

Boston 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.

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 social care; information and communication technology; hairdressing and beauty therapy; arts, media and publishing; and preparation for life and work.

Description of the provider

1. Boston College is a medium sized, general further education college with two campuses and a town centre site in Boston, four centres in surrounding areas and a Skills Academy in Skegness run in conjunction with Grimsby Institute. Boston is in an area with many low wage and low skill jobs and a high proportion of migrant workers. The county has grammar schools with sixth forms. No other further education colleges are nearby. Most learners are white British. Very few have black minority ethnic heritage, reflecting the local population. The college's Centre of Vocational Excellence in early years is awaiting new standards accreditation in 2008. The college's mission is: "Boston College: a learning organisation raising aspirations and meeting the skills needs of individuals, communities and employers through high quality education and training".
2. The college provides courses and progression routes in all sector subject areas. Currently the college has most enrolments in health, public services and care, information and communication technology and preparation for life and work. Numbers of enrolments for men and women are about equal for those aged 16 to 18. Amongst adults, significantly more women enrol. In 2006/07, the college enrolled 6,943 learners on further education programmes for those aged 16 or over, of whom around three quarters were adults. Learners from both age groups are enrolled on courses at all levels, with around a third on each of level 1 and 2, and just under a fifth of enrolments at level 3.
3. The college leads two large Train to Gain consortia in the East Midlands and Eastern region which cover seven sector skill areas, and in 2007/08 had over 2,500 enrolments. It has around 400 work-based learners, most of whom are on construction and business administration programmes. Provision for 14 to 16 year-olds is extensive, and the college has a small provision for adult and community learning.
4. Boston College was last inspected in October 2003. At that time, inspectors judged that overall effectiveness of provision was satisfactory.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
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	Good: Grade 2
Information and communication technology	Good: Grade 2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good: Grade 2
Arts, media and publishing	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The overall effectiveness of provision is good, which matches the college's self-assessment. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall, and good for Train to Gain, students aged 14 to 16 and for work-based learners, where success rates are high. Further education success rates are improving, and are around the national average except for adult level 1 programmes, where success rates are increasing but remain low. The standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory, and they make satisfactory progress.
6. Teaching and learning are good, with most lessons being good or better. Good teaching is characterised by well planned lessons which maintain learners' interest and engagement throughout and use a variety of techniques well, including innovative use of learning technology. Less successful lessons do not meet individual learners' needs sufficiently, and do not challenge more able learners. Learners' additional learning needs are met promptly and effectively. Assessment is thorough, and in many cases helps learners to understand how to improve their work.
7. The college is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of learners. It has an outstanding approach to educational and social inclusion, characterised by its well maintained and developed links to take learning to under-represented and vulnerable groups over a wide, mainly rural, geographical area.
8. Support for learners is good, with effective information, advice and guidance across a wide range of support services which are easily accessible to all learners. Tutorial and other learning support are particularly effective in helping learners to make progress.
9. Leadership and management are good, and strongly focused on improving the success of learners. Quality improvement measures are effective in improving the quality of provision. Staff benefit from a wide range of accessible professional development. Equality of opportunity is good and relevant data are analysed and evaluated effectively for most learners. However, in Train to Gain programmes the outcomes for learners from different groups are not sufficiently monitored.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college's capacity to improve is good. Strong leadership, effective quality improvement arrangements and a substantial staff development programme raise standards for learners. Work-based learning and Train to Gain success rates are high, and between 2006/07 and 2007/08, further education success rates increased substantially and are at a satisfactory level. The quality of provision in sector subject areas, and the standards of teaching and learning and support and guidance for learners have improved from mostly satisfactory

to mostly good. The college is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of its learners. Managers and staff use very high quality management information well. Governors monitor academic performance closely.

11. Self-assessment provides a broadly accurate judgement of the college's performance. The process makes effective use of data. The self-assessment report is informative, evaluative and contains evidence to support judgements. Inspectors found further strengths and areas for improvement not recorded in the report. Effective quality improvement plans reflect the self-assessment judgements.

