

Loughborough College

Inspection report

Provider reference 130748

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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. Loughborough College is a large general further education college located in the borough of Charnwood in Leicestershire. The college shares a campus with Loughborough University and the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) College Loughborough. Some provision occurs in community sites in Loughborough and North Leicester. The college's recruitment area includes Loughborough, the surrounding rural area and the northern outskirts of Leicester. Some 22% of its learners are from minority ethnic groups.
2. Loughborough College offers qualifications from levels 1 to 4 in all sector subject areas, with the exception of agriculture, horticulture and animal care. The LSC funds around half of the college's courses. Courses funded through the Higher Education Funding Council for England, together with an increasing range of international and commercial work, account for its other work. In 2007/08 the college had 2,022 full-time and 8,438 part-time learners, with around 450 learners aged 14 to 16. Learners aged 16 to 18 represent around 42% of the college and adults 58% when comparing course guided learning hours. The proportion of male to female learners is broadly even. The college has a work-based learning provision of around 170 learners and a contract to offer Train to Gain for around 500 learners. Work-based learning and Train to Gain make up around 10% of the college's LSC-funded provision.
3. The first two phases of a major estates development have been completed which provide newly built specialist facilities for hair, beauty, hospitality, sport, exercise and fitness, technology and engineering. The college's mission is: 'Loughborough College will partner individuals, communities and businesses to achieve outstanding education and training successes'.
4. The population of Charnwood is 164,800. Around 15% are from minority ethnic groups. Charnwood ranks 264 out of 354 for the average scores for the highest levels of deprivation in England. The unemployment rate in Charnwood is just over the national average. The percentage of pupils in Leicestershire gaining five GCSEs at A* to C, including English and mathematics, in 2007 was 48.8%, compared to the national average of 46.8%.

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. Overall effectiveness is good. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 have improved steadily since the last inspection in line with the national average. For adult learners success rates have been above the national average but the improvement slowed in 2007/08 to a satisfactory level. Success rates for work-based learners increased substantially and are good. For learners aged 14 to 16 success rates have declined and for Black African learners they are low.
6. Teaching and learning are good and improving. Individual coaching for work-based and Train to Gain learners is good. Assessment of learners' work and skills is of a high standard. Systems to assure the quality of teaching and learning are effective, although moderation of lesson observations is not consistently so.
7. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good and the approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The very wide range of well established partnerships in the community enables under-represented people to become learners. Progression opportunities for learners are good. The college pays particular attention to learners' views and takes effective action to resolve issues that learners raise.
8. Guidance and support for learners are good. The identification of learners' needs is swift and support put in place quickly. Most learners receive very effective tutorial support. Not all learners have individual meetings with their tutors to set targets and for a minority the quality of their learning targets is poor. Support is less effective for work-based learners.
9. Leadership and management are good. The principal, senior managers and governors provide clear strategic leadership. Managers have a clear focus on improving provision for learners. Communications are good. Self-assessment is generally accurate. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college's capacity to improve is good. Overall success rates have risen consistently over the last three years, although the increase slowed in 2007/08. Rigorous quality assurance procedures operate across most provision. Management information is accurate and accessible, but the use of benchmarks is not sufficiently effective. The college has strong leadership, good staff development and outstanding financial management. Self-assessment is inclusive, makes good use of course information and informs the college development plan well. However, it does not identify areas for improvement sufficiently well and is over generous in its judgements and grades.

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

11. The college has made good progress in addressing areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. Achievement rates have improved and are similar to the national average. Overall success rates for learners on work-based learning programmes have improved significantly since the last inspection. They have risen from well below to above the national average for almost all sector subject areas. Coordination and evaluation of cross-college functions has improved.

Key strengths

- high success rates on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), engineering, science and mathematics and arts courses
- high success rates on work-based learning programmes
- success of learners in progressing to higher education
- high quality of assessment for learners
- highly responsive and flexible collaborative work with a wide range of partners
- very strong involvement of learners in college and community life
- good support for learners on courses based at the college
- outstanding educational and social inclusion
- highly effective team working
- clear strategic leadership
- outstanding financial management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success and progression rates for learners aged 14 to 16
- low success rates for Black African learners
- inconsistent effectiveness of the moderation of lesson observation outcomes
- ineffective target setting and reviews for some learners
- insufficiently critical self-assessment.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grade:

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

12. Achievement and standards are satisfactory and this disagrees with the college's self-assessment of good. Success rates have increased since the last inspection. The increase slowed in 2007/08. Long course success rates are at a satisfactory level overall and at a good level for adult learners on level 1 courses. Success rates for learners on ESOL, engineering, science and mathematics and arts courses are high. Success rates on short programmes have increased to around the national average.
13. For work-based learning programmes, college data for 2007/08 indicate learners' success rates are good, particularly in engineering. Success rates for the very small number of advanced apprentices in hairdressing were low. Train to Gain success rates are at a satisfactory level overall, although retention was low on sports and hairdressing programmes in 2007/08. Progression within the workplace to positions with more responsibility is good and an increasing number of advanced apprentices in engineering are progressing to higher education.
14. Retention rates have increased since the last inspection. They are at a satisfactory level. In 2007/08, retention rates declined for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 1 and 2 courses and for adults at level 2. Pass rates have increased since the last inspection and are high for learners on arts, computing and retail and commercial courses. They improved substantially for adult learners on level 3 courses. Learners make satisfactory progress on prior levels of attainment.
15. Success rates for male and female learners and those from minority ethnic groups and White British are similar except for Black African learners. Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 on school link programmes have declined from a high to a satisfactory level and their progression to other courses in the college is low.
16. Learners enjoy their studies. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory, including key skills. A high proportion of learners is successful in their applications to higher education.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

