

Epping Forest College

Inspection report

Provider reference	130677
Published date	January 2009

Audience	Post-sixteen
Published date	January 2009
Provider reference	130677

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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: science and mathematics; engineering and manufacturing technologies; arts, media and publishing; languages, literature and culture; literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); and business, administration and law.

Description of the provider

1. Epping Forest College is a medium-sized general further education college located in West Essex, close to the towns of Loughton and Debden. The college's mission is 'to provide high quality, inclusive general further education for the community we serve'.
2. The college offers courses in 15 sector subject areas, although in a few areas the numbers of learners are low. The highest number of learners in 2007/08 were in preparation for life and work; languages, literature and culture;

business, administration and law; science and mathematics; health, public services and care; and arts, media and publishing.

3. In 2007/08, the college enrolled 3,294 learners. Some 60% were aged 16 to 18, 53% were women and 33% were from minority ethnic groups. The number of learners aged 14 to 16 was 144. In 2006/07 37% of learners were from Essex, about 23% from Waltham Forest and around 21% from Redbridge. Most of the remainder were from other East London boroughs.
4. The population of the Epping Forest District is 112,637 of which 9% are from minority ethnic groups. The population of Redbridge is 238,635 of which 36% are from minority ethnic groups. The population of Waltham Forest is 218,341 of which 35% are from minority ethnic groups. Epping Forest ranks 229, Redbridge ranks 143 and Waltham Forest 27 out of 354 for the average scores for the highest levels of deprivation in England. The employment rate in the Epping Forest District is just below the national average, but is just above in Redbridge and Waltham Forest. The percentage of pupils gaining five GCSEs at A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, in Essex in 2007 was 47.2%, in Waltham Forest it was 42.1% and in Redbridge 61.5%, compared to a national average of 46.8%.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Inadequate: Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Inadequate: Grade 4
Achievement and standards	Inadequate: Grade 4
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Inadequate: Grade 4
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Inadequate: contributory grade 4</i>

Sector subject areas

Science and mathematics	Inadequate: Grade 4
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Arts, media and publishing	Good: Grade 2
Languages, literature and culture	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business, administration and law	Inadequate: Grade 4

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Inadequate: Grade 4

5. The overall effectiveness of the college is inadequate. Achievement and standards are inadequate. The long course success rate for adult learners is high but low for learners aged 16 to 18, the majority of learners. Success rates are low for a substantial minority of sector subject areas, key skills qualifications and Black Caribbean and Black African learners aged 16 to 18. Standards of learners' work are satisfactory.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most lessons are adequate rather than good, with little stimulation and challenge. Assessment is accurate but monitoring of learners' progress through individual learning plans is weak. Initial assessment of learners' literacy needs is thorough but less effective for numeracy.
7. The response to the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. Enrichment is mostly good. The appropriate range of courses meets most learners' requirements. The approach to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory and the college recruits effectively from groups underrepresented in education. Links with local schools are positive. Partnerships with the community are improving but only a few courses are available at community venues. Links with employers are few.
8. Guidance and support are satisfactory. The college's links with local schools are effective in supporting vulnerable young people in their transition to college. Learners have access to a useful range of health and welfare services. New arrangements for tutorials are in place but it is too early to assess their effectiveness. Target setting on individual learning plans is poor.
9. Leadership and management are inadequate. Resources are very good and learners appreciate the college's new facilities. The college has been through a difficult period since the last inspection. Its direction is unclear. Quality improvement arrangements are ineffective. Governors are insufficiently rigorous in checking the performance of learners. Financial management is improving but value for money is poor. The promotion of equality of opportunity is inadequate.

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: Grade 4

10. The college's capacity to improve is inadequate. The long course success rate for adults increased substantially in 2007/08, but for learners aged 16 to 18 the increase was slow and the success rate was below that of similar colleges. Quality improvement arrangements are ineffective and managers' record of securing improvement is weak. Too few lessons are of good or better quality. Monitoring of learners' performance by governors lacks effectiveness.

11. Self-assessment reports prior to 2007/08 gave insufficient attention to areas for improvement, overstated strengths and did not take sufficient account of evidence when grading. However, in 2007/08 the self-assessment report was more self-critical and the report provided a very thorough evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement.

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

12. The college has made inadequate progress in addressing areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Accommodation and access for learners is substantially better. Learners' punctuality has improved. However, the quality of teaching and learning has not. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 remain a major concern. Weaknesses in the use of individual learning plans and in key skills provision are still issues. The effectiveness of leadership and management has declined. The strategic direction of the college, a strength at the last inspection, is unclear.

Key strengths

- high success rates for adult learners in 2007/08
- good support for vulnerable learners
- high quality accommodation and resources
- very thorough self-assessment in 2007/08.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low long course success rates for learners aged 16 to 18
- low key skills qualification success rates
- low long course success rates for Black Caribbean and Black African learners aged 16 to 18
- much teaching and learning where learners are insufficiently stimulated and challenged
- weak employer engagement
- poor target setting on individual learning plans
- weak strategic direction
- ineffective action to improve provision for learners
- ineffective monitoring of learners' performance by governors
- inadequate promotion of equality and diversity
- poor value for money.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Inadequate: Grade 4

Contributory grade:

Learners aged 19+

Satisfactory: grade 3

13. Achievement and standards are inadequate. This matches the self-assessment report. Between 2005/06 and 2007/08, the long course success rate for adults increased substantially to a high level, particularly at level 1. However, for this period for learners aged 16 to 18, the long course success rate was at unsatisfactory level, particularly at level 1 and at level 3, especially for General Certificate of Education (GCE) A and AS-level provision and the rate of increase was slow. Short course success rates between 2005/06 and 2007/08 increased substantially from a very low level but were below that for similar colleges. Key skills qualification success rates between 2005/06 and 2007/08 were all at unsatisfactory levels. The proportion of learners achieving the highest grades and the success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 completing in 2007/08 were low.
14. In most subject areas between 2005/06 and 2007/08, the increase in success rates was slow. In business, administration and law no increase took place. Long course success rates in 2007/08 in engineering and manufacturing and education and training were high. However, success rates were at an unsatisfactory level in science and mathematics; retail and commercial enterprise; leisure, travel and tourism; humanities; social sciences; and business, administration and law.
15. Overall, long course success rates in 2007/08 for learners from minority ethnic groups were similar to the college as a whole. However, the rates for Black Caribbean learners and Black African learners aged 16 to 18 were lower than in the rest of the college. Long course success rates for male and female learners in 2007/08 were similar but the pass rate for female adult learners was lower than that for male learners. Learners receiving learning support generally achieve higher success rates than the college's average rate, although this varies widely between subjects.
16. The adequate standard of learners' work helps them achieve satisfactory economic well-being. In engineering and manufacturing services, and art, media and publishing learners' skills are of a high standard. Electrical engineering learners use mathematics with confidence and those from performing arts during live productions create character and mood particularly effectively. In business, administration and law most learners' work is adequate but accounting learners develop good workplace skills. Most GCE A and AS learners make poor progress compared to their prior attainment. Learners make a positive contribution to the community through charitable activities and work with schools and the local community. Their attendance and punctuality overall are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. Quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. This agrees with the self-assessment report. A frank reappraisal of lesson observation grades compared to outcomes for learners has led the college to revise its observation procedures. Early evidence suggests that moderation of grades awarded by managers is now more rigorous and better reflects success rates. While observation has become more accurate, managers recognise they need to do more to link observation, staff development and appraisal. At present, action points arising from lesson observation are often imprecise and fail to rectify the issues identified.
18. Most teachers demonstrate a sound grasp of their subjects and are well qualified. New accommodation provides a pleasant learning environment with ready access to technology and other learning resources. Managers have targeted the use of information and learning technology (ILT) as an area for improvement and in a number of lessons it is now used well to support and enliven learning. The best lessons provide learners with an interesting and lively approach to learning with a variety of purposeful activities. In these lessons learners respond well and make good progress. However, most lessons are adequate rather than good with insufficient emphasis on stimulating and challenging learners to reach the highest standards of which they are capable. Teachers in too many lessons do not plan to meet the needs of all learners effectively, particularly able and gifted learners. In these lessons learners lose interest, become distracted and make slow progress.
19. Internal verification ensures assessment is effective but the monitoring of learners' progress through individual learning plans remains an area for improvement.
20. The college has introduced comprehensive initial assessment of learners for literacy needs. However, arrangements for assessment of numeracy needs are less effective. The planning of additional learning support is good and learners receive support promptly. Learners value highly the additional support provided.
21. The response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. The range of courses in most sector subject areas is appropriate and provides learners with progression from entry level to level 3. A useful programme of courses is in place for learners aged 14 to 16. The college has only recently started providing work-based learning and Train to Gain provision, numbers are low. Employer engagement is mostly weak, a concern noted in the self-assessment report. The college provides few programmes tailored specifically for employers' needs and has no systematic arrangements to collect their views. Links with local schools are effective. The range of enrichment activities for learners is good.
22. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory. Effective arrangements recruit learners from areas of high deprivation. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is high compared with the local area. The college provides an appropriate range of courses for learners

with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for those whose first language is not English or those needing to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Links with the community are improving but the number of courses the college offers at community venues is low.

23. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, too high a proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 left their courses early. Early indications suggest that this situation is improving with revised entry criteria, increased initial assessment and well planned support contributing to the improvement. The college now has better arrangements for learners to change courses when appropriate. Guidance on progression to employment, further and higher education and workplace training is satisfactory.
24. The college is piloting full-time tutor posts in some subject areas to help resolve issues of attendance and retention. It is too early to assess fully their impact. The recent introduction of an electronic individual learning plan has improved communication and general access to learners' records. However, as the self-assessment report recognises, target setting remains poor and the alignment and management of additional learning support, literacy and numeracy and key skills provision have insufficient clarity.
25. College's links with local schools are effective in supporting the transition to college of vulnerable young people. The specialist support for the large number of dyslexic learners is effective. These learners achieve higher success rates than the college's average rate. Support for learners with complex needs has enabled them to complete their studies successfully. Learners have access to a useful range of health and welfare services and their adoption of healthy lifestyles is good.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: Grade 4

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Inadequate: grade 4

26. Leadership and management are inadequate. The college has been through a challenging period, with three principals in 2008, a high proportion of interim managers, and a rebuilding programme. The college's direction is unclear, an issue recognised in the self-assessment report. College leaders and managers are attempting to resolve this problem by establishing a clear direction, which focuses more sharply on improving provision and responsiveness to the needs of learners, employers and the local community. At the time of the inspection, it was too early to judge the effectiveness of this work.
27. Quality improvement arrangements are ineffective. The majority of success rates have increased at too slow a pace and are at unsatisfactory level with the exception of those for adults. The proportion of good or better teaching and learning is low and issues from the last inspection remain unresolved. Recently introduced quality assurance processes and high standard management information enable managers and staff to monitor courses and learners'

performance more thoroughly. The accuracy of performance monitoring at college and sector subject area level has improved but this is not the case at course level. Issues identified in course reviews often remain unresolved. The annual appraisal of staff is adequate but quarterly reviews of progress based on outcomes of appraisal do not always take place.

28. Governors are insufficiently rigorous in monitoring the performance of learners and have been slow to challenge managers about weaknesses in provision. The quality of information they receive has been poor but is improving.
29. Financial management has improved recently and is effective. Resources are very good and learners appreciate the college's new facilities. ILT is of a very high standard but, as the self-assessment recognises, its use and development have no clear strategy. Given the insufficient improvement in teaching and learning, the low success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 and the decline in grades since the last inspection, the college provides poor value for money.
30. The promotion of equal opportunities is inadequate, which agrees with the self-assessment report. The college makes an appropriate response to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005. However, it does not fully meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The response to the equality legislation has been slow. Success rates for Black Caribbean and Black African learners are an issue. Governors' and managers' training in equality and diversity has taken place only very recently. The work of the recently convened equality and diversity group is at a very early stage and it is too early to measure any effect. Appropriate policies are in place but actions to implement, review and assess their impact are very recent. The promotion of equality of opportunity across the curriculum is inconsistent. The proportion of black and minority ethnic staff and governors is lower than that of the college community, although broadly in line with the local area. Arrangements for safeguarding young people meet government requirements but the college has been slow in its response to its duties to protect vulnerable adults.

Sector subject area

Science and mathematics

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

31. The college offers GCSE biology, psychology and mathematics and GCE AS and A-level biology, chemistry, physics, psychology and mathematics. The number of learners is 251, 135 study full time, 154 are aged 16 to 18, 160 are female and 93 are from minority ethnic groups.

Strengths

- high pass rates and high proportion of high grades for GCSE biology
- high standard of learners' work on the intensive science course
- very effective use of ILT to aid learning.

Areas for improvement

- very low success rates for most GCE subjects
- inadequate progress made by most GCE learners
- very low key skills qualification success rates
- insufficient good or better teaching and learning
- insufficient progress made to improve provision.

Achievement and standards

32. Achievement and standards are inadequate. This agrees with the self-assessment report. Success rates in most GCE subjects are low. Pass rates and the proportion of high grades are at an unsatisfactory level. Female learners and learners from Black Caribbean and Black African groups have low success rates. Pass rates and the proportion of high grades in GCSE biology were high in 2007/08. Success rates in AS chemistry and mathematics improved markedly and were at a satisfactory level in 2007/08. Key skills success rates are very low.
33. Most GCE learners make inadequate progress compared to their prior attainment, but GCSE learners' progress is satisfactory. The standard of learners' work on the intensive science course is high but in other subjects it is satisfactory. Learners' punctuality is satisfactory but their attendance is low.

Quality of provision

34. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers and learners use ILT very effectively and learners engage in interesting activities. The proportion of good or better lessons is low. In less effective lessons, communication between teachers and learners is unclear, learners work at the same level regardless of ability, they receive insufficient challenge and their progress is often slow. Assessment is

satisfactory. Initial assessments effectively identify relevant learning support needs and provision of support benefits learners.

35. The response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. Entry requirements are more realistic than in the past. Progression within college is low, but progression from college to higher education and employment is high. Curriculum enrichment is satisfactory. Links with employers are underdeveloped. Social inclusion is good; learners appreciate the harmonious atmosphere at the college.
36. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Learners receive good personal support. Tutorials are satisfactory. The best individual learning plans are helpful and address relevant issues; others lack constructive proposals for improvement. The use of work placements is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

37. Leadership and management are inadequate. Managers do not provide a successful and consistent direction that improves provision for learners. For too long success rates have been low, learners' progress is slow and lessons uninspiring. The self-assessment report is accurate but course reviews vary in quality. The best are evaluative and inform constructive action plans. Others are brief, over-descriptive and contain insufficient judgements. Managers observe and appraise all teachers. However, managers are ineffective in ensuring that improvement targets arising from observations and appraisal are met. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Resources and accommodation are good. Value for money is inadequate.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

38. Provision is available from level 1 to level 3. Learners can work towards the award; certificate and diploma in vehicle maintenance, repair and fitting operations, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in performing electrical operations at level 1 and an electro-technical award at level 2. The number of learners is 239; 180 are aged 16 to 18, 235 are male and 171 study full time. The college offers motor vehicle provision to 49 learners aged 14 to 16.

Strengths

- high success rates in 2007/08
- high standard of learners' practical skills
- good employer engagement
- good individual support for learners in workshops
- good management actions to improve provision.

Areas for improvement

- ineffective consolidation of learning in motor vehicle provision
- unsatisfactory range of motor vehicles for teaching to industry standard
- insufficient implementation of health and safety procedures in the motor vehicle workshops.

Achievement and standards

39. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates in 2007/08 were high and increased significantly between 2005/06 and 2007/08. Retention rates on a few courses were low. The standard of learners' practical work is high. They use hand tools to dismantle and reassemble vehicle assemblies correctly and confidently. Learners use measuring tools for vehicle steering geometry and engine component wear and tolerances accurately and well. Learners enjoy college life and lessons. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

40. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Teachers and learners make effective use of ILT, particularly the animated graphical software on complex vehicle components to provide individual study on topics, including fuel injection, braking systems and steering. Motor vehicle teachers develop learners' practical motor vehicle skills well, but do not consolidate sufficiently learners' understanding of practical activities with written or diagrammatic work. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory and the monitoring of learners' progress is effective. Feedback to learners on how to improve their work is insufficient.

41. The response to meeting learners' needs is satisfactory. The range of courses available to learners provides an effective introduction to work in the motor vehicle repair and electrical industry. Good engagement with local employers helps ensure the curriculum provides learners with the skills required by industry.
42. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Individual learning and behavioural support in the workshops are good. The recent appointment of a pastoral tutor is having a marked effect on improving retention and punctuality. Tutorials are effective. The use of the new electronic learning action planning system is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are satisfactory. At the last inspection, provision was inadequate. Since then managers' actions to improve provision have been substantial. Success rates are high and the standard of teaching and learning has improved markedly. Self-assessment is accurate. Accommodation and workshops are of a high standard but the range of workshop vehicles is unsatisfactory. Promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Managers and staff are taking action to increase female participation through targeted school visits and advertising. The implementation of health and safety procedures is insufficient; for example, lines on workshop floors to show safe passageways and to mark hazardous areas are unclear. The college recognises these issues and is taking prompt action to resolve them.

Arts, media and publishing

Good: Grade 2

Context

44. Full- and part-time courses are available from level 1 to level 3 in arts, media and publishing. Learners can work towards GCE AS and A level, national diplomas and certificates, foundation diplomas and other professional qualifications. Of the 486 learners, 433 are aged 16 to 18, 281 are female, 457 study full time and 147 are from minority ethnic groups.

Strengths

- high pass rates on the majority of courses in 2007/08
- high standard of learners' work
- good integration of theory and practical work
- good progression
- extensive enrichment activities to support learning
- good accommodation and resources for most learners.

Areas for improvement

- low success rate on key skills in communication at level 2
- low retention on GCE A-level in film studies and national diploma in performing arts
- insufficient promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

45. Achievement and standards are good. In 2007/08, learners who completed their studies obtained high pass rates, with a high proportion achieving high grades. Success rates at levels 1 and 2 were high but closer to the rate for similar colleges at level 3 in 2007/08. Retention rates for learners on courses for GCE A level in film studies and the national diploma in performing arts were at an unsatisfactory level. The success rate on key skills in communication at level 2 was low.
46. Learners' work is of a high standard. In fine art and graphics, learners' good creative work is characterised by thorough research and experimentation. Performing arts learners animate text particularly effectively. Media learners produce some excellent work for external clients.

Quality of provision

47. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers integrate theory and practice well. They ensure learning develops learners' understanding of basics concepts well and that they can apply this successfully to produce complex creative work. Teachers encourage learners to evaluate their performance thoroughly to improve the quality of their work. Teachers know their learners well. The good relationships between learners and teachers lead to productive working environments in lessons.

48. The response to the needs of learners is good. The range of courses is good. Learners progress particularly well through levels 1 to 3. A majority of learners securing places at university are the first in their families to do so. Teachers provide learners with a wide range of enrichment activities to extend and improve their knowledge and understanding of arts, media and publishing.
49. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Learners receiving additional learning support make the same progress as their peers. Much improved systems of initial advice and guidance and induction help learners settle well into their courses. Most teachers use the new electronic individual learning plans well to record progress and set targets.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are good. Managers take successful action to improve provision. Staff work well together. Most learners have access to good resources and accommodation. Suitable rehearsal facilities are not available for music learners. The lesson observation system is now more robust. The quality development leaders provide effective support for teachers. Managers and teachers do not use the curriculum sufficiently to promote equality and diversity. Self-assessment is largely accurate.

Languages, literature and culture

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

51. The college offers courses in GCE AS and A levels in English literature and English language. Other courses include GCSE English and a pre-GCSE course in adult literacy at levels 1 and 2. The college organises evening classes in modern foreign languages leading to qualifications awarded by the Open College Network. The number of learners is 197; 154 are aged 16 to 18, 134 are female and 152 study full time.

Strengths

- high success rates on the certificate of achievement in English, GCE AS-level English language and GCE A-level English literature
- consistently high pass rates in GCE A-level English language
- particularly effective development of terms, concepts and learners' views by teachers.

Areas for improvement

- low proportion of high grades in GCSE English
- low success rates on GCE AS-level English literature
- ineffective management of group work
- ineffective quality improvement arrangements.

Achievement and standards

52. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates were high on the certificate of achievement in English, GCE AS-level English language and A-level English literature in 2007/08. Pass rates in GCE A-level English language were consistently high. Only around half of those who begin a GCE AS course in English continue their study to GCE A level. Success rates on GCE AS-level English literature are low, an area for improvement in the self-assessment report. The progress made by learners on GCE AS and A-level courses is broadly in line with predictions based on their prior attainment at GCSE. The proportion of high grades in GCSE English is low.
53. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory; for example, GCE A-level literature learners demonstrate appropriate understanding in an analysis of theme, structure and context of William Blake's poetry. Others provided a sound stylistic analysis of texts. Learners' written work is of a satisfactory standard. The many posters and displays of learners' work celebrate their achievement effectively.

Quality of provision

54. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers skilfully elicit appropriate terms and concepts from learners, encouraging the development of analysis, evaluation and the justification of

views. Most learning tasks successfully motivate learners; for example, learners created high standard posters depicting Gothic devices and conventions or gave imaginative performances based on literature. The management of group work and of presentations by learners is often ineffective. Learners drift off task or do little. Detailed feedback on written work helps learners improve.

- 55. The response to meeting learners' needs and interests is satisfactory. The range of programmes is appropriate. Recruitment to modern foreign language courses is low, an issue noted in the self-assessment report. Enrichment is effective.
- 56. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Pre-course guidance is appropriate. Teachers support learners well. Learners' targets for improvement are often insufficiently precise.

Leadership and management

- 57. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Accommodation is good and well equipped. Courses are well resourced. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Access to and take up of appropriate staff development are good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The promotion of equality and diversity is firmly embedded within the curriculum. Course reviews are insufficiently self-critical and do not support quality improvement. The use of lesson observations and of learners' views to improve the quality of provision is ineffective. Self-assessment is broadly accurate.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

58. The college provides courses in literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Qualifications are available from entry level to level 2. About half of the provision is made up of literacy qualifications. Most learners study on entry or level 1 accredited courses. Of the 452 learners, 200 are aged 16 to 18, 268 are female, 198 are from minority ethnic groups and 171 declare a learning difficulty or disability.

Strengths

- very high success rates on ESOL speaking and listening courses in 2007/08
- very effective use of teaching and learning resources
- good management actions to improve provision.

Areas for improvement

- poor attendance and punctuality
- insufficient account of the individual learning needs of learners
- insufficient use of target setting and reviewing of learners' progress.

Achievement and standards

59. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. In 2007/08, success rates on ESOL speaking and listening courses were very high at entry and level 1. Success rates on literacy and numeracy long courses at entry and level 1 were at a satisfactory level. Since 2006/07, most long success rates have increased substantially.
60. Learners make effective progress and improve their confidence. ESOL learners improve their language skills well. Attendance and punctuality are poor, although monitoring of attendance has improved since September 2008.

Quality of provision

61. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. This agrees with the self-assessment report. Teachers very effective use of teaching and learning resources engage learners successfully in lessons, particularly ILT and visual and practical learning materials. Explanations and use of questioning are effective and motivate learners well. Too much teaching is directed at groups rather than taking sufficient account of learners' individual learning needs, especially in lessons with learners with a range of abilities. Reviewing of learners' progress, including the use of target setting for improvement is insufficient. Targets set to develop learners' skills are insufficiently precise and measurable. Not all learners are clearly aware of their targets and a few are insufficiently challenging.

62. The response to the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. The range of courses to meet learners' requirements is adequate. However, provision for the needs of employers is insufficient.
63. Staff provide satisfactory guidance and support. Additional support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs is adequate. Careers guidance for ESOL learners is not routinely available.

Leadership and management

64. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers' action to improve provision is good. Success rates have increased substantially between 2005/06 and 2007/08. Use of data to monitor the provision is good. Staff work well in teams. The sharing of good practice is effective. Observations of teaching and learning process are thorough, with clear judgements and feedback to teachers, although plans to improve teaching and learning are insufficiently rigorous. The course review process is satisfactory. All staff have a teacher training qualification but not all have subject specialist qualifications. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Success rates for men and women and those from different ethnic groups are similar. The promotion of equality and diversity in the classroom is adequate. Equality and diversity training is insufficient. Managers do not routinely check the promotion of equality and diversity in lesson observations. Self-assessment is satisfactory; the report is broadly accurate but does not include judgements on learners' progress and the standard of their work.

Business, administration and law

Inadequate: Grade 4

65. The college offers courses in business, administration, accounting and law from level 1 to level 4. Qualifications available include NVQs, first and national diplomas, GCE A and AS levels and other vocational awards. Of the 437 learners, 352 are aged 16 to 18, 274 are female, 364 are full time and 154 are from minority ethnic groups.

Strengths

- high success rates for NVQs at levels 2 and 3 for accounting technicians and for the Institute of Legal Executives at level 2
- high rate of progression from vocational business provision to higher education
- high pass rates in key skills qualifications on vocational business courses.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on most courses
- insufficiently challenging lessons to develop learners' understanding and knowledge
- narrow range of courses
- insufficient employer engagement
- insufficient improvement since the last inspection.

Achievement and standards

66. Achievement and standards are inadequate, an area for improvement in the self-assessment report. The overall long course success rate in 2007/08 was below that for similar colleges and has not increased since 2005/06. Success rates on a few courses were high in 2007/08, including NVQs at levels 2 and 3 for accounting technicians and at level 2 for the Institute of Legal Executives. Key skills pass rates in 2007/08 increased to a high level.
67. The rate of progression from vocational business courses to higher education is high. Learners' work is satisfactory. Accounting learners develop high level workplace skills. For most other learners these skills are at an appropriate level. Learners' behaviour, attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

68. The quality of provision, and teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, responsive teaching engages learners in stimulating learning. However, too many lessons rely on a narrow range of teaching methods, which do not challenge learners effectively or enable them to develop their knowledge and understanding sufficiently. Teachers monitor learners' work effectively and provide useful feedback on how to improve. The identification and provision of additional learning support and assessment are satisfactory.

69. The response to the needs and interests of learners and employers is inadequate. Too many full-time business learners do not have access to a work placement. The range of vocational courses is narrow. Very few professional or short courses are available for people in employment and engagement with employers is weak. Enrichment is satisfactory.
70. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Staff carefully monitor and respond to the personal support needs of learners. Learners receive effective guidance on careers and progression to further and higher education courses. Learners value the support they receive from their tutors.

Leadership and management

71. Leadership and management are inadequate. Since the last inspection, progress has been insufficient in remedying areas for improvement. A lack of direction and little continuity of leadership have restricted improvements in provision. Success rates for most courses have not increased, a few have declined and the range of teaching and learning remains narrow. Staff are committed to achieve higher standards and current managers clearly recognise the issues and are taking action to resolve them. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these actions. The self-assessment report is accurate. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared to 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
All Long - Level 1	05/06	474	63	69	-6	662	53	65	-12
	06/07	397	68	74	-6	820	58	70	-12
	07/08*	780	65	N/A	...	424	81	N/A	...
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	0	...	...	...	0	...	...	...
	06/07	0	...	...	...	0	...	...	...
	07/08	0	...	...	...	0	...	...	...
NVQs	05/06	83	65	72	-7	1	100	74	26
	06/07	25	56	75	-19	0	...	...	...
	07/08*	66	79	N/A	...	1	0	N/A	...
Other	05/06	391	63	69	-6	661	53	65	-12
	06/07	372	69	74	-5	820	58	70	-12
	07/08*	714	64	N/A	...	423	81	N/A	...

* college data

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared to 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
All Long - Level 2	05/06	885	64	66	-2	402	62	66	-4
	06/07	909	61	70	-9	338	70	69	1
	07/08*	889	73	N/A	...	322	76	N/A	...
GCSEs	05/06	330	71	68	3	94	74	67	7
	06/07	349	66	71	-5	93	67	70	-3
	07/08	277	70	N/A	...	85	79	N/A	...
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	1	100	69	31	0	...	...	...
	06/07	17	65	73	-8	2	100	71	29
	07/08*	46	83	N/A	...	1	0	N/A	...
NVQs	05/06	25	40	65	-25	57	60	68	-8
	06/07	41	34	68	-34	49	76	69	7
	07/08*	45	64	N/A	...	74	86	N/A	...
Other	05/06	529	61	66	-5	251	58	65	-7
	06/07	502	60	70	-10	194	70	69	1
	07/08*	521	75	N/A	...	162	71	N/A	...

* college data

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared to 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
All Long - Level 3	05/06	1837	60	71	-11	431	55	64	-9
	06/07	1841	60	73	-13	374	56	68	-12
	07/08*	1778	67	N/A	...	342	73	N/A	...
A/A2 Levels	05/06	408	82	87	-5	63	78	72	6
	06/07	365	82	87	-5	61	64	76	-12
	07/08	341	82	N/A	...	42	81	N/A	...
AS Levels	05/06	954	53	67	-14	90	43	55	-12
	06/07	1033	52	69	-17	108	45	59	-14
	07/08*	910	61	N/A	...	75	60	N/A	...
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	191	44	66	-22	59	32	57	-25
	06/07	15	13	59	-46	47	30	59	-29
	07/08*	6	33	N/A	...	30	37	N/A	...
NVQs	05/06	3	33	71	-38	23	43	63	-20
	06/07	1	100	74	26	23	65	69	-4
	07/08*	0	...	...	...	39	79	N/A	...
Other	05/06	281	63	65	-2	196	61	64	-3
	06/07	427	63	70	-7	135	70	69	1
	07/08*	521	68	N/A	...	156	83	N/A	...

* college data