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

12. The college has made good progress. All areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been resolved successfully. Strengths are maintained and improved. Provision in art and design is now satisfactory. Concerns regarding the quality of teaching and learning, careers education and guidance and the promotion of equal opportunities in most lessons are now remedied. Quality assurance is rigorous. The quality of individual learning plans, although improving, remains variable.

Key strengths

- high success rates on Train to Gain, advanced apprenticeships and 14 to 16 programmes
- good teaching and learning
- excellent range of flexible and responsive provision
- good support for learning
- highly effective quality improvement arrangements
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the low success rates for adult level 1 learners
- the underdeveloped virtual learning environment
- the insufficient curriculum enrichment activities.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

Train to Gain

Good: grade 2

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

13. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. This matches the college's own assessment. Overall success rates on courses increased over the previous three years, and are at a satisfactory level. According to college unvalidated data for 2007/08, the rate of increase in 2007/08 was faster than the national rate of improvement. The success rate for adults on long level 1 programmes improved significantly in 2007/08, although it remains low. Retention rates for those aged 16 to 18 in 2007/08 are now satisfactory. For adults, they rose considerably. Success rates for men and women are similar. White learners from other countries had significantly lower rates of success than other learners in 2006/07. The college has identified this and has taken appropriate action to improve the success of this group significantly.
14. Achievement and standards for work-based and Train to Gain learners and for learners aged 14 to 16 are good. Train to Gain learners and learners aged 14 to 16 achieve high success rates. Key skills success rates have been significantly above national rates for the previous four years. Advanced apprenticeships in all four years up to 2008 have high overall and timely framework success rates and the rates for apprenticeships are satisfactory. A high proportion of learners on two year programmes progresses into the second year.
15. The standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory. Most learners make appropriate progress, compared with their prior attainment on entry to the college. Learners in care, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and hairdressing make good progress.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

16. Quality of provision is good, which matches the college's self-assessment. Teaching and learning are good. Successful interventions have improved the quality of teaching and learning. Priorities for improvement are identified effectively from teaching observations. Through the teaching and learning forum, these priorities inform focused project work and have a positive impact, such as raising the proportion of good or better lessons for learners on level 1 courses. The sharing of good practice is effective. Advanced practitioners support teachers sensitively and successfully to improve their practice, recording progress in detailed developmental records. However, teaching and learning observation reports captures neither information on the quality of learning nor feedback from teachers sufficiently well. Train to Gain managers do not validate or moderate sub-contractor observations.

17. Inspectors judged most theory and practical lessons they observed as good or better. In the best lessons, learning is planned well to include a variety of interesting activities to meet the range of learners' abilities and preferred styles of learning. These lessons move at a brisk pace, incorporate a wide range of learning resources, include innovative use of information technology, and hold learners' interest throughout. In the less successful lessons, learning activities are not well matched to the needs of individuals and more able learners are not challenged sufficiently well. Learners make satisfactory progress. Learners' individual support needs are assessed thoroughly at the start of their courses and the support provided is timely and effective. A range of flexible approaches is used very well in community learning centres for information technology learners and for trainees based in the workplace. Employers are involved closely in their trainees' learning and progress reviews. Assessment is thorough and appropriate to learners' needs. The college's virtual learning environment is at an early stage of development and is not used widely or consistently well by learners.
18. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. Since the previous inspection, the college has developed an extremely wide and varied spread of courses, for those aged 14 and over, at all levels and appropriate to the needs of learners. The college is highly responsive to the broad range of employer requirements. Employer involvement is outstanding with very effective networking arrangements and particularly good market information. The yearly curriculum review process is a thorough assessment of the current provision and supports the development of future provision to meet stakeholders' needs. The college responds well to government initiatives with the implementation of two large Train to Gain consortia and a strong work-based learning provision. The college has a high profile over an area that extends to nine counties. The good selection of marketing activities is highly effective in promoting the provision. Learning opportunities are available in a wide range of accommodation, including a bus, throughout the area. Productive links with schools provide a variety of successful programmes for learners aged 14 to 16. Learners benefit from a broad range of enrichment activities which offer plentiful opportunities to engage in sports. All learners, including those with disabilities, have good access to appropriate additional qualifications.
19. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The college has a strong strategic focus on inclusion. The excellent variety of innovative projects increases participation in areas of high deprivation. The college has widened participation effectively through employability programmes for young people and courses for the large numbers of migrant workers and their families. The college responds positively to local needs, establishes strong partnerships with local communities, schools and employers, and provides an extensive and varied range of flexible and responsive provision with clear progression pathways.
20. Advice, guidance and support for learners are good. The excellent range of marketing, publicity and recruitment activities enables prospective learners to make well informed career and course choices. Links with the Connexions