17. The quality of provision is good. This disagrees with the college's self-assessment of outstanding. Teaching and learning are good. The use of information learning technology (ILT) in lessons is mostly effective. Most teachers use the virtual learning environment (VLE) well but it is insufficiently

embedded in a few areas. Most lesson plans take account of learners' differing needs effectively.

18. In the best lessons, learners engage in lively role-play and group activities. Good relationships with teachers help rapid progress in an enjoyable learning environment. Teachers ask searching questions very effectively to challenge learners and to sustain their attention. Good quality individual coaching in the workplace enables learners to progress well. In less effective lessons learners do the same work at the same pace and the same level. In these lessons, the pace is too slow, learners lose interest and the challenge for the more able learners is insufficient. A small minority of teachers dominate lessons and talk at their learners, without checking that learning takes place.
19. The internal lesson observation process has improved. Most observation reports are appropriately detailed. A few are brief and gradings are optimistic. Moderation of lesson observation is not consistently effective. Managers worked well with A-level teachers to improve their teaching and learning. A-level success rates improved in 2007/08.
20. Initial assessment is thorough, timely and it informs individual learning plans for full-time learners aged 16 to 18. Learners receive appropriate additional learning support promptly. Work-based and Train to Gain learners have an adequate initial assessment, but few Train to Gain learners receive additional learning support in the workplace. Individual programme planning for Train to Gain learners is insufficiently rigorous. Most teachers use the new individual learning plans very effectively but not all.
21. Assessment is good. Most assignments are clear and marked thoroughly. Most feedback helps learners improve. A minority is too brief. Internal verification is comprehensive and effective. Workplace assessment of learners on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) is thorough. Learners receive clear feedback. Reports to parents, carers and guardians and employers are good.
22. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. The college has a wide range of very well established local, regional and national partnerships. Work with employers is increasing. Employers are very supportive of work-based learners. The range of provision is wide and learners have very good progression opportunities. The proportion of level 2 work is low.
23. A large and growing number of learners benefits from a wide-ranging and responsive enrichment programme. In some curriculum areas, however, few learners participate. Activities enable learners to make a very positive contribution to college and community life. The learners' voice is very strong, and is encouraged. Managers have made many improvements in response to learners' proposals.
24. The approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Excellent ESOL work with community organisations widens participation to people often under-represented in education and training. Mentors give very good support to a wide range of disadvantaged and vulnerable people so that they become

learners and progress. Relations with schools, universities and the voluntary sector are extremely effective, and consequently many learners benefit significantly.

25. Guidance and support for learners are good. Information, advice and support for learners on courses based at the college are extensive. Learners have access to informative pre-entry advice and guidance, which enables them to make well informed choices about their courses.
26. Learners access a wide range of effective support to meet their individual needs, including support for mental health, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Learners also make good use of specialist equipment and assistive technology. The college offers clear and appropriate guidance on careers and welfare issues. Success rates for learners receiving additional support are higher than the college average. Resources for support services are good. Communications between teachers and support staff are good.
27. Most learners on full-time programmes receive very effective tutorial support, with good coverage of the Every Child Matters themes. Progress tutors and learners review regularly the achievement of clearly focused targets and make very good use of high standard individual learning plans. However, since September 2008, not all learners have had an individual tutorial to set targets and for some learners the quality of target setting is poor.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

Train to Gain

Satisfactory: grade 3

Learners aged 14 to 16

Satisfactory: grade 3

28. Leadership and management for college provision are good, but are only satisfactory for work-based learning, Train to Gain and for school links provision. This disagrees with the college's self-assessment of outstanding. The principal, senior managers and governors provide clear strategic leadership. The college has a very clear five-year strategic plan that focuses strongly on learners' needs. The strategic plan informs the business plan and quality arrangements well. A strong set of core values underpins the strategic direction and provides a clear vision of the college's future. The college has a good understanding and is highly responsive to local, regional and government priorities.
29. The principal and senior managers promote team-working strongly, devolving key responsibilities to curriculum teams particularly effectively. Teams have very clear targets and are accountable for meeting them. Curriculum managers provide good support for innovation within teams. Communication throughout the college is good.

