

New College, Nottingham

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.

Description of the provider

1. New College, Nottingham was established in 1998. It is a large general further education college with four main campuses, located in the centre and north of the city of Nottingham. In Greater Nottingham, there are two other general further education colleges, a sixth form college, 13 schools for learners aged 11 to 16, and 19 schools for learners aged 11 to 18.
2. The college offers courses in all sector subject areas. About a quarter of its learners study on level 1 and a quarter on level 3. Most of them are from the city of Nottingham and the districts of Gedling and Ashfield. The college recruits just over half of its learners from areas of deprivation. Just under a third of its learners live in areas ranked amongst the most educationally disadvantaged in England.
3. Many learners aged 16 to 18 come from schools with relatively low GCSE pass rates. The proportion of learners achieving 5+ A* to C grades at GCSE in the city of Nottingham is 53%, compared with the national average of 62%, and the proportion gaining 5+ A* to C grades, including functional English and mathematics, is 33%, compared with the national average of 47%. The number not achieving 5+ A* to G grades at GCSE is 18%, compared with the national average of 8%.
4. According to college data for 2007/08, approximately 18,000 learners enrolled, of whom 40% were aged 16 to 18. Nearly 61% studied on a part-time basis. Nearly 58% were female and over 22% were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 15% of people from similar communities in Nottingham. About 300 learners aged 14 to 16 followed courses on a part-time basis. The number of learners on work-based learning programmes was about 500, and the number on Train to Gain was 1,500. The college has four Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in construction, hospitality, early years and retail. The college's mission is: 'To be a world class college transforming the lives of people and communities'.

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>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The overall effectiveness of provision is good and this agrees with the college's self-assessment. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The long course success rate has improved significantly in recent years and is close to the national average. Train to Gain success rates are outstanding. Adults achieve high success rates on level 1 courses, but low success rates on level 2 provision. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 1 and 2 courses are low. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory overall, but it is good in work-based learning, Train to Gain and catering.
6. Teaching and learning are good. Support for learning in lessons is good. Managers take very effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning on previously underperforming courses. Many teachers provide challenging learning, but insufficient account is taken of students' individual learning needs. Good use is made of realistic work environments to develop learners' vocational skills to high standards, but inappropriate accommodation in parts of the college hinders learning.
7. The approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Community engagement is excellent. Many learners from disadvantaged areas and many learners normally underrepresented in further education and training have been enrolled by the college. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. Learners benefit from a very wide range of courses and enrichment opportunities. Employer engagement is excellent.
8. Guidance and support for learners are good. Learners, including those with disabilities, benefit from the extensive range of good support services. Academic guidance and support are good, but target setting for individual learners is not always precise enough to help them to make better progress.
9. Leadership and management are good. The management of work-based learning and Train to Gain provision is good. Financial management is outstanding. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Whilst quality assurance arrangements are good overall, the implementation of the lesson observation and appraisal systems is incomplete. Governance is good. Value for money is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college's capacity to improve is good. Over the last three years, the long course, work-based learning and Train to Gain success rates have improved at a rate significantly greater than the national rates of increase. Managers have made substantial improvements to success rates on courses which were targeted for action due to their previous underperformance. Quality assurance procedures, underpinned by good staff development, focus strongly on learners'

outcomes and managers monitor their implementation and impact closely. The management information system is accurate and all staff use it well to improve provision.

11. The self-assessment is accurate. The college adopted a more rigorous approach to self-assessment in 2007/08 than in 2006/07. Curriculum managers made better use of data, course reviews and learners' views to inform the self-assessment process. The ensuing report is more realistic and is more useful to managers and governors.

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

12. The college has made good progress in addressing the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. Adults' pass rates have increased substantially and key skills success rates have improved markedly. Although attendance and punctuality have improved, they are only satisfactory. The availability and use of information learning technology (ILT) have improved. The utilisation of space, whilst still low, has increased.