service are good. Induction enables most learners to settle quickly into the college. The identification of, and provision for, additional learning needs is thorough. The college clearly identifies and meets learners' increasing intensive support requirements and multiple barriers to learning. Good links with schools and communities support learners' transition to the college. Comprehensive advice, guidance and support arrangements are available to all learners. The wide range of learners' support services includes counselling, childcare, and information about finance, health, careers and courses. Enthusiastic and committed learning support assistants work effectively with those at risk and with vulnerable learners. Learners accommodated within the halls of residence benefit from excellent welfare provision. Good quality support is provided in lessons and for work-based learners.

21. The tutorial system meets the needs of most learners and links well to cross-college support services. It covers many of the aspects of the Every Child Matters agenda. The college provides effective financial support to enable learners to continue their studies. Learners receiving support achieve at least as well if not better than other learners.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

22. Leadership and management are good. This agrees with the self-assessment report. The principal and senior managers, well supported by governors, staff and local partners, provide strong strategic leadership. They set a clear direction with relevant aims and objectives for the college, based on a thorough understanding of the geographical and socio-economic characteristics of the local area, including the different needs of communities, employers and the requirements of the LSC. Managers' response to Train to Gain and the needs of migrant workers is particularly successful. The principal and senior managers, along with governors, staff and partners, review regularly their aims and the type of provision the college offers to continue to meet local needs well. Development plans take clear account of the college's aims and objectives. Communication is good.
23. Strong leadership ensures that quality improvement arrangements are comprehensive, effective and raise standards. Senior managers, subject managers and staff meet regularly to review performance. They take successful action to improve provision for learners. They have established clear procedures for quality assurance and self-assessment. Quality improvement plans focus clearly on issues and senior managers review these regularly to ensure problems are resolved. Using a thorough programme of surveys, managers collect the views of learners and employers. Managers regularly assess the quality of teaching and learning using an effective observation system. Staff and managers make good use of a particularly extensive range of data to assess and to raise learners' performance. The college has established comprehensive procedures for appraisal and a substantial staff development programme designed to improve provision.

24. Governance is good, as judged in the self-assessment report. Governors are well informed about the college. They monitor learners' performance and the quality of teaching and learning thoroughly. Governors use their deep knowledge of the needs of the local area and a good range of skills and experience to support the work of the college effectively. They provide clear oversight and contribute strongly to establishing and reviewing the college's strategic direction.
25. Equality of opportunity is good. The college has a very strong emphasis on equality of opportunity and has clear and relevant values in place. Established arrangements create good relations between different groups. Staff and governors receive regular training on different aspects of diversity. The college's range of provision meets the learning needs of all under-represented and disadvantaged groups. The planning of lessons and tutorials takes careful note of equality of opportunity. The college monitors and analyses the performance of different groups of further education learners well. However, the analysis of the performance of different groups of Train to Gain learners is insufficient. Equality of opportunity is not a regular item on Train to Gain meeting agendas and assessors do not adequately explore equality of opportunity during progress reviews. The college has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults. However, the college has not fully extended these arrangements into work-based learning. The college meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The college has effective arrangements for race equality impact assessments.
26. Financial management is good. Effective financial arrangements assign funding to subject and cross-college areas which provide satisfactory or better resources for learners. Accommodation is adequate, although extensive plans new buildings are in place. Given the college's success rates, quality of teaching and learning, responsiveness to learners and employers, and support and guidance for learners, the college provides good value for money.

