

Derwentside College

Inspection report

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

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

The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: health and care; engineering and manufacturing; hairdressing and beauty therapy; humanities and social sciences and preparation for life and work.

Description of the provider

1. Derwentside College is a small tertiary college established in 1986 to combine the activities of Consett Technical College and the sixth forms of five local schools. It is the major provider of post-16 education and training in the semi-rural district of Derwentside in the north west of County Durham. The college mission places a strong focus on meeting the educational needs of the local community and providing 'a great place to learn, achieve and succeed'. The college's main campus is in Consett, in new buildings opened in 2002. There is a sixth form centre in Lanchester. The college is organised into four

curriculum areas and offers courses in all areas of learning with the exception of land-based industries and construction. The college operates in a challenging environment. Derwentside is ranked 45th out of 354 councils in the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) Indices of Multiple Deprivation. It is an area of small communities, still struggling to regenerate after the decline of the coal and steel industries. Manufacturing remains the largest employment sector and the college has strong links with the engineering industry. Since the last inspection the college's income has fallen by one third, due to the ending of funding for pre-employment training and changes in Learning and Skills Council (LSC) priorities for adult learning, staff numbers have been reduced significantly and there has been a substantial change in the management structure. In 2006/07 the number of full-time equivalent learners on roll for 16-18 year-olds were 828 and for 19+ 446. This represented 1,310 learners 16 to 18 and 2,252 19+ learners. Of these approximately 63% were female and 37% male.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Good: contributory grade 2</i>

Sector subject areas

Health and care	Good: Grade 2
Engineering and manufacturing	Good: Grade 2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Humanities and social sciences	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

2. This is a good college. Since the last inspection a substantial rationalisation of the curriculum has occurred. The college budget has been cut by one third and staffing numbers have been reduced by over 100. However, during this period of adjustment the principal, senior management team and staff have successfully promoted an improvement agenda.
3. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates for 16-18 learners are outstanding and have increased between 2004/05 and 2006/07 to significantly above the national average for similar colleges. Success rates for 19+ learners also demonstrate a pattern of year-on-year improvement to above national benchmarks.
4. Teaching is good and improving. There has been a significant increase in the percentage of good and better teaching. The central focus of staff development is on teaching and learning. Effective systems are in place to assure the quality of teaching and learning. Learners receive regular and supportive feedback as well as good and timely support. The written recording of lesson observations is too prescriptive and judgements do not always adequately match grades awarded.
5. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. The college has evolved a more responsive approach to the learning needs of the local community. Strong partnerships have been established with employers and schools. Growth has occurred in employer based provision. An active and successful 14-16 programme is flourishing and has contributed to the reduction of those not in education, employment or training (NEET) and an increase in progression rates to further education. The college has failed to arrest the decline in enrolments in the sixth form centre.
6. Care, guidance and support are good. A good and developing range of information, advice and guidance services promote good induction, transition and progression. Tutorial support is good and suitably promotes the Every Child Matters agenda. There is good and speedy support for learners in need of additional support or at risk of not completing their course or attaining their learning objectives. A good range of enrichment programmes encourages learners to make a positive contribution to college life.
7. Leadership and management are good. A clear strategic direction has been established. The self-assessment is generally accurate. There is good monitoring of performance and improvement at directorate level. While governors have provided a strong strategic steer their monitoring of some elements of college performance has been variable. The self-assessment report tends to be too descriptive and in parts there is insufficient analysis of

course performance. The promotion of equality and diversity are good. While curriculum management has improved there are some areas where it is less effective.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. The college demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. Success rates are consistently high. The whole college self-assessment is broadly accurate. While arrangements for quality assurance have been strengthened there remains variability in how some curriculum managers use self-assessment effectively to secure improvement. In a significant minority of areas self-assessment is more descriptive than evaluative. Targets in some action plans are imprecise. There has been a failure to successfully tackle the falling numbers in the sixth form centre. Unless actively tackled such factors potentially hinder the college's capacity to improve further. The college has made good progress in recent years to develop effective partnerships. Management information is accurate and easily accessible although not always used effectively at course level. The professional development of staff is well planned and focuses appropriately on improving teaching and learning. The financial position is satisfactory. Staff are strongly committed to the college's mission and priorities. Senior management has successfully guided the college through a period of re-organisation, fiscal constraint and staffing reductions. While governors challenge managers they do not always effectively scrutinise some key aspects of provision.