Key strengths

- significant increases in success rates on long courses, work-based learning and Train to Gain provision in recent years
- outstanding Train to Gain success rates
- high success rates by adult learners on level 1 courses
- high standard of learners' work in work-based learning and Train To Gain provision
- very good support for learning in lessons
- very extensive range of provision
- outstanding approach to educational and social inclusion
- very wide range of well used support services
- excellent community and employer engagement
- outstanding financial management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates by learners aged 16 to 18 on level 1 and 2 provision
- low success rates by adults on level 2 courses
- insufficient account taken of learners' individual learning needs
- inappropriate accommodation which hinders learning
- imprecise target setting to aid learners' progress
- incomplete implementation of the lesson observation and appraisal systems.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grade:

Train to Gain

Outstanding: grade 1

13. Achievement and standards are satisfactory and this agrees with the college's self-assessment. The overall long course success rate has risen at a significantly greater rate than the national rate of increase in the last three years and is close to the national average. According to unvalidated college data for 2007/08, learners aged 16 to 18 succeed well on short courses, as do adults on level 1 provision. The success rates of learners aged 16 to 18 on levels 1 and 2 courses are low, as are success rates for adults on level 2 provision. Whilst success rates in several sector subject areas improved significantly to at or above the national average in 2007/08, those in a few areas declined or are below the national average.
14. Retention rates on level 1 courses are high for adults, but low for learners aged 16 to 18. Pass rates are low for learners of all ages on level 2 courses. The proportion of high grades achieved by learners is satisfactory. Key skills success rates have improved significantly and are satisfactory. In 2006/07, most learners made the progress expected of them, given their prior attainment. General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level and AS learners taking English literature, geography, sociology and chemistry made good progress, but those taking history and law made insufficient progress.
15. The success rates for the majority of learners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds improved in 2007/08, to be at or above their respective national average. Learners receiving additional learning support are much more successful than those not receiving it. The success rates and progression of learners aged 14 to 16 are satisfactory.
16. The success rates for Train to Gain learners are extremely high, especially for those on Skills for Life programmes. The rate of improvement in Train to Gain and work-based learning success rates is substantial. The overall work-based learning framework success rate is satisfactory. The proportion of work-based and Train to Gain learners who complete by their targeted end date is high. Work-based learners make good progress.
17. The standard of learners' work is high in catering, Train to Gain and in work-based learning, but overall it is satisfactory. Attendance has improved slightly over the last three years and is satisfactory. Punctuality is satisfactory overall, but in some lessons learners are late and are insufficiently challenged. Most learners enjoy college life and their lessons and feel safe in college.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

18. Teaching and learning are good. This agrees with the college's self-assessment. Learners enjoy lessons. Most teachers provide clear explanations of learning topics. Generally, the use of ILT in lessons is good, but a few teachers miss the opportunity to use it for interactive learning. Good use is made of vocational workshops, college dining areas and hairdressing and beauty therapy salons to develop learners' vocational skills to the high levels required by industry. In the best lessons, teachers provide challenging learning that stretches learners' abilities. On work-based learning and Train to Gain programmes, staff and employers provide good training which develops learners' vocational skills to a high standard. The level of learners' motivation, engagement and interest in theory lessons is mixed. In the less effective lessons, the pace of learning is slow and teachers do not use a range of approaches to take sufficient account of learners' individual learning needs. In a few parts of the college, cramped classrooms, poor ventilation and external noise have a detrimental effect on learning.
19. Work-based learning is observed as part of the college's observation process. Most lesson observation outcomes are accurate. Additional staff training and support focus appropriately on courses where observation grades are relatively low. Managers took decisive action to improve the quality of teaching and learning on previously underperforming courses. The success rates on most of these courses have improved.
20. Initial assessment processes are thorough and ensure learners' support needs are met. Support staff are well qualified; they are skilled at providing good learning support to learners with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with sensory impairments. Diagnostic assessments determine accurately whether learners have the necessary literacy, numeracy and key skills and the levels of additional support required. Support for learning in lessons is very good.
21. Internal and external verification procedures are very thorough and ensure the college meets the requirements of regulatory bodies. Highly experienced assessors provide very good support to work-based learners. The marking of learners' work is usually of high quality, but occasionally it is brief and unhelpful.
22. The curriculum offering is outstanding and meets the needs and interests of learners, employers and the community extremely well. The college self-assessed this aspect to be good. Learners benefit from an extremely rich and varied range of activities, including a very wide enrichment programme. Activities enable learners to make an outstanding contribution to both the local and the college communities. Learners have raised very significant sums for charities. The student union and learners' voice within the college are particularly strong. Employer engagement is very extensive. The college has excellent labour market information, which it uses well. Partnerships with employers, community groups and schools are extremely effective and very beneficial to all concerned.