Sector subject area

Health, public services and social care

Good: Grade 2

Context

27. Currently the college offers full-time courses in health and social care and early years at levels 1 to 4, and public services at levels 1 to 3 to 252 full-time learners, most of whom are aged 16 to 18. Over half of these learners follow level 3 courses. Approximately one third of full-time learners follow courses in public services. Most of the 90 part-time learners are adults and follow courses in health and social care and early years. Around 857 learners are on Train to Gain, and 27 are apprentices. The college offers a significant number of short courses in health and social care and early years.

Strengths

- high and improving success rates on courses at levels 1 and 2
- high Train to Gain success rates
- good teaching and learning
- strong and successful focus on improving standards in care
- outstanding links with employers.

Areas for improvement

- low and declining success rate on the diploma in childcare and education course
- insufficient attention given to meeting the needs of more able learners at level 3.

Achievement and standards

28. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 have improved significantly and are high. Learners often overcome significant personal difficulties to make good progress on these courses. Success rates at level 3 are more variable. Those for adult learners have improved significantly but for learners aged 16 to 18, improvement is more modest. Success rates on the diploma in childcare and education course have declined and are unsatisfactory. Train to Gain and apprenticeship learners have high success rates. The skills these learners display have a positive impact on improving their clients' quality of life. Learners aged 14 to 16 make good progress and have high success rates. Public services learners have much success in regional and national competitions. Attendance is very high.

Quality of provision

29. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and generally provide a wide variety of learning activities. Teachers keep up-to-date with their professional qualifications and learners

benefit from their knowledge of current practice. Early years learners in particular have valuable placement experiences and good opportunities to reflect on their own professional practice, giving them a secure base for the development of practical caring skills. Teachers' expectations of more able learners at level 3 are not always high enough and the tasks they set are not sufficiently demanding. Targets are insufficiently challenging for those capable of higher levels of achievement.

30. Assessment is rigorous and assignments are marked carefully, often with detailed comments on how work could be improved further. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. Learners benefit from the wide range of provision with clear progression routes between levels. Satisfactory opportunities enable full-time learners to participate in curriculum enrichment. Learners receive very good support. Tutorials are well planned and delivered. Learners' progress is monitored carefully.

Leadership and management

31. Leadership and management are good and contribute significantly to the improved standards in care courses and the successful delivery of the college's Train to Gain programmes. Equality of opportunity is outstanding. Course management is strong and most performance targets are met or exceeded. Links with employers are outstanding. Managers have expanded their portfolio of short courses significantly and have successfully encouraged employers' participation in curriculum development and delivery. Accommodation and resources are good in care but satisfactory in public services.

Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

Context

32. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in information and communication technology (ICT) from entry level to level 4. Learners work towards a range of BTEC diplomas, and short qualifications in computing. Courses are available at Boston and other centres in south Lincolnshire. Of 590 learners, 178 are aged 16 to 18, 412 are adults and 138 study full-time. Female learners slightly outnumber males. An increasing number of learners come from eastern Europe.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- well targeted range of provision with good progression
- highly effective target setting and monitoring of progress at learning centres
- good curriculum management.

Areas for improvement

- poor retention on the long level 1 certificate for IT users course
- insufficiently specific target setting for full-time learners.

Achievement and standards

33. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are outstanding on BTEC introductory and first diplomas. The BTEC national diploma and certificate for IT users (short courses) have high success rates. The proportion of high grades achieved by learners on the BTEC introductory diploma is very high, but is very low on the BTEC first diploma. Retention on the long level 1 certificate for IT users course is low. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of provision

34. The quality of provision is good, as are teaching and learning. Teachers plan lessons well and use a wide variety of activities. Learners enjoy lessons and make reasonable progress. Teachers use interactive whiteboards creatively in many sessions to capture learners' ideas and stimulate discussion. Learners make good progress in learning centres where they benefit from an effective combination of self-paced learning materials, tutor support and taught workshop sessions.
35. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. Well placed centres and mobile units take learning to hard-to-reach learners. Funding is used well to provide taster courses to help learners gain confidence, ICT skills and qualifications. Many learners progress to higher level courses, including higher education.

