

# Long Road Sixth Form College

Inspection report

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Grading

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

The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](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 monitoring 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. Long Road Sixth Form College was established in 1974. The college is located two miles to the south of the centre of Cambridge on a 23 acre site. It serves both students leaving school in the Cambridge area, other parts of Cambridgeshire and neighbouring counties. Student numbers have increased from 1,095 in 1993 to approximately 2,002 in 2007/08.
2. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and study full-time level 3 courses. Courses for full-time students are offered in 12 of 15 sector subject areas. Level 3 courses are mainly GCE A and AS levels; but the college also provides national diploma courses in five subject areas. The new Diploma in creative and media has been available from September 2008. The very small number of adult students studying full time is spread between levels with the majority on level 2 courses. A small number of adult part-time students study basic skills provided in conjunction with Cambridge Housing. College data show that 89% of students are white. In 2006/07, female students constituted 52% of the college population.
3. Cambridge has a lower than average number of people claiming unemployment benefit. The local area is mainly prosperous; but there are some areas of deprivation. Achievement of pupils aged 16 generally compares well with the national average with 61% achieving five GCSEs at grades A\* to C in 2006/07.
4. The college made major changes to its organisational structure in 2007 as the result of a review. In 2006, the corporation approved some changes to the college mission which now reads, 'Long Road Sixth Form College is a high quality 16+ education institution, dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in a caring environment. We specialise in the provision of academic and vocational courses for 16-19 full-time students'.

## 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>Good: contributory grade 2</i>

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The college provides a good quality of education and training. Achievement and standards are good and this agrees with the college's judgement in their self-assessment report. GCE A-level success rates have been consistently at the high national average and improved further in 2007/08. Value added measures show that students achieve significantly higher grades at both GCE A and AS levels than would be predicted from their performance at GCSE. Success rates at level 2 improved sharply in 2007/08 to above average. Success rates for AS levels, having improved steadily in the years between 2004 and 2007, declined in 2007/08.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and some aspects are good. Teaching is consistently good in several areas across the college; however, lessons are not always planned with sufficient attention to the differing needs of students. Students' academic performance is particularly well tracked and monitored to support their progress. Initial assessment is timely and additional support enables students identified with additional learning needs to achieve success rates at the college average. The punctuality of students remains an area for further improvement.
7. Responsiveness to the needs and interests of students, employers and the local community is good. Links with schools are strong and educational and social inclusion are good.
8. Guidance and support are good with very effective pastoral support to promote students' well-being. The college provides an inclusive community within which students feel valued and safe.
9. Leadership and management are good. Strategies for the future and the mission for improvement are clear. Significant changes to the organisation have been led highly effectively and improvements secured. Quality assurance systems have improved significantly, but implementation remains variable in a minority of areas of the college. The promotion of equal opportunities is good. Governance is very good.

### Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college has a good capacity to improve. The self-assessment report is clear, inclusive, mostly accurate and self-critical. In particular, it contains very useful analyses of data. The outcomes of self-assessment inform the developmental plan well. The single equality and diversity policy provides a very realistic framework for improvement.
11. Quality improvement procedures have been renewed and are comprehensive. Where implemented rigorously, they lead to improvements in students' learning

experiences and successes. In a minority of underperforming areas, however, the implementation has not yet been sufficiently rigorous and effective. The management restructuring has reinforced the emphasis on improving teaching and learning and students' outcomes. Managers, governors and staff are committed to achieving these aims. The college has good financial and human resources to continue its plans for improvement, including its proposals for new accommodation.

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

12. The college has made good progress to rectify areas for improvement. Students' success rates have improved in line with national increases, except for AS level results which declined in a minority of subjects in 2007/08, having improved steadily in previous years. Students make significant progress compared with their prior attainment. The college has responded well to new initiatives and local needs. Improvements to teaching and learning have been secured although the planning for differing needs of students is under-developed. Students' attendance has improved since the last inspection whereas their punctuality remains an area for further improvement. The monitoring of students' progress against targets is now a key strength of the college. Quality assurance systems have been renewed and improved. Accommodation has been improved significantly since the last inspection, especially in students' social and study areas.

### Key strengths

- very good progress made by most students
- high and improving success rates at GCE A level
- particularly effective arrangements to support students' transition from school to college
- very good pastoral care that promotes students' well-being
- successful support for students' academic progress
- highly effective leadership and management of significant organisational change
- very good governance leading to improvements.

### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- low success rates in a minority of AS subjects in 2007/08
- under-developed planning for the differing needs of students in lessons
- inconsistent implementation of some aspects of quality assurance
- insufficient improvement to the punctuality of students.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

13. Achievement and standards are good which concurs with the college's judgement. Students enter the college with a wide variety of previous attainment including those with a relatively low GCSE points score. Value added measures show that the progress of students at both GCE A and AS level is very good with most achieving significantly higher grades than would be predicted from their GCSE performance. Most students progress from AS level to GCE A level.
14. Students achieved success rates in GCE A levels at the high national average between 2005 and 2007. College data show both success rates and the proportion of students achieving high grades improved further in 2008. Areas such as media, psychology and art and design have maintained a particularly strong performance with a higher than average number of students gaining passes at the highest grades. Students often produce written and practical work of a high standard. This includes rich and varied examples of art work displayed throughout the college and written work demonstrating good skills of critical analysis.
15. In the years between 2005 and 2007, AS level success rates improved steadily closing the gap between college and the national average. In 2008, success rates declined. In particular, success rates in AS level biology, physics, chemistry and mathematics were below average. Success rates in most national diploma courses improved to above average in 2008 and level 2 success rates rose sharply to above average. However, a low proportion of students achieved high grades at GCSE mathematics and English language. Different groups of students, including those in receipt of additional learning support and from minority ethnic groups, achieve similar success rates to the college average. Male and female students achieve similar success rates although the gap between rates widened slightly in 2007/08. The majority of students progress from GCE A level to higher education, art foundation courses or employment. Similarly, students on full-time GCSE courses progress to advanced, further and vocational education or employment. Students value their learning and enjoy their time at college.

### Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

16. The quality of provision is good which concurs with the college's judgement. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and some aspects are good. A very high priority is given to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Actions taken to improve teaching have led to improved sharing of good practice between subjects and departments. There is consistently good and occasionally outstanding teaching in several areas across the college. In these lessons, students are motivated, participate actively and develop good independent learning skills. However, the quality of teaching and learning



across the college is not always consistently good. Too many lessons are not planned well enough to meet the full range of student ability.

17. Information and learning technology (ILT) is used well and often creatively, to enhance teaching and learning. The college's virtual learning environment (VLE) provides a good range of materials and activities in many subjects. Students enjoy their lessons, display positive attitudes to their work and many achieve high levels of skills and self-confidence. This is enhanced by the good working relationships formed with their teachers. Students' punctuality to lessons is sometimes poor and disrupts the learning of others.
18. There is very good tracking of, and reporting on, students' progress against their predicted grades. Students' assessed work is returned promptly and most written feedback is clear and constructive about how students can improve further. Parents and carers hold the college in high regard and are kept well informed about students' progress.
19. Initial assessment identifies students' additional support needs effectively. Students in receipt of additional learning support achieve success rates in line with the college average. The transition arrangements and support for students with more complex or specific learning needs is excellent, in many cases removing barriers to learning for vulnerable young people. The arrangements for the assessment and support of students' literacy are good although the identification and support for students' numeracy skills is less systematic. The college's overall arrangements for the accreditation of key skills are unclear.
20. The college has improved the rigour of its lesson observation process. It correctly identified the insufficient planning in some lessons in order to meet different students' learning needs. In some cases however, written feedback does not give sufficiently succinct or clearly prioritised messages about what teachers need to do to improve.
21. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students is good. A very wide range of subjects at GCE A and AS levels is available. Flexible timetabling ensures students can take the subject options of their choice. Level 2 provision provides successful pathways to further study and employment. The college's development of new diplomas is good. It is strongly committed to this provision and works well with partners. The college responds quickly to meet demand for new provision.
22. Senior staff have built good and effective links with the college's partner schools. The college organises a range of events which provide very good opportunities for school students to consider their options and choices. Enrolments for 2008/09 are well above target.
23. A much improved enrichment programme has been introduced. Early indications are that student uptake is good. Students value highly the opportunity to improve their learning and skills through very effective subject workshops. Many departments provide a wide range of relevant subject-related trips and visits. Students' participation in a wide range of individual and group

sports and fitness activities is very good. Employers' support for students on work experience programmes is highly effective.

24. Support and guidance for students are good. Both pastoral and academic support is particularly effective. Students appreciate the caring and friendly environment. Staff work well to engage with and support students to succeed. The college places a strong emphasis on anti-bullying and inclusion. Effective counselling services are well supported. The promotion of students' well-being is good. Students have excellent access to student services and welfare organisations. Links with neighbourhood policing are good. The college makes extremely good use of trained peer mentors to support new students during their induction to the college. Induction arrangements help students settle quickly and make new friends easily.
25. The group and individual tutorial programme is well structured, linked effectively to students' overall personal development and to the demands of their programme. Readily available information is used to monitor and manage absence and performance. Subject tutors provide thorough assessments of each student's performance and areas for improvement. However, tutors place insufficient emphasis on the written recording of agreed learning targets.
26. The college provides potential students with good information, advice and guidance services. The college has taken steps to improve its career guidance, particularly for those wishing to enter employment. Progression opportunities are promoted effectively through a wide range of media and activities. Work arrangements with Connexions are good and students' use of their services has increased significantly.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Good: grade 2*

27. Leadership and management are good and this concurs with the college's judgement. The principal, senior managers and governors have a clear strategy and mission for improvement, based on their vision for significant changes to benefit students. The operational plan links effectively to the self-assessment report and sets a challenging agenda for change. The principal led the restructuring of the college in 2006/07 very effectively to enable improvements to be made. Senior managers and governors know the college's strengths and areas for improvement and are very committed to raising quality and improving outcomes. Success rates at GCE A level have been consistently at the high the national average and improved further in 2007/08. Success rates at AS level, having improved steadily in previous years, declined in 2007/08. Managers engage in productive partnerships with parents and local stakeholders, including schools, the 14-19 partnership and employers.
28. Governance is very good. Governors have very appropriate skills and knowledge and are committed to improving students' learning experiences. They challenge senior managers robustly and are proactive in promoting improvement. The

proportions of female governors and governors from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are low. Governors complete a skills audit and a self-assessment report, which informs their staff development effectively.