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

9. The college has made good progress in tackling the key issues raised in the last inspection report. Strengths noted in that report have been maintained. Success rates at levels 1 and 2 for learners aged 16 to 18 have improved appreciably. The percentage of good or better lessons has improved significantly. While the rigour of whole college quality assurance has improved there is some variability at course level. The college now provides good additional support for learners and has a strong focus on those 'at risk' of underachieving. Access to support for part-time and off-site learners has improved. There remain some inconsistencies in the use of individual learning and action plans. Provision is now satisfactory in meeting literacy and numeracy needs within the college and local community. The college has made some progress in tackling accommodation deficiencies.

Key strengths

- high and sustained success rates
- outstanding success rates for 16 to 18
- strong links with employers and schools
- good provision and developments for 14-16 learners
- good individual support for learners

- strong and effective senior management focus on raising achievement and standards
- clear vision and a clear strategic direction.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- rigour of self-assessment and quality improvement processes
- improvements to the recording of lesson observation evidence
- less effective curriculum management in some areas
- continuing deficiencies in accommodation
- declining and now small numbers in the sixth form centre
- governors' scrutiny of some provision.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Learners aged 16 to 18

Outstanding: grade 1

10. Achievement and standards are good. The judgement is in line with the college's own evaluation. Over a period of three years the college has demonstrated year-on-year improvement in success rates for both 16-18 and 19+ learners. Success rates for 16-18 learners are outstanding; for all long courses for 16 to 18 learners, at all levels, success rates have been significantly above the national benchmark for similar colleges. For example level 1 success rates have improved from 61% in 2004/05 to 85% in 2006/07; for level 2 from 60% in 2004/05 to 81% in 2006/07; and at level 3 from 72% in 2004/05 to 82% in 2006/07. Success rates for 19+ learners have also been consistently above benchmarks. The college recognises that there is a need to improve the percentage of high grades and value added on a number of GCE AS and A level courses. While there is underperformance on a small minority of courses, these are quickly recognised and appropriate strategies devised.
11. Overall success rates for apprenticeships demonstrate sustained improvement. For advanced apprentices overall success rates in 2005/06 were 57%, and increased to 65% in 2006/07. Apprentices' overall success rates have increased from 63% in 2004/05 to 70% in 2006/07. Timely success rates also increased in 2006/07 to just above the national rate. All framework rates are above national benchmarks except for advanced apprenticeships for 2006/07. The college recognises the need to improve timely success rates for advanced apprenticeships.
12. The standard of learners' work is good. Attendance rates are good and improving. Learners work safely in studios and workshops. Assessment of learners' work is fair and accurate. There is good progression to employment and to further and higher education.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

13. The quality of provision is good and is in agreement with the college's own judgement in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. The college has successfully reduced the number of satisfactory and inadequate lessons and increased the number of those that are good and outstanding. The better lessons are characterised by good planning with a strong focus on activities that complement the needs of individual learners. For example, teachers in humanities are adroit at managing small groups of learners to promote learning: in engineering a broad range of well planned activities enables learners to work independently. Weaker lessons are too teacher centred and lack pace with the consequence that learning activities are less

well developed. Learners comment favourably on the quality of teaching they receive.

14. There is an effective system for assuring the quality of teaching and learning. Observers are well trained. Teachers usually receive detailed and helpful verbal feedback. There are clear links between teaching observations, performance management and staff development. Staff development activities have a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. Teachers are very well supported by advanced grade lecturers (AGL) and subject learning coaches. However, there are shortcomings in the written recording of lesson observations. The proforma used for observations are too prescriptive and focus observers' attention on teaching process and activities rather than learning. In a significant minority of record sheets the evidence recorded does not adequately match the grades awarded. While the use of information and learning technology (ILT) has improved it remains underdeveloped in several curriculum areas. Assessment is well planned. Feedback is generally clear and detailed and offers guidance on how to improve. The college has a strong sense of what is required to elicit further improvements to teaching and learning.
15. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners and employers is good. Collaboration with employers is good and is particularly well established in the engineering, manufacturing and care and manufacturing sectors. The college is proactive in the development of the 14-19 curriculum. Liaison with schools is good and many pupils gain an insight into the specialist areas of the college through a series of taster days and events. The college also offers a good range of link courses to 14-16 year-olds including young apprenticeships. There has been growth in employer based provision including apprenticeships and Train to Gain. The decline in the number of learners studying GCE AS and A level subjects occasionally constrains learners' choices of subject combinations. Opportunities to study full time at level 3 are limited in some vocational curriculum areas. Alternative choices of advanced apprenticeships or part-time study meet the needs of most, but not all learners. An appropriate and diverse enrichment programme enables learners to make positive contributions to college life. Relevant additional qualifications are linked to most full-time programmes and learners benefit from trips and activities to enhance their career options and personal aspirations.
16. Support and guidance for learners are good. The college has a coherent range of information, advice, welfare and guidance services. These are prominent and accessible to all. Induction is comprehensive and enables learners to settle quickly into their courses. Initial and diagnostic assessments are robust and appropriate specialist support is promptly arranged. Many learners have effective support with their literacy, numeracy and specialist needs. Most learners receiving additional support achieve high success rates.
17. The tutorial system provides good individual support and a range of group activities covering social, career and health issues. There is excellent coverage of Every Child Matters themes. Each learner's progress is carefully reviewed

and intensive mentoring is provided if there are causes for concern. The mentoring process has been successful in supporting learners to complete their programmes. Outcomes of reviews are recorded on individual learning plans. Most plans help learners to improve, though the target setting process is underdeveloped on GCE AS and A level courses. Procedures to review the progress of apprentices are good.

18. Careers guidance is good and information is readily available. Support for applicants to higher education is comprehensive. Most learners on vocational programmes value the opportunity for work experience. The college periodically collects the views of learners through perception surveys, though it fails to give feedback to learners' survey outcomes.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

19. Leadership and management are good. The principal, senior managers and governors provide a clear strategic direction for the college. Within a difficult operational climate, they have successfully re-aligned the college's provision. Success rates have improved and are now high and the quality of teaching is now good. Communications within the college are good. Course performance, the performance of teachers and the progress made in implementing improvement plans are monitored rigorously at directorate level. Close attention is paid to monitoring learners' progress. The observation of teaching is linked closely to the appraisal of teachers and to professional development. Management information is accessible and provides accurate information on learners' achievement.
20. The college works well with a good range of partners. Working arrangements with schools and employers are strong. There is a strong link with the primary care trust. These partnerships have helped the college provide an increasing range of training for employers, deliver a substantial apprenticeship programme and develop a wide ranging health awareness programme. The college has taken a successful lead in the development of the new diplomas and young apprenticeship programmes.
21. The whole college self-assessment report is broadly accurate in its identification of the college's key strengths. It fails to identify some of the areas for improvement such as those relating to quality assurance. A few areas for improvement are insufficiently substantiated by evidence. There are gaps in the range of criteria evaluated. It is overly descriptive. However, the self-assessment process is well established. The procedures involve all staff and builds from the individual course and service reviews. The rigour with which annual course reviews are completed is broadly satisfactory but variable. Some of the proforma used do not prompt a sufficiently comprehensive analysis of course performance. The quality of self-assessment

at curriculum area levels is mixed and in some cases insufficiently evaluative or based securely enough on a suitable range of evidence.

22. Curriculum management is satisfactory overall. Curriculum managers are responsible for a wide range of disparate vocational areas and often carry an extensive administrative load. In some cases they are stretched too much and are not sufficiently well informed about what is happening in their areas of responsibility and spend too much time on operational issues and not enough on strategic and quality assurance.
23. The management of equality and diversity is good. Appropriate policies and action plans are in place. The performance of different groups is thoroughly analysed and there is no significant differences in performance by any individual group. Staff receive suitable professional development. Learner induction and the pastoral programme give good attention to the promotion of equality of opportunity. The college celebrates diversity well. The college complies with the requirements of the relevant legislation regarding equality and diversity. The management of safety is well developed. Strong attention is given to risk assessment and to safety in workshops. The college has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults. Staff are provided with appropriate training.
24. Staff are well qualified. They are appropriately supported by induction and appraisal and provided with a suitable range of professional development opportunities. Accommodation is satisfactory. Some classrooms are too small for the sizes of the groups using them and temperature control in some is poor. Relatively few are equipped with modern information and learning technology. Specialist resources are satisfactory and in some areas good. Governors have provided a strong strategic steer to the college. They have been clear, for example, about the need to improve partnership arrangements with stakeholders and the need to re-align the college's work to meet the government's skills agenda. The degree to which they monitor the college's performance is variable. They receive a wide range of appropriate reports, but a few receive insufficient attention. In some cases the minutes do not record sufficiently the discussions which take place. The college's financial position is satisfactory and improving. With high success rates and good teaching and an average class size of nearly 14 the college provides good value for money.

Sector Subject Area

Health and care

Good: Grade 2

Context

25. There are 232 learners on full-time courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 in health and social care and childcare; 90% are aged 16-18. A further 34 adult learners are studying access to higher education (HE) health studies. There are 253 part-time students taking NVQs in care and 12 taking NVQs in childcare. There are 11 apprentices in childcare. Female learners comprise 85% of the total cohort.

Strengths

- high success rates in 2006/07
- good teaching and learning
- effective partnerships with employers promoting learning
- good support for learners.

Areas for improvement

- quality of self-assessment reporting
- suitability of accommodation.

Achievement and standards

26. Success rates are high and demonstrate improvement over a three year period to significantly above the national average on most courses. Early indications are that success rates remain high in 2007/08. Retention has improved significantly since 2004/5 and is now above the national average in all courses except the national certificate in health studies. Access to HE learners had a success rate of 75% in 2006/07, 9% above national average. Learners' attendance is good: they arrive punctually and are attentive in class. Learners develop good employment skills on their courses. The standard of their written work is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

27. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers set tasks and ask questions which ensure all learners make good progress. Teachers have a good knowledge of their learners' needs and meet them well, particularly at level 1. Specialist support assistants are deployed very effectively in lessons to meet the needs of identified learners. Lessons focus on the development of study skills alongside vocational knowledge. Assessment is satisfactory. Assignments are marked positively and assessed in accordance with awarding body guidelines.
28. Partnerships with employers in both care and childcare are good. NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in care are delivered to a wide range of care homes with underpinning knowledge delivered either in the workplace or at the college.

Assessments are undertaken flexibly to fit in with shift patterns. The college runs a successful childcare course for 14-16 year-old pupils at a local school.

29. Learners at the college and in the workplace are well supported. Tutorials for full-time learners are well planned. Learners receive good careers advice and guidance. NVQ learners are interviewed thoroughly and encouraged to make use of college resources. Progression from level to level and onto higher education is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

30. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The self-assessment report is not effective in improving the provision. The evidence is limited and the report lacks sufficient evaluation. Significant strengths are not sufficiently well recognised and some weaknesses are overemphasised. Course performance is reviewed but there is limited evidence of review and development of the curriculum or strategies to tackle fluctuations in recruitment. Teachers are observed and appraised each year and the observation process gives an accurate account of the quality of teaching and learning. Staff are well supported by the acting curriculum manager. Some accommodation is unsatisfactory, rooms are crowded, and temperature control is poor. The teaching and learning resources are satisfactory. Equality and diversity is promoted well in lessons and the recruitment of male students is good.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Good: Grade 2

Context

31. The college offers full-time, part-time and evening vocational and technician courses at levels 1 to 3 in fabrication and welding, mechanical engineering and electrical electronic engineering. There are also short bespoke courses for industries. Of the 254 enrolments, 81 are adults, 94 are part time, 3 are female and 75 are aged 14 to 16. The college has 96 work-based learners.

Strengths

- very high success rates on level 2 long courses
- high overall framework completion rates for apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship
- much good teaching and learning
- good support and guidance for learners.

Areas for improvement

- very low success rates on level 3 long courses for learners aged 16 to 18
- low timely framework completion rate for advanced apprenticeship.

Achievement and standards

32. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates in 2006/07 on level 1 long courses were in line with the national average for learners aged 16 to 18 and above the national average for 19+ learners. Success rates on level 2 long courses, which account for about 60% of the provision, have been significantly above the national average for the last three years. For the small number of learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 long courses, success rates have been very low over the last three years. Overall retention rates are high.
33. In work-based learning, the overall apprenticeship framework completion rate declined in 2006/07 but remained slightly above the national average. For advanced apprenticeship, the overall framework completion rate was significantly above the national average in 2006/07. The timely framework completion rate for apprentices improved markedly in 2006/07 but declined for advanced apprentices to well below the national average. The quality of learners' written work is satisfactory. Learners develop good practical skills and maintain acceptable levels of performance in the workplace.

Quality of provision

34. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. In the better lessons, teachers use a good range of activities to promote independent learning. There is evidence of differentiated teaching and learning and good use is made of ILT. Strong emphasis is placed on health and safety and learners undertake risk assessment in practical lessons. In the weaker lessons,

teachers do not sufficiently challenge learners to achieve the necessary learning outcomes. Lessons are too teacher centred. The assessment of learners' work is good. Monitoring of learners' progress is effective.

35. The college responds well to meeting the needs of learners and employers. Bespoke courses are developed to update the skills of local employees. The range of enrichment activities is satisfactory. The support and guidance for learners are good. Tutorials are effective. Work-based learners are well supported by the college assessors and their work supervisors ensuring the effective development of their practical and personal skills. On-site progress reviews take place on a regular basis but are not sufficiently rigorous. Equality and diversity and health and safety are not discussed with the learner during the review process.

Leadership and management

36. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication is good. Team meetings are productive. Links with employers and schools are strong. Teaching and learning are not sufficiently evaluated and there is too much emphasis on reporting the lesson grade profile and inadequate focus on the outcome of the observations. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. Engineering resources are satisfactory. Workshops are adequate for the purpose. Classrooms and the Computer Aided Design (CAD) suite are well equipped, bright and of the appropriate size for the groups. The co-ordination of the on-site and off-site training for work-based learners is good. There is satisfactory promotion and development of equality and diversity.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

37. The college offers hairdressing and beauty therapy from levels 1 to 3. There are 165 learners, of whom 51 are part time and 6 are hairdressing apprentices.

Strengths

- high success rates on NVQ beauty therapy level 3
- good standards of assignment work on beauty therapy programmes
- good activities to engage and motivate learners
- good arrangements to support learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on NVQ hairdressing level 2
- some poor resources
- insufficiently rigorous evaluation of programme performance.

Achievement and standards

38. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The success rate on NVQ beauty therapy level 3 is high and has remained consistently high over a three year period. Success rates on NVQ beauty therapy level 2 and NVQ hairdressing level 1 show considerable on year variations. Improved apprenticeship success rates of 68% for overall and 57% for timely are above the national average. The NVQ hairdressing level 2 success rates are consistently low and currently 11% below the 2006/07 national average. The college is aware that retention is a critical factor and has introduced strategies that identify and support learners at risk of leaving the programme. Key skill success rates are at or above national average apart from application of number at level 2.

Learners develop satisfactory occupational skills. They work efficiently; complete satisfactory client services, use good levels of communication, are enthusiastic and enjoy their studies. Beauty therapy assignments are of a very high standard. Assignments are well researched, detailed, show a very good understanding of the topic and are well presented.

Quality of provision

39. The quality of provision is good. Inspection agreed with the college evaluation that teaching and learning are good. Varied, well planned and managed activities engage and motivate learners. Learners work conscientiously developing presentations, working within teams and replicating practical services. Tutors have high aspirations for their learners, often using questioning to challenge and extend learning during tasks. Some practical activities are overly focused on correct procedures with little re-enforcement

of theoretical principles. Assessment practices are satisfactory, as is the monitoring of learners' progress.

40. Arrangements to support learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs are good. All learners complete diagnostic assessments. Learners quickly receive good and effective additional support. Learners in receipt of additional learning support achieve well. Pastoral and academic support are good. Effective evaluations ascertain those learners at risk of leaving the programme early. Committed learning advisors provide impartial learning and pastoral support. Information, advice and guidance are broadly satisfactory. Tutors and learning advisors provide effective guidance, helping learners achieve their learning and assessment targets.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are well qualified and committed. Meetings take good account of learner issues and college wide initiatives. Flexible timetabling extends the range of qualifications and assessment opportunities for learners. Staff development focuses on improving teaching and learning. Verification meets awarding body criteria. Equality of opportunity is good and well promoted. Learners have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities towards other learners and staff. As identified in the self-assessment report, there are some poor resources. The practical salons are realistic commercial environments but shortage of space and limited information technology restrict high quality training. The evaluation of programme performance is insufficiently rigorous. Self-assessment is insufficiently evaluative with unsubstantiated judgements. The quality improvement plan lacks detail and there is insufficient evaluation of progress towards improvement targets.

Humanities and social sciences

Good: Grade 2

Context

42. GCE AS and A level courses are offered in English language, English literature, geography, history, psychology and sociology together with access to HE courses. At the time of inspection there were 143 subject enrolments for 16-18 year-olds on GCE AS and A level courses which is a reduction of almost 50% since 2004/05. The number of 19+ learners on access courses has increased slightly to 80.

Strengths

- high success rates at GCE A level and AS level in 2007/08
- good teaching and learning
- good support for learners.

Areas for improvement

- low pass rates in 2006/07 in GCE AS psychology
- poor achievement of high grades in psychology.

Achievement and standards

43. Achievement and standards are good. In 2007/08 success rates at GCE A level and AS level were above the national average for similar colleges for all courses except English language at GCE A level and English literature at AS level. Many courses demonstrate sustained improvement. In 2006/07 there were low pass rates in sociology and very low pass rates in psychology at AS level. However, successful strategies to tackle this have resulted in significantly improved pass rates in 2007/08. The proportion of learners achieving higher grades in AS psychology is low. Some learners do less well than would be expected from their GCSE profile. Success rates on access courses are satisfactory. In class and in written work learners demonstrate an ability to evaluate theories and research at an appropriate level.

Quality of provision

44. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned. Activities are well managed and learners respond enthusiastically to them. Some groups are small but teachers use effective strategies to ensure that learners are stimulated with a high level of discussion and activity. Some learners benefit greatly from the small group setting. On occasions learners are insufficiently challenged to develop their answers to questions. Good subject based workshops and homework clubs enhance learning. Processes for identifying and supporting learners at risk are now good. Assignments are set regularly and marked work is returned in a timely manner with effective feedback. Classroom accommodation is good. A good range of books and periodicals is available and access to computers is good. The virtual learning environment is an effective learning support for English and access courses.

45. The range of subjects available is satisfactory. A good range of enrichment activities is on offer. Learners receive good guidance and support. Progression to higher education from GCE A level and access courses is improving and is good. Progression from GCE AS level to GCE A level is satisfactory. The use of individual learning plans is poor and does not contribute effectively to learner progress.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are good and have been effective in improving learner achievement. Staff meet on a regular basis and focus effectively on improving learner performance. The systems for observation and performance management link well to a good range of professional development activities which focus on teaching and learning. Course reviews are effective and make good use of data but are limited by a lack of targets for higher grade achievement or value added. The self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative. Progress against planned actions is effectively monitored. Some action plans lack precise milestones. Managers have not been successful in maintaining learner numbers at GCE AS and A level. Equality of opportunity is good and well promoted.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

47. The inspection focused on key skills and on literacy and numeracy. There are 226 learners on key skills communications and 233 on key skills application of number, delivered on the Consett site, and to workplace learners. On literacy and numeracy courses there are 269 16-18 learners and 276 19+ learners. These include 184 learners attending additional support workshops, for learners from mainstream courses.

Strengths

- good teaching and learning on discrete literacy and numeracy provision
- good guidance and support for learners.

Areas for improvement

- self-assessment report insufficiently evaluative
- lack of clarity around the role of curriculum manager.

Achievement and standards

48. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. On substantive key skills courses success rates are above national benchmarks over three years. For example, in key skills application of number at level 1 for 16-18 learners the success rate for 2006/07 was 69% compared to the national benchmark of 46%. However, there is a declining trend in many of these success rates over the three year period 2004/05 to 2006/07. Success rates in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory although there is some variability across courses. For example, success rates for basic numeracy at level 1 for both 16 to 18 and 19+ learners showed a decline from 2005/06 to 2006/07. The standard of most learners' work scrutinised in the inspection was good. Attendance at key skills sessions and evening literacy and numeracy sessions is good. Attendance at daytime literacy and numeracy sessions is satisfactory. Punctuality is good.