36. Support for learners is good. All learners receive appropriate information, advice and guidance at a well planned induction. Additional learning support and appropriate financial assistance are readily available. Teachers support full-time learners outside the classroom and learners access course materials on-line. Teachers plan assignments well, mark work carefully and give detailed feedback. They are highly effective in setting targets and monitoring progress in learning centres; however, they set insufficiently detailed targets for full-time learners. Managers monitor learners' attendance, punctuality and performance closely and take prompt action where necessary.

Leadership and management

37. Leadership and management are good. Comprehensive quality assurance processes are in place. Courses are targeted well to meet local needs. Professional development is effective. Teaching and learning have improved. Success rates have been maintained and improved. Self-assessment is evaluative and matches many of the judgements made by inspectors. Full-time learners and staff are involved in the self-assessment process, but part-time learners have less representation. Full-time learners benefit from additional courses to broaden their skills, but have few opportunities to experience IT in the workplace or hear visiting speakers. Accommodation is satisfactory. IT equipment is reliable and is updated regularly.
38. Equality of opportunity is good. Effective strategies attract and support hard-to-reach learners. Displays are used well to inform and reinforce equality and diversity issues.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Good: Grade 2

Context

39. NVQ provision is offered at levels 1 to 3 in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Currently 137 learners aged 16 to 18 and 48 adults study full-time. Of these 108 are hairdressers, 64 are beauty therapists and 31 are on introductory hair and beauty courses. Forty learners are apprentices. Some 49 learners are on part-time hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapy accredited courses. Around 40 learners are aged 14 to 16.

Strengths

- high success rates on NVQ hairdressing courses
- high standards of learners' skills
- good teaching and learning
- good support for learners
- good curriculum developments focused on entry and level 1 provision
- very effective quality improvement arrangements.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on NVQ level 2 beauty therapy
- insufficient use of commercial experience.

Achievement and standards

40. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high on hairdressing NVQ courses, advanced apprenticeships, provision for learners aged 14 to 16 and key skills. Success rates on beauty therapy courses are more variable, with low but improving rates on NVQ level 2. Complementary therapy success rates are satisfactory.
41. Learners display high standards of salon and presentation skills. Their written work and use of visual images is good. They use information technology well for research and presentation. Visiting speakers, outings and competitions further extend learners' skills. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of provision

42. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan sessions effectively and use technology skilfully to enhance learning. Highly visual presentations match the learning needs of most learners. Assessment is satisfactory although feedback on written work is too brief. Resources are generally satisfactory, but the nail salon is unsuitable as a beauty therapy learning environment.
43. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. Progression opportunities are good, both through the levels from provision for learners aged 14 to 16 to level 3 and laterally to increase learners' range of salon skills and

qualifications. Introductory courses help learners decide between hairdressing or beauty therapy. Learners enjoy taking additional qualifications, which enhance their employability. Employer links do not create sufficient opportunities for learners to experience work in a commercial environment. Staff make insufficient use of workplace evidence to assess work-based learners.

44. Learners receive good support. Their individual learning needs are identified before they start their course, and support is put in place promptly. Learners benefit from good financial support. Pastoral support is excellent. Teachers understand learners' personal situations well and respond sensitively. Tutorials and review sessions focus clearly on learners' progress.
45. Individual learning plans and termly targets are effective and monitored well by tutors. NVQ full-time level 1 learners benefit from achieving a range of additional employment-related qualifications.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are good. Managers have developed a curriculum which responds well to local needs and enhances opportunities for lower achieving full-time learners aged 16 to 18. These opportunities enable learners to develop their professional skills at an appropriate pace.
47. Strong, focused quality improvement arrangements, including regular course reviews, enable staff to react quickly to rectify problems. Learners and employers contribute regularly to the self-assessment process. Internal verification is satisfactory. Managers monitor staff performance well through challenging targets which they review carefully in appraisals.
48. Despite a very strong culture of equality, equal opportunities are not reinforced sufficiently outside the group tutorial programme. Managers are insufficiently active in marketing the provision to men.