29. Financial management is very good. The allocation and monitoring of finances are exemplary and relate well to students' needs and college priorities. Managers have committed finances prudently to effect significant improvements in accommodation and resources. Some accommodation, however, does not provide a good learning environment; some rooms are too small and students' social and study areas are overcrowded at times. Resources, including information learning technology (ILT), are good, current and are used well to facilitate learning. Staff are well qualified and participate in a wide range of staff development based on college and individual needs. Most students make very good progress, compared with their prior attainment on entry to the college. The college provides good value for money.
30. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Policies and procedures integrate equality and diversity issues well. Managers analyse and monitor performance, staff recruitment and student enrolment rigorously by different groups. The success rates of students from different backgrounds are not significantly different from those from white backgrounds. The single equality and diversity policy is very clear and comprehensive. Incidents of bullying and harassment are very rare and are resolved quickly. Students feel very safe at college. They feel empowered to express their opinions openly. Procedures for recording and resolving complaints about equality and diversity are very clear and effective. Staff and governors have received training on equality and diversity and are committed to embedding a culture of equal opportunities into college life. The college's response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Child Protection Act is good.
31. Quality assurance systems have improved significantly, but their implementation is variable. The best lesson observation written reports focus well on students and learning; others are terse and produce little to promote improvements. The outcomes of lesson observations do not inform teachers' appraisals and staff development systematically enough. Course team reviews are comprehensive and include students' views and lesson observation outcomes in some areas, but are less inclusive in others. Senior managers are aware of these inconsistencies and are supporting middle managers, many of whom are inexperienced in implementing quality assurance systems, to improve outcomes. Most of the departmental self-assessment reports are clear, self-critical and accurate. They inform the college self-assessment report which is clear, inclusive, mostly accurate and self-critical. In particular, it contains a very useful analysis of data, which managers interpret well to reach appropriate conclusions.

## 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	52	42	71	-29	64	59	57	2
	06/07	22	50	73	-23	38	55	64	-9
	07/08*	-	-	N/A	-	28	57	N/A	-
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	06/07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	07/08*			N/A				N/A	
NVQs	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	06/07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	07/08*	-	-	N/A	-	-	-	N/A	-
Other	05/06	52	42	71	-29	64	59	57	2
	06/07	22	50	72	-22	38	55	64	-9
	07/08*	-	-	N/A	-	28	57	N/A	-

\* college data

Note that qualification types with low numbers have been omitted from the table for the benefit of clarity

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	573	77	78	-1	85	60	65	-5
	06/07	747	73	82	-9	53	62	65	-3
	07/08*	638	87	N/A	-	45	73	N/A	-
GCSEs	05/06	467	85	82	3	30	53	67	-14
	06/07	629	76	83	-7	-	-	-	-
	07/08*	566	88	N/A	-	-	-	N/A	-
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	06/07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	07/08*	-	-	N/A	-	-	-	N/A	-
NVQs	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	06/07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	07/08*	-	-	N/A	-	-	-	N/A	-
Other	05/06	106	42	70	-28	54	63	62	1
	06/07	112	60	79	-19	38	74	62	12
	07/08*	72	83	N/A	-	45	73	N/A	-

\* college data

Note that qualification types with low numbers have been omitted from the table for the benefit of clarity

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	6442	79	84	-5	144	57	65	-8
	06/07	6664	82	85	-3	33	64	69	-5
	07/08*	6572	80	N/A	-	20	85	N/A	-
GCSEs	05/06	1864	93	93	0	47	57	78	-21
	06/07	2055	93	93	0	-	-	-	-
	07/08*	2097	95	N/A	-	13	100	N/A	-
AS Levels	05/06	4391	74	79	-5	91	59	58	1
	06/07	4453	77	81	-4	-	-	-	-
	07/08*	4305	74	N/A	-	-	-	N/A	-
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	180	65	77	-12	-	-	-	-
	06/07	94	69	65	4	-	-	-	-
	07/08*	134	71	N/A	-	-	-	N/A	-
NVQs	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	06/07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	07/08*	-	-	N/A	-	-	-	N/A	-
Other	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	06/07	61	85	80	5	-	-	-	-
	07/08*	36	75	N/A	-	-	-	N/A	-

\* college data

Note that qualification types with low numbers have been omitted from the table for the benefit of clarity