30. The college has well established quality assurance arrangements. Curriculum review meetings underpinned by a good range of evidence are effective in driving forward improvements. The college reviews performance and targets effectively from curriculum teams to governors. Quality improvement actions have had a positive impact in computing and on most A-level provision, but a lesser impact on provision for learners aged 14 to 16. The college's management information system provides a good range of accessible reports, which staff find helpful. However, the use of benchmarks is insufficiently effective. Well established appraisal procedures are effective, but not monitored sufficiently well. Outcomes from lesson observations link clearly to appraisal and inform the good range of staff development sessions, many of which focus on improving teaching and learning. Quality assurance arrangements for work-based learning and Train to Gain are less effective than for the rest of the college.
31. The college's approach to equality of opportunity is good. Equality has a strong prominence at the college. The college has appropriate policies for race, gender and disability. It is working towards a single equalities scheme. The college analyses performance data by different groups well and takes action when issues arise, particularly with concerns for retention for Black African learners on NVQ programmes. The college complies with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and monitors and reports on its targets for equality and diversity well. The college conducts impact assessments on all its key policies and usefully involves members of the minority ethnic students' forum in the process. The college meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination (Amendment) Act 2005 and has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults. The college engages well with the community cohesion agenda. The promotion of equal opportunities in work-based learning provision is satisfactory.
32. Governance is good. Governors have a good range of skills. Communications between governors and the college are good. They are fully involved in setting the college's strategic direction and educational character. Most governors have a good awareness of the performance of different learners. Governors have had recent training in safeguarding but not in equality and diversity. Attendance of the main board is below the college target.
33. The college has some excellent and much satisfactory accommodation; it is well resourced. Currently 87% of buildings are accessible to all learners. Learners' use of the college's learning resource centre and VLE has increased significantly in the past year. Financial management is outstanding. The monitoring of course costs is particularly effective. The college has made significant efficiencies in administrative processes whilst continuing to invest in teaching and support for learners. Given the improvement in the college's overall success rates and the good quality of provision, value for money is good.

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.

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	05/06	1332	74	69	5	1355	77	65	12
	06/07	651	76	74	2	757	80	70	10
	07/08*	766	76	N/A		647	81	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	9	67	73	-6	3	67	...	...
	06/07		...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	9	67	n/a		0	n/a	n/a	
NVQs	05/06	67	67	72	-5	142	75	74	1
	06/07	80	71	75	-4	97	94	75	19
	07/08*	92	78	n/a		70	83	n/a	
Other	05/06	1256	74	69	5	1210	77	65	12
	06/07	571	77	74	3	660	78	70	8
	07/08*	665	76	n/a		577	81	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.

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	05/06	901	70	66	4	1836	78	66	12
	06/07	1058	78	70	8	1200	78	69	9
	07/08*	875	74	n/a		1038	74	n/a	
GCSEs	05/06	94	64	68	-4	63	63	67	-4
	06/07	97	80	71	9	49	69	70	-1
	07/08*	57	77	n/a		37	86	n/a	
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	21	81	69	12	...	...	...	...
	06/07	20	80	73	7	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	12	75	n/a		0	n/a	n/a	
NVQs	05/06	106	75	65	10	216	70	68	2
	06/07	163	66	68	-2	188	77	69	8
	07/08*	139	78	n/a		261	67	n/a	
Other	05/06	680	69	66	3	1557	79	65	14
	06/07	778	80	70	10	963	79	69	10
	07/08*	667	73	n/a		740	76	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	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	05/06	1450	70	71	-1	1188	62	64	-2
	06/07	1454	70	73	-3	802	70	68	2
	07/08*	1587	77	n/a		723	74	n/a	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	272	81	87	-6	73	78	72	6
	06/07	236	84	87	-3	81	74	76	-2
	07/08*	268	90	n/a		68	88	n/a	
AS Levels	05/06	501	60	67	-7	57	68	55	13
	06/07	625	68	69	-1	92	53	59	-6
	07/08*	684	71	n/a		66	68	n/a	
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	47	72	66	6	12	58	57	1
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	0	n/a	n/a		0	n/a	n/a	
NVQs	05/06	39	62	71	-9	288	47	63	-16
	06/07	52	77	74	3	175	76	69	7
	07/08*	50	76	n/a		162	57	n/a	
Other	05/06	591	73	65	8	758	66	64	2
	06/07	541	66	70	-4	454	71	69	2
	07/08*	585	77	n/a		427	79	n/a	

* 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*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	48	38%	52%	25%	43%
		timely	52	17%	34%	8%	27%
	06/07	overall	22	46%	63%	42%	57%
		timely	23	35%	43%	30%	37%
	07/08	overall	14	71%	69%	53%	64%
		timely	13	69%	47%	54%	42%
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	36	67%	58%	50%	52%
		timely	32	41%	38%	31%	34%
	06/07	overall	30	77%	64%	67%	60%
		timely	29	72%	47%	66%	44%
	07/08	Overall	36	78%	67%	74%	64%
		timely	36	58%	51%	71%	48%

* 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/provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	64	83%
		timely	64	83%
	2007/08	overall	515	58%
		timely	515	58%
	2008/09 (3 months)	overall	19	38%
		timely	19	38%

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/provider skills for life rate**
Train to Gain (skills for life)	2006/07	overall	0	n/a
		timely		
	2007/08	overall	20	85%
		timely	20	85%
	2008/09 (3 months)	overall	0	n/a
		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
- ** Skills for life qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection