjects, including vocational courses at all levels. The college is very inclusive and recruits a significant number of learners with relatively low GCSE results and is not a typical sixth form college. One tenth of the provision is at level 1 and 2. The college offers provision in 11 of the 15 sector subject areas including 42 subjects at advanced level, 43 AS levels, 10 National Diploma courses, 1 National Certificate and 3 National Awards. A range of GCSE and vocational courses are available at levels 1 and 2.
5. The college appointed a new principal in September 2007. The college mission is to be a 'sixth form college committed to enabling individual learners to achieve their potential in a supportive and inclusive environment'.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: contributory grade 1</i>

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

6. Overall effectiveness is good. Value added is outstanding. Value added measures indicate that students who complete GCE AS and A2 courses make outstanding progress and place the college in the top 20% of scores for similar colleges.
7. Learners make outstanding progress relative to their prior attainment. The overall success rate has consistently increased since the previous inspection but remains below the national average for sixth form colleges. Success rates at level 1 have been consistently outstanding. Success rates at level 2 have improved to above the national rate; however, at level 3 success rates have improved but remain below the average for sixth form colleges. Success rates on A2 courses are high and in line with the national average. Success rates on AS courses have improved but remain relatively low. However, value added performance at AS is outstanding. Progression onto higher education is good. Progression rates from level 1 and 2 to higher level courses are outstanding although there is scope for improvement in the proportion of students who continue from AS courses to the full A level.
8. The college has an outstanding approach to including all learners. The proportion of learners recruited from minority ethnic groups is far higher than the percentage within the population of Kirklees. There are no significant differences in the performance between different groups of learners. Teaching and learning are good and well monitored. The curriculum is broad and flexible and includes many vocational programmes. Many students participate in the extensive range of enrichment activities. Learners receive outstanding personal and specialist support. Information advice and guidance is generally effective, as are group tutorials. Leadership and management are good. Arrangements for quality assurance are effective. The management information system is used well by senior managers. Financial management is good. The college gives good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

9. Capacity to improve is good. Senior managers set a clear strategic direction which is well understood by staff. Areas for improvement are clearly identified. The college has a clear mission, with a focus on social inclusion. The principal and the senior team have a strong focus on improving success rates. The self-assessment process is improved and the grades awarded broadly agree with those awarded by inspectors. Staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and are appropriately qualified. Resources are good and the college is financially stable. There has been good progress in improving the weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection. Retention rates at level 3 have improved significantly, although they remain below the national rate. Staff are committed to the mission of the college and value the open and supportive management style. A skills audit and a training programme are

planned for governors. The size of the governing body has recently been increased to improve staff and learner representation and action is being taken to improve attendance at meetings. The college's self-assessment process has improved. The draft report is broadly accurate but some curriculum self-assessments are insufficiently judgemental. Most key areas for improvement identified by inspectors are included in the self-assessment report and plans are in place to correct them.

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

10. The college has made good progress in addressing most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Staff development is focused on improving teaching and learning. Lessons now contain appropriate challenge for the most able learners. There is suitable use of information and learning technology (ILT). The system for observing teaching and learning is well established, however, some lessons are overgraded. Overall success rates have consistently increased since the previous inspection but vary between levels. Success rates on level 1 courses have been consistently outstanding. Success rates on level 2 programmes are above national rates. Success rates on level 3 courses, although improved, remain below the national average for sixth form colleges. Retention rates at level 3 have improved significantly but remain below the national rate. This is a key area for improvement identified by the college.

#### Key strengths

- outstanding success rates on level 1 and 2 courses
- outstanding value added
- good internal and external progression
- good teaching and learning
- outstanding educational and social inclusion
- exceptional personal and specialist support
- very effective external links to meet learners' needs.

#### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- improving the success rate for learners on level 3 courses
- improving the proportion of GCSE learners achieving grade C or higher in English
- improving the focus on learning in observations of teaching and learning
- improving aspects of the tutorial programme
- improving the effectiveness of self-assessment in some curriculum areas.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

11. Achievement and standards are good. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment. Learners make outstanding progress at the college. The overall success rate has increased consistently since the previous inspection and in 2008 it was five percentage points below the 2007 national average for sixth form colleges. There are no significant differences in the performance between different groups of learners. Value added measures indicate that there was outstanding value added for students on A2 courses and the college is in the top 20% of colleges nationally. Over 50% of learners on GCE A level courses exceeded their target grade. The college is in the top 25% of sixth form colleges for student performance at A level in 2008.
12. Success rates on level 1 courses have been consistently outstanding; over 90%. On level 2 programmes, with over 200 learners following these courses, success rates have improved and been above the national rate for the last two years. Around a third of learners re-sit their GCSE English or mathematics to gain a grade C or above. The high grade pass rate in mathematics is good. The college recognises the need to improve the results in GCSE English and has put in place a number of appropriate strategies.
13. Success rates on level 3 courses have improved but in 2008 they remained six percentage points below the 2007 national average for sixth form colleges. Around a third of the college's level 3 learners are studying the National diploma qualification and pass rates are very high. National diploma learners make outstanding progress. Value added measures for national diploma learners place the college in the top 10% of colleges nationally.
14. Success rates on A2 courses are high and in-line with the national average. On AS courses success rates have improved but remain relatively low. Pass rates are satisfactory and the college has correctly identified that retention is low and is the key area for improvement. Learners' progress on A2 and AS courses relative to their prior attainment is very good.
15. Progression rates from level 1 and 2 to higher level courses are outstanding although there is scope for improvement in the proportion of students who continue from AS courses to the full A level. A high proportion of learners progress to higher education. Learners are mature in their approach to learning and their behaviour is good. Attendance and punctuality are good. The standard of learners' work is good.



## Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

16. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Learners use the good learning resources well. The college has maintained the high standards evident at the previous inspection and made improvements in key areas identified as weaknesses. For example, teachers make more effective use of ILT in the classroom. Learners are positive about their lessons. Working relationships between learners and teachers are good. Most teachers have a good knowledge of their learners' needs. They plan lessons to suit different abilities and challenge the more able learners. There is good use of group work but some ineffective checking of the progress of individual learners within groups. The lesson observation process is well established and has helped managers to accurately assess and raise the overall standard of teaching and learning. However, there is too much focus on teaching during observations and insufficient attention to learning. Inspectors agreed with the college that some observations are overgraded and that the text in some observation reports does not match the grade awarded. Observation outcomes are shared at team meetings and through the teaching and learning group. The college identifies and shares good practice effectively at well focused staff development days. Assessment is fair, accurate and reliable. Feedback is detailed and constructive in helping learners to identify how and where they can improve.
17. There is good provision to meet the needs and interests of learners. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. A high proportion of learners have a very low entry score and the college meets their needs particularly well. The college provides exceptional personal and specialist support for learners with complex needs. The college has established very effective external links with feeder schools, employers and higher education institutions. On many programmes, there are good opportunities for learners to experience the industrial and commercial world through visits, guest speakers and work experience. The college uses its well established international links to provide a small number of overseas work placements as well as learner visits to enrich the curriculum. The broad and flexible curriculum is very responsive to learner needs and offers a wide range of GCE A and AS courses, as well as vocational programmes. At levels 1 and 2, the curriculum is used effectively to promote wider participation. There is a broad cross-college enrichment programme which is accessed by many students. Opportunities for learners to express their views about their experience at the college are good.
18. Support for learners is good. Personal and specialist support is exceptional. Learners with a range of complex needs, including dyslexia and dyspraxia, receive outstanding support from well-qualified staff. Programme and personal tutors are exceptionally supportive to learners' individual needs. Learners needing mentoring support are very well identified before entry through highly effective liaison with feeder schools. The open door service provides exceptionally good health support through a part-time onsite medical team and referral to a very wide range of external specialist agencies. Careers guidance and support are also outstanding. It is very specific, highly effective and well documented. Information advice and guidance before entry is generally

effective. Prospective learners have a range of opportunities to visit the college and discuss programme choices. However, college data indicates a high number of learners make changes to their programme early in the college year. Learner induction is effective in helping learners to settle into their programme and the college. Aspects of tutorial provision are underdeveloped. Group tutorials are generally effective but some topics such as sexual health and relationships are not integrated within the curriculum for all level 1 and 2 learners. Target-setting is inconsistent in reviews. Many progress targets are too general and not sufficiently broken down into small achievable steps. More recently, weekly meetings with individual personal tutors have been introduced to closely monitor learner progress and retention. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of this strategy.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Outstanding: grade 1*

19. Inspectors agreed with the college draft self-assessment that leadership and management are good. The recently appointed principal, governors and senior managers provide a clear strategic direction for staff. There is strong emphasis on social inclusion. Many staff roles and responsibilities have recently been redefined and clarified. The principal and senior team have developed an open and consultative style of management which is valued by staff. Communication with staff, learners and parents is excellent. Most curriculum areas are well managed but the college recognises some are not and action is starting to be taken. The effectiveness of governance is satisfactory. Governors are committed to the college's inclusive mission.
20. The college is prominent in the local community where it plays an important role in providing academic and vocational education. Collaboration and partnerships with local further and higher education providers, local schools and employers are very good.
21. Arrangements for quality assurance are effective in securing improvements. The system of observing teaching and learning is well established and understood by staff however, inspectors agree with the college that some observations are overgraded. The college's self-assessment process has been improved for 2007/08 and the draft report is broadly accurate. Some curriculum self-assessments are too descriptive and insufficiently judgemental. The college has identified variations in performance and a range of appropriate strategies are in place to address underperformance.
22. Financial management is very good. The college has consistently improved the quality of its accommodation. The college has managed the significant growth in the number of learners very well. However, as the college continues to grow there is pressure on accommodation. Premises are well maintained. Resources for learning are good. New staff benefit from a good induction and are supported by an appropriate mentor. Teachers are well qualified and participate

in the wide range of professional development opportunities made available to them.

23. The practice and promotion of equal opportunities are outstanding. Learners understand and respect the cultural traditions of various ethnic groups within the college. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding and the focus of the college's vision, mission and values. The college provides a harmonious multi-cultural environment with a strong focus on mutual respect and learner success. There are appropriate arrangements in place for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. The college meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2002.
24. The management information system provides accessible accurate and timely data which is used well by senior managers to monitor and manage performance. In some curriculum areas management information is not used well to analyse performance and accurately identify areas for improvement.
25. There is a clear management focus on improvement. Success rates have risen year on year since the previous inspection. The progress made by most learners compared with their previous attainment is outstanding. All key areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been addressed; however, the overall success rate on advanced level courses is below the national rate. Many actions have been implemented to improve retention but it is too soon to judge the impact of these initiatives. The college gives good value for money.

## Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 long 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 to 18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 1	05/06	134	96	71	25	1	100	57	43
	06/07	176	95	73	22	...	...	...	...
	07/08	99	92						
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	35	94	78	16	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08								
NVQs	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08								
Other	05/06	99	97	71	26	1	100	57	43
	06/07	176	95	72	23	...	...	...	...
	07/08	99	92						

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 long 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 to 18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 2	05/06	907	76	78	-2	12	58	65	-7
	06/07	891	85	82	3	13	85	65	20
	07/08	941	85			7	86		
GCSEs	05/06	741	75	82	-7	11	55	67	-12
	06/07	686	85	83	2	13	85	68	17
	07/08	621	86			6	83		
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	34	88	77	11	...	...	...	...
	06/07	43	88	78	10	...	...	...	...
	07/08	2	100						
NVQs	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08								
Other	05/06	132	74	70	4	1	100	62	38
	06/07	162	86	79	7	...	...	...	...
	07/08	318	85			1	100		

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 long 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 to 18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 3	05/06	5008	76	84	-8	57	72	65	7
	06/07	4918	76	85	-9	57	74	69	5
	07/08	4713	79			26	54		
A/A2 Levels	05/06	1499	91	93	-2	29	90	78	12
	06/07	1571	92	93	-1	42	81	80	1
	07/08	1384	92			9	67		
AS Levels	05/06	3037	68	79	-11	20	60	58	2
	06/07	3076	68	81	-13	10	50	61	-11
	07/08	2379	73			5	20		
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	240	79	77	2	4	50	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08								
NVQs	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08								
Other	05/06	232	73	79	-6	4	25	62	-37
	06/07	271	76	80	-4	5	60	66	-6
	07/08	950	73			12	58		

\* denotes no national average for comparison

... denotes no enrolments