Arts, media and publishing

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

49. Full-time courses are offered in performing arts, music, art and design and media from levels 1 to 3. Most learners are aged 16 to 18 and study on level 3 courses. Most adults study at level 3. Courses include introductory and first diplomas in art and design, media and performing arts, GCE AS and A levels in art and design, film and media studies, and national diplomas and awards in performing arts, music practice, music technology, art and design and media.

Strengths

- high success rates on the national diplomas in art and media
- very high standards of work on the national diploma in performing arts year 2
- broad curriculum offering good progression
- good support for learners
- good resources for music
- effective quality improvement strategies.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates for adults
- insufficient enrichment activities
- insufficient ILT resources
- unsuitable accommodation for performing arts.

Achievement and standards

50. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for learners on national diplomas in art and design and media are high. Generally learners aged 16 to 18 have better success rates than adults. Success rates for adults are low. Standards of work are generally satisfactory and learners progress well. Learners on the national diploma in performing arts produce some excellent work. Their acting displays highly professional approaches showing a good characterisation and they interpret challenging material successfully. Key skills success rates have improved over the last three years.

Quality of provision

51. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons teachers use creative and interesting approaches to develop learners' skills. Less successful lessons are delivered at a slow pace, with a limited range of activities that do not stretch all learners. At the end of many lessons teachers do not consolidate and evaluate learning. Assessment is satisfactory. Learners are clear about what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.
52. Learners' needs and interests are met satisfactorily. Learners benefit from a broad range of courses from levels 1 to 3. A wide range of supplementary

qualifications enables learners to develop their specialist skills and interests. Learners are given too little experience of professional work or exposure to professional practice. They are offered insufficient enrichment or work experience opportunities.

53. Guidance and support for learners is good. During individual tutorial interviews, tutors set and review learners' targets effectively. Art and design teachers monitor learners' progress continually. More challenging learners are very well supported by tolerant and understanding staff. Learners with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by learning support assistants. They progress well.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is equality of opportunity. The new management team have introduced rigorous performance management, good staff training and closely monitored quality improvement procedures. Standards are rising. Teachers work well together to bring about the planned improvements. Resources and accommodation for music students are good. However, studios and classrooms have insufficient information learning technology and specialist technology equipment. The spaces used by performing arts learners are unsuitable for most learning activities.
55. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Satisfactory progress has been made over the last two years.

Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

Context

56. The college provides a range of full-time and part-time courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacy and numeracy and full-time courses for learners aged 16 to 18 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those with low prior achievement. Most learners are on entry or level 1 accredited courses. At the time of the inspection, 192 learners were on ESOL courses, 161 on literacy, 77 on numeracy, 36 on courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD) and 64 on employability courses.

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills and confidence
- high success rates on ESOL level 1 provision in 2007-08
- good teaching and learning
- good use of target setting and reviews in LLDD and employability courses
- wide range of flexible and responsive provision
- good management action to secure improvements.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient attention in lessons to meeting individual learning needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- poor punctuality in ESOL.

Achievement and standards

57. Achievement and standards are good. Learners develop good skills and confidence. Their lives outside college benefit greatly from improvements in their literacy, numeracy and language skills. Learners on employability courses and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop good work-related skills and improve their personal and social skills and self-confidence.
58. Success rates on level 1 ESOL courses improved significantly in 2007/2008 and are now high. Retention improved rapidly.
59. Punctuality is poor in ESOL lessons. Lateness interrupts classes and impacts adversely on learners.

Quality of provision

60. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good in literacy, numeracy, ESOL and employability programmes. In the best lessons it is characterised by good planning and preparation, use of a wide range of activities and approaches and good classroom management. Teachers use technology, practical and paper-based learning resources well. Most learners

make good progress in class, although more able learners are not always sufficiently challenged.

61. Teachers do not always plan lessons appropriately to meet the individual learning needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The adult status of learners is not always reflected in learning materials.
62. Target setting and reviews with learners on employability courses and for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Learners are actively involved in the process, which captures their small steps of progress and success well.
63. The needs and interests of learners are met well. The wide range of provision is flexible and responsive to changing individual and community needs. The range of ESOL provision is extensive and full-time courses are available for learners with low prior achievement. Support for learners is good.

Leadership and management

64. Leadership and management are good. Managers take effective actions to secure improvement. Strategies to improve retention in ESOL, including flexible attendance possibilities offered through workshops, are very effective. Key skills are managed well and learners achieve consistently high success rates. Teachers and learners benefit from the significant impact of extensive continuing professional development activities on the quality of provision. Monitoring and evaluation of provision are comprehensive. Robust processes inform the observation of teaching and learning, although equality issues are insufficiently mentioned in feedback. Equality of opportunity is good. Self-assessment is inclusive, detailed and informative; however, inspectors found strengths and areas for improvement not included in the report.

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	1036	72	69	3	1310	60	65	-5
	06/07	1157	70	74	-4	920	53	70	-17
	07/08*	1044	77	N/A		462	62	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	-	-	-		-	-	-	
	06/07	-	-	-		-	-	-	
	07/08*	-	-	N/A		-	-	N/A	
NVQs	05/06	124	79	72	7	158	75	74	1
	06/07	107	61	75	-14	-	-	-	
	07/08*	84	82	N/A		2	100	N/A	
Other	05/06	912	71	69	2	1152	58	65	-7
	06/07	1050	71	74	-3	920	53	70	-17
	07/08*	978	76	N/A		460	62	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	974	64	66	-2	1027	64	66	-2
	06/07	917	64	70	-6	751	68	69	-1
	07/08*	906	73	N/A		713	69	N/A	
GCSEs	05/06	57	65	68	-3	12	50	67	-17
	06/07	54	72	71	1	8	38	70	-32
	07/08*	39	64	N/A		17	71	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	14	86	69	17	-	-	-	
	06/07	8	88	73	15	-	-	-	
	07/08*	2	100	N/A		-	-	N/A	
NVQs	05/06	146	58	65	-7	237	67	68	-1
	06/07	125	66	68	-2	210	68	69	-1
	07/08*	129	64	N/A		332	69	N/A	
Other	05/06	757	65	66	-1	778	63	65	-2
	06/07	730	63	70	-7	533	69	69	0
	07/08*	736	75	N/A		364	66	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	1521	69	71	-2	538	68	64	4
	06/07	1438	72	73	-1	391	66	68	-2
	07/08*	1400	70	N/A		479	74	N/A	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	260	88	87	1	32	88	72	16
	06/07	258	84	87	-3	48	94	76	18
	07/08*	209	89	N/A		38	84	N/A	
AS Levels	05/06	775	66	67	-1	35	71	55	16
	06/07	757	66	69	-3	23	39	59	-20
	07/08*	668	60	N/A		45	47	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	36	44	66	-22	1	0	57	-57
	06/07	-	-			-	-		
	07/08*	-	-	N/A		-	-	N/A	
NVQs	05/06	34	65	71	-6	150	61	63	-2
	06/07	29	83	74	9	114	58	69	-11
	07/08*	44	84	N/A		178	78	N/A	
Other	05/06	416	67	65	2	320	70	64	6
	06/07	394	73	70	3	206	67	69	-2
	07/08*	479	73	N/A		164	76	N/A	

* college data

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the provider/college, 2006 to 2008.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	115	72	53	66	44
		timely	114	62	34	60	27
	06/07	overall	105	73	64	70	58
		timely	104	63	43	60	37
	07/08	overall	69			70	N/A
		timely	77			53	N/A
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	161	72	58	63	52
		timely	135	61	38	56	34
	06/07	overall	177	65	65	60	61
		timely	184	54	47	52	44
	07/08	Overall	149			62	N/A
		timely	162			45	N/A

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

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

Table 5a

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

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	300	88
		timely		
	2007/08	overall	738	83
		timely		

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