Quality of provision

49. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy are good. Effective use of interactive computer programmes in diagnostic assessment leads to effective individual learning plans and informs the planning of differentiated lesson plans for future sessions. Tutors are supportive of learners and build their confidence by praising success. In the better lessons, teachers use a good range of activities and teaching is well paced. Teaching and learning in key skills are satisfactory. Diagnostic tests are linked to GCSE grades to place learners on the correct level. Learners are challenged and work diligently in most sessions. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are good in both areas. Guidance and support of learners are good. The provision of additional learning support for learners is both

prompt and appropriate. Careers advice and guidance are good and appreciated by learners.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college acknowledges the need to further promote the development of literacy and numeracy courses for unemployed adults and young people (NEET) to build on initiatives undertaken in 2007/08. The organisation and management of the moderation and verification of learners' work is thorough. The role of key skills co-ordinators is well defined and they work effectively as a team. The role of the curriculum manager for the area is insufficiently clear and this leads to some underdevelopment with respect to course development, quality assurance, and evaluation. Operational management of the area is satisfactory. The self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative and analytical. For example, it fails to identify declining trends in success rates in key skills. Data are not sufficiently used to support evaluation and set clear targets. There is satisfactory promotion of equality and diversity. Resources are good.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, 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	04/05	400	61	62	-1	587	67	61	6
	05/06	375	74	68	6	490	64	67	-3
	06/07	415	85	73	12	352	76	71	5
GNVQs/ AVCEs	04/05	28	68	64	4	...	...	...	...
	05/06	20	65	71	-6	...	...	...	...
	06/07	8	88	70	18	1	100	...	...
NVQs	04/05	15	67	66	1	17	94	71	23
	05/06	15	73	70	3	5	80	71	9
	06/07	49	78	73	5	12	83	77	6
Other	04/05	357	61	61	0	570	66	61	5
	05/06	340	74	67	7	485	64	67	-3
	06/07	358	86	73	13	339	75	70	5

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, 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	04/05	410	60	61	-1	477	55	60	-5
	05/06	409	67	65	2	694	65	66	-1
	06/07	364	81	69	12	541	75	70	5
GCSEs	04/05	81	53	66	-13	71	55	64	-9
	05/06	28	79	69	10	32	66	67	-1
	06/07	19	84	71	13	7	100	70	30
GNVQs/ AVCEs	04/05	26	77	67	10	...	...	...	...
	05/06	23	91	67	24	4	75	65	10
	06/07	15	93	70	23	3	100	63	37
NVQs	04/05	89	58	56	2	123	64	62	2
	05/06	88	73	64	9	191	65	69	-4
	06/07	76	75	66	9	255	82	71	11
Other	04/05	214	62	59	3	283	52	58	-6
	05/06	270	62	63	-1	467	64	65	-1
	06/07	254	82	69	13	276	67	70	-3

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, 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	04/05	689	72	66	6	351	65	57	8
	05/06	692	77	68	9	247	76	62	14
	06/07	742	82	70	12	173	72	67	5
A/A2 Levels	04/05	132	93	85	8	7	100	74	26
	05/06	136	89	86	3	9	100	74	26
	06/07	210	90	84	6	3	100	77	23
AS Levels	04/05	296	66	63	3	31	42	53	-11
	05/06	342	74	64	10	12	17	57	-40
	06/07	279	76	64	12	4	100	59	41
GNVQs/ AVCEs	04/05	89	69	60	9	9	44	52	-8
	05/06	47	94	67	27	2	50	54	-4
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	62	77	55	22	87	52	55	-3
	05/06	12	75	66	9	48	83	65	18
	06/07	137	88	75	13	57	81	71	10
Other	04/05	110	65	57	8	217	73	57	16
	05/06	155	70	62	8	176	77	62	15
	06/07	116	74	68	6	109	65	66	-1

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes managed by the college 2004 to 2007

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	39	74	48	62	34
		timely	39	41	31	38	22
	05/06	overall	28	57	53	54	44
		timely	24	33	34	33	27
	06/07	overall	20	65	N/a	55	N/a
		timely	19	26	N/a	21	N/a
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	89	63	51	42	39
		timely	86	48	29	34	22
	05/06	overall	64	69	58	55	52
		timely	69	54	38	41	34
	06/07	overall	81	70	N/a	67	N/a
		timely	86	52	N/a	45	N/a

Note 'At the time of the inspection - LSC data for 2006/07 had yet to be fully validated'

- * 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'