23. The approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. An exceptionally wide range of courses is offered in most sector subject areas. The college works very successfully with many community organisations to recruit large numbers of learners who are underrepresented in education and training. Partnerships with community organisations widen participation, benefit learners and promote community cohesion very effectively. Learning opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are broad.
24. Guidance and support are good, as recognised by the college in its self-assessment report. A very extensive range of well used support services is provided. Learners speak very highly of the advice, support and guidance they receive. Attendance and retention officers, behaviour coordinators and a peer mentoring scheme have been introduced effectively to support learners with identified needs. Specialist support for learners with mobility difficulties and with visual and hearing impairments is of high quality. The college works closely and effectively with a wide range of support agencies and makes referrals appropriately.
25. Arrangements for providing academic guidance and support are good. Teachers set learners targets to achieve and review them frequently. The targets set in some individual learning plans and on work-based reviews, however, are not always specific enough to help learners make progress. The tutorial programme is good and promotes the 'every learner matters' agenda. This includes promoting healthy lifestyles and the development of employability skills which contribute to learners' future economic well-being. The quality and consistency of tutorial support and the monitoring of learners' progress, however, vary between different areas.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

26. Leadership and management are good, which agrees with the college's self-assessment. The principal and governors provide effective corporate leadership and have strengthened the senior management team through recent key appointments to the directorate. They have realigned roles successfully to ensure a better focus on academic performance, closer monitoring of the quality of provision, clearer reporting responsibilities and greater accountability. The management of work-based learning and Train to Gain is good.
27. The college has systematic and good arrangements for quality assurance which raise standards for learners. Thorough course reviews and self-assessment inform detailed quality improvement plans. Senior managers meet regularly with subject managers to review performance rigorously and take strong and effective action to address issues. Managers make particularly effective use of a wide range of accurate data on learners' performance. They ensure that quality assurance arrangements are robust. The college has established good arrangements for observing teaching and learning, but not all teachers are

observed annually. Procedures for appraisal are also in place, but not all staff were appraised in 2007/08.

28. Staff development at the college is good. The staff development programme is substantial and relates clearly and very effectively to improving provision. Training courses are evaluated thoroughly and assessed for impact on staff and learners. Staff are well qualified. The response to workforce reform is good.
29. Financial management is outstanding. Senior managers have been very effective in moving a substantial financial deficit into a surplus. Managers have used the surplus well to support improvements in the college's performance. Systems to allocate costs for courses and capital expenditure are robust. Although the college has facilities of a high standard and some excellent specialist resources, issues remain with the quality of some learning accommodation. Given learners' overall success rates, the college provides satisfactory value for money.
30. Governance is good. Governors are very committed to the values and educational character of the college. They are well informed through the governors' intranet, training sessions and attendance at college exhibitions and celebrations. Governors challenge and support senior managers appropriately. Governors have a wide range of skills and have good contacts with local communities.
31. Equality of opportunity is good. Equality and diversity are celebrated well. Managers promote the anti-bullying, anti-harassment and respect policies very well. They take good account of the diverse backgrounds of their learners in publicity materials. Senior managers and governors monitor separate and appropriate policies for race, gender and disability well. Courses on aspects of equality and diversity are well represented in the staff development programme, but mandatory training for staff is insufficient. The college has a good involvement in community cohesion initiatives. The black and minority ethnic learner population is significantly higher than the local population. Governors and senior managers reflect the local black and minority ethnic and female population well. The college has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults and complies with the requirements of the Child Protection Act, the Disability Discrimination (Amendment) Act 2005 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Managers are, however, at the early stages of developing equality impact assessments. The promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace is satisfactory.

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	3089	64	69	-5	1652	53	65	-12
	06/07	2005	63	74	-11	1594	71	70	1
	07/08*	2081	72	N/A		2162	80	N/A	
GNVQs and Precursors	05/06	12	83	73	10	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	...	...	N/A		...	...	N/A	
NVOs	05/06	114	60	72	-12	26	81	74	7
	06/07	62	68	75	-7	19	89	75	14
	07/08*	17	82	N/A		4	75	N/A	
Other	05/06	2963	64	69	-5	1626	52	65	-13
	06/07	1943	63	74	-11	1575	70	70	0
	07/08*	2064	71	N/A		2158	80	N/A	

* Unvalidated 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	3105	62	66	-4	2693	47	66	-19
	06/07	2905	65	70	-5	2081	63	69	-6
	07/08*	2567	68	N/A		1686	65	N/A	
GCSEs	05/06	716	66	68	-2	345	63	67	-4
	06/07	890	71	71	0	335	64	70	-6
	07/08*	949	68	N/A		279	68	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	44	55	69	-14	19	84	68	16
	06/07	31	55	73	-18	64	80	71	9
	07/08*	15	100	N/A		95	85	N/A	
NVOs	05/06	494	60	65	-5	761	46	68	-22
	06/07	437	67	68	-1	507	65	69	-4
	07/08*	479	63	N/A		517	65	N/A	
Other	05/06	1851	61	66	-5	1568	43	65	-22
	06/07	1547	61	70	-9	1175	61	69	-8
	07/08*	1124	69	N/A		795	61	N/A	

* Unvalidated 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	4719	71	71	0	1985	56	64	-8
	06/07	4965	71	73	-2	1570	60	68	-8
	07/08*	5100	73	N/A		1249	69	N/A	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	1121	86	87	-1	204	70	72	-2
	06/07	1314	86	87	-1	151	72	76	-4
	07/08*	1218	89	N/A		147	78	N/A	
AS Levels	05/06	2492	68	67	1	292	52	55	-3
	06/07	2562	66	69	-3	242	56	59	-3
	07/08*	2553	65	N/A		218	53	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	60	50	66	-16	15	53	57	-4
	06/07	10	60	59	1	5	60	59	1
	07/08*	2	50	N/A		15	73	N/A	
NVQs	05/06	175	66	71	-5	569	64	63	1
	06/07	172	77	74	3	526	63	69	-6
	07/08*	162	78	N/A		330	74	N/A	
Other	05/06	871	64	65	-1	905	50	64	-14
	06/07	907	61	70	-9	646	56	69	-13
	07/08*	1165	73	N/A		539	67	N/A	

* Unvalidated college data

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the 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	44	48	53	32	43
		timely	40	38	38	20	28
	06/07	overall	52	61	64	52	57
		timely	47	47	43	38	38
	07/08	overall	49	86	68	73	62
		timely	49	71	46	69	42
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	168	55	58	46	52
		timely	131	32	37	43	34
	06/07	overall	210	65	65	52	61
		timely	198	44	47	51	45
	07/08	Overall	213	66	67	62	63
		timely	212	55	50	62	47

* 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	162	57
		timely	37	20
	2007/08	overall	249	87
		timely	201	70

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

Table 5b

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

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college skills for life rate**
Train to Gain (skills for life)	2006/07	overall	10	38
		timely	9	35
	2007/08	overall	48	100
		timely	34	71

* 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

** Skills for life qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection