Swindon College

Inspection report

Provider reference   130849

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Contents

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 students 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: engineering; construction; information and communication technology (ICT); hairdressing and beauty therapy; literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); and business, administration and law.

Description of the provider

1.   Swindon College is a medium-sized general further education college based near the town centre. The focus of the college's provision is on vocational education and training. Swindon was, until recently, characterised by low unemployment and relatively high wages, but despite this the college serves many areas of social and economic deprivation. The recent economic downturn has already had a significant impact on the town, with major employers reducing staff numbers. School leavers' attainment is significantly lower than the national average.

2.   In 2006/07, there were nearly 12,500 students enrolled on nearly 21,800 qualifications. This equated to around 4,000 full-time equivalent students, split equally between those aged 16 to 18 and adult students. There were slightly more male students aged 16 to 18 than female students, and significantly more female adult learners than males. The proportion of students of minority ethnic origin was around 9%.

3.   The college offers provision to significant numbers of students in most sector subject areas and runs programmes from entry level to higher education. For both age groups, the highest percentage of students on long courses is studying at level 2. The curriculum areas with the highest number of enrolments are: health, public services and care; engineering; construction; ICT; retail and commercial enterprise; arts, media and publishing; preparation for life and work; and business, administration and law. The college currently has around 600 school pupils aged 14 to 16 on increased flexibility and related programmes, and a further 50 or so on young apprenticeships. It has a substantial work-based learning (WBL) contract, with approximately 400 in learning. The college's Train to Gain provision is growing rapidly, with around 500 learners in 2006/07 anticipated to increase to nearly 2,000 in 2008/09.

4.   The college's mission is 'to deliver high quality vocational teaching and training that meets the needs of the market place and inspires success'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity	*Satisfactory: contributory grade3*

Sector subject areas

Engineering	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Construction	Satisfactory: Grade 3

ICT	Inadequate: Grade 4

Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision   Satisfactory: Grade 3

5.   The overall effectiveness of the college is satisfactory. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Success rates have risen significantly since the last inspection, although they remain below average for students aged 16 to 18 on level 2 courses and for adult learners on level 1 courses. Students' practical work is good and they are prepared well for future employment. Success rates in Train to Gain provision are outstanding, and achievement for work-based learners and for school pupils aged 14 to 16 is good.

6.   The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is very little inadequate teaching but the proportion of lessons that are good or better is too low. The best lessons are characterised by careful planning, an engaging range of activities and effective checks on learning. Weaker lessons do not engage or enthuse students, either because the teacher talks for too long without holding students' interest or because the pace of learning is too slow.

7.   The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students, and its approach to educational and social inclusion, are good. A wide range of courses with good progression routes caters for most potential students. Links with employers are good and the range of Train to Gain provision is excellent. The college works closely with schools and is effective in meeting the needs of many vulnerable students.

8.   Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Recent improvements have led to many more students who are at risk of leaving the college being retained. Tutorial provision is improving and students' attendance and progress are being monitored more carefully, although the use of targets to monitor and improve students' progress is underdeveloped. Group tutorials provide useful information on being healthy and staying safe. Students with additional learning needs are generally well supported. Students feel safe and enjoy being at the college.

9.   Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. Significant improvements have been brought about in the short time since the last inspection. Despite this, the quality of provision remains uneven. Quality assurance arrangements have improved but their effectiveness in raising standards is not yet consistent across all aspects of the college's work. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve   Satisfactory: Grade 3

10.   The college's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Overall success rates have risen and improvements in work-based learning and Train to Gain provision are good. Clear quality assurance arrangements are in place but their

application is not yet fully effective in driving up standards across the college. Intervention by senior managers has been a significant factor in achieving improvements, although the current temporary nature of key appointments constitutes an element of risk. Middle managers' understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards has improved considerably. The self-assessment process provides a sound basis for future improvement.

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

11.	The college has made good progress in improving provision since the last inspection. Its overall effectiveness is now satisfactory. Three curriculum areas previously judged inadequate are now satisfactory. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 have improved. Actions to improve retention rates have had significant recent impact. Key skills provision has improved and success rates in work-based learning are now good. Actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning have been effective in reducing the level of unsatisfactory teaching. Target setting to help students to improve their performance continues to be highly variable. The sharing of good practice within course and departmental teams has improved considerably. Data to support quality improvement are now easily accessible to managers and clear quality assurance arrangements are in place.

Key strengths

- good development of students' practical skills in most vocational areas
- good quality of provision in work-based learning and Train to Gain
- the college's very good responsiveness to local community and employment needs
- good quality of provision for school students aged 14 to 16
- much improved and increasingly effective focus on raising standards
- significant improvements in communication and team working across the college
- the inclusive, safe and welcoming environment for students.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates for students aged 16 to 18 on level 2 courses and for adults on level 1 courses
- variations in students' achievement between sector subject areas
- the low proportion of good or better teaching
- the quality of provision in ICT
- the inconsistent impact of quality assurance procedures
- the use of targets to monitor and improve students' progress.

Main findings

Achievement and standards   Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

WBL   *Good: grade 2*
Train to Gain   *Outstanding: grade 1*
Students aged 14 to 16   *Good: grade 2*

12.   Achievement and standards are satisfactory; a judgement in line with the college's self-assessment. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 on long courses improved between 2006/07 and 2007/08, although they remain below the national average. They remain particularly low on courses at level 2. Success rates for adult students are significantly above the national average at levels 2 and 3. However, at level 1 adult success rates declined in 2007/08 and are significantly below the national average. Inspection evidence shows that at the time of the inspection the proportion of students who are likely to complete their courses has risen significantly.

13.   The improvement seen recently in success rates is uneven between different sector subject areas. For example, whilst success rates are high in health, public services and care, sport, leisure and tourism, and business administration, they are significantly below national average in science and mathematics, ICT, and languages, literature and culture. Key skills success rates have improved. School pupils aged 14 to 16 benefit from their courses and many progress onto full-time college programmes. Detailed analysis of the success rates of different groups of students by gender and ethnicity shows no statistically significant patterns. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. The college recognises that its work in developing measures to make secure judgements on students' progress is at an early stage.

14.   Learners on the college's substantial programme of work-based learning achieve well. Success rates on the college's Train to Gain provision, which is growing rapidly, are outstanding. Employees develop new skills and knowledge that are valued highly by their employers. Overall success rates on apprenticeship and advanced apprentice programmes are rising rapidly and are above national average. An increasing proportion of learners are achieving their apprenticeship frameworks by their planned end date.

15.   The standard of students' practical work is good; their theoretical understanding and the quality of their written work are satisfactory. In most vocational areas students develop good practical skills that they can apply in work settings and therefore improve their employability. Attendance at, and punctuality to, lessons is satisfactory. Most students, both on college-based and work-based programmes, enjoy their courses.

Quality of provision   Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

WBL   *Good: grade 2*
Train to Gain   *Good: grade 2*
Students aged 14 to 16   *Good: grade 2*

16.   Teaching and learning are satisfactory. This agrees with the college's own assessment. Since the last inspection the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced significantly. Senior managers have put in place appropriate strategies to support teachers and improve practice. Despite this, too much teaching remains satisfactory and not enough is good or better. On occasions, the college's own records of lesson observations describe normal practice as strengths and pay insufficient attention to evaluating the impact of teaching on learning.

17.   Teaching in practical lessons is better than the teaching of theory. In the best lessons, teachers design stimulating assignments and set tasks that motivate students and contribute to the good development of vocational skills. Teachers use quizzes effectively to test understanding and direct group discussions well, using probing questions to extend knowledge. Teachers have built empathetic relationships with their students, using good humour, and their students enjoy learning. Staff in work-based learning organise training and plan assessment opportunities well. Employers are effectively involved in training and assessment.

18.   In less effective lessons, teachers do not focus enough on what students will learn and learning objectives are often little more than a list of tasks or descriptions of activities to be worked through. Too many teachers spend too long talking without noticing that students have lost interest. Learning is sometimes not checked, questioning techniques are weak and the pace of learning is slow.

19.   The college has improved arrangements for providing a wide range of specialist support services to meet students' additional learning needs. Learning support assistants are used in lessons to help individual learners, although in lessons where teachers talk for most of the lesson assistants' work with individual students is hindered.

20.   Although many teachers effectively assess students' work and provide useful feedback to help students improve their work, targets set through the process of completing individual learning plans are frequently not sufficiently detailed or useful.

21.   The college has improved the way key skills are taught. Many curriculum areas have introduced key skills teaching within the teaching for vocational aspects making these much more relevant for students. However, this practice varies across the college.

22.   The quality of provision for school pupils aged 14 to 16 is good. Students enjoy their courses and are motivated well. Students who are on 14-19 Diploma courses are working on well designed, stimulating projects and are enjoying learning new skills. For example, in engineering they are using computer software to learn about three-dimensional modelling.

23.   The extent to which the college meets the needs and interests of students is good. The college offers a wide range of vocational programmes, with appropriate progression routes available to level 3 and beyond. The range of vocational courses for school students aged 14 to 16 is good and includes the new 14-19 Diplomas and young apprenticeships. A particularly wide range of Train to Gain provision is in place, with 42 qualifications available. The college works well to meet the needs of employers and is responding positively to support them and their employees through the economic downturn. The college enrichment programme is satisfactory and improving. The range of activities is still too limited to enable all students to participate in activities of interest to them.

24.   The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. It makes good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable students are carefully looked after. The college has established a number of projects to engage young people not in employment, education or training. Good partnership arrangements with a strong focus on community links in areas of deprivation contribute to the college's success in making provision for under-represented groups.

25.   Guidance and support are satisfactory overall and are good for students aged 14 to 16 and work-based learners. A comprehensive range of publicity materials and marketing events offers impartial advice and guidance for all prospective students and initial interviewing focuses strongly on ensuring students are on the right course. Collaborative links with schools and other providers are well established. In partnership with specialist agencies the college offers a good range of services and activities to support students with financial, childcare and personal issues. Students receive satisfactory advice when they wish to progress to employment or higher education.

26.   The college has introduced new arrangements for tutoring since the previous inspection. Mechanisms to identify and support those at risk of not completing their course have improved and include monthly early warning reports that highlight issues relating to attendance and under-performance. Student experience managers effectively take responsibility for the process and also support a case load of the most vulnerable students. The implementation of electronic individual learning plans is not yet consistent across the college, particularly with regard to the setting of meaningful targets that help students to improve. Effective group tutorials are organised around Every Child Matters themes and equality and diversity issues. However, the tutorial programme is still in the early stages of implementation and is under review.

Leadership and management   Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity   *Satisfactory: grade 3*

27.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following the last inspection an acting principal was appointed together with a vice principal on a fixed term contract. Two further vice principal roles are undertaken by independent consultants. Effective action has been taken by college leaders to address weaknesses. Communication and teamwork are much improved across the college, strategic aims are clear and managers at all levels are well motivated. Overall success rates have improved although they remain below average for students aged 16 to 18. Three curriculum areas judged unsatisfactory at the last inspection are now satisfactory, although provision in ICT, which was not inspected in 2007, was judged to be inadequate.

28.   Governance is satisfactory. Prompt action was taken to address major weaknesses in leadership and management following the last inspection and governors are careful to ensure they comply with their statutory duties and apply due processes. Governors are now appropriately involved in setting the direction of the college, monitoring both its financial and its academic performance, and challenging managers.

29.   Financial management is satisfactory. Clear procedures are in place for allocating resources and for monitoring expenditure, although average class size is relatively low. A decline in enrolments following the last inspection and the significant level of expenditure incurred in implementing recovery arrangements have resulted in a financial deficit in 2007/08 and a further projected deficit for 2008/09. A bid for exceptional funding to the Learning and Skills Council to support recovery is awaiting resolution. Given the improvements achieved since the last inspection and an overall improving trend in success rates, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

30.   Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Clear quality assurance arrangements are now in place and are understood by staff at all levels. Managers and teachers now have good access to data. Curriculum management has improved and is generally satisfactory, with examples of very effective management in work-based learning and Train to Gain. Lessons are now observed systematically and procedures have been used well to identify and improve weak practice. Improvements in the quality of provision have been heavily reliant on intervention by senior managers and the impact of quality assurance arrangements in driving up standards systematically is still to be fully realised. Self-assessment is generally accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement, although some aspects of provision are over graded and the level of good or better teaching is over estimated.

31.   Despite some buildings showing signs of their age, accommodation is satisfactory and in some areas, such as construction, very good. New facilities on the main college site contrast starkly with original college buildings.

Resources for ICT are good although these are not always used to best advantage to support learning.

32. Arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults are satisfactory. The college is fulfilling its legal duties with respect to safeguarding arrangements and Criminal Records Bureau checks. Staff have received appropriate child protection training, although records of attendance at training events have not been monitored systematically to ensure full coverage. The college has a zero tolerance approach to unsuitable behaviour, intimidation and bullying and students report that the college provides a safe and harmonious environment for learning.

33. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Vulnerable young people and those who are at risk of not completing their programmes successfully are now monitored and supported well. The college is compliant with the requirements of race, disability and gender equality legislation. Action plans for promoting equality and diversity are in place and their impact is carefully monitored. Training to raise staff awareness of equality and diversity has been successful and the college's intentions in this respect are well evidenced through displays and events. The promotion of equality and diversity is a key feature of tutorial arrangements and there are good examples of the promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum. This is not yet, however, universally the case across the college.

Sector subject areas

Engineering   Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

34.   The college has 378 students studying courses in mechanical, electrical and motor vehicle engineering. Most students are full time. Just under half of the students are adults. There are 170 students aged 14 to 16 on level 1 and 2 programmes. There are 38 apprentices and 136 advanced apprentices on work-based learning programmes.

Strengths

- high success rates on most level 2 courses
- high success rates on engineering apprenticeship programmes
- good development of students' practical skills
- effective curriculum development.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on most level 3 courses
- ineffective strategies to meet the needs of students of different abilities in lessons
- ineffective use of targets to improve students' progress.

Achievement and standards

35.   Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on most level 2 programmes are high, but on most level 3 courses they are low. Progression rates for school pupils aged 14 to 16 onto full-time courses are high. Engineering apprenticeship framework completions have improved over the last three years and are now good. However, overall success rates for advanced apprenticeships in electro-technology are low. Students develop good practical skills, for example, when using specialist tools and equipment. Their written work is satisfactory. Behaviour, attendance and punctuality are good. Students have a high regard for health and safety. The college celebrates success with awards that motivate and inspire students.

Quality of provision

36.   Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students enjoy lessons and take pride in their work. Teachers have good occupational skills, which they use well to help students to develop their practical skills. In the best lessons teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) well to enthuse students, who can also access learning materials through the college's virtual learning environment. In the less effective lessons, planning fails to take individual students' needs and abilities into account. Insufficient attention is paid to

providing appropriate challenge for students according to their abilities. Assessment and the monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory.

37.   The range of programmes offered is satisfactory. New qualifications have been introduced to improve progression opportunities and include the new 14-19 Diplomas. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. Classrooms and workshops are well managed with displays of students' work and learning materials. The workshops have appropriate tooling and consumables. The vehicle fleet represents a range of current road models. Students' learning is enriched through a range of organised visits and trips.

38.   Support for full-time students is satisfactory and it is good for work-based learners. Initial assessment is undertaken early and identifies individual needs. Support is quickly in place and students are appreciative of the help from tutors and teachers. Students' progress is closely tracked but targets for improvement are imprecise and not reviewed.

Leadership and management

39.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. Productive links exist with local schools and employers. Apprentices benefit from good training opportunities in the workplace. Quality improvement is focused on initiatives to improve teaching. Self-assessment is accurate and data are used effectively to monitor course performance. Internal verification is rigorous. Teaching and learning observations are linked to appraisal and staff development. New teachers have recent industrial experience and are well supported. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory but is not fully embedded within work-based reviews.

Construction   Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

40.   The college offers courses from level 1 to level 3, and apprenticeships in building crafts and services. Technical and professional studies are offered at levels 3 and 4. Of the 661 students, 259 are part time and 192 are adults. Of the 129 apprentices, 41 are on advanced programmes. Vocational programmes are provided for 164 pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools.

Strengths

- high and improving success rates in work-based learning
- good development of students' skills in practical lessons
- very good workshop facilities that provide a realistic working environment
- effective management actions taken to improve provision.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on level 2 courses for students aged 16 to 18
- dull teaching in a significant minority of theory lessons
- ineffective target-setting in individual learning plans.

Achievement and standards

41.   Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall success rates for adults have risen and are now satisfactory. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 are low, particularly at level 2 where success rates on the advanced construction award are very poor. However, current in-year retention rates are high. Key skills success rates have improved. Work-based learning success rates are improving and are significantly above the national average. The standard of students' practical work is good and the quality of written work is satisfactory but in some cases teachers do not highlight mistakes. Attendance at lessons is good.

Quality of provision

42.   The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Occupational skills are developed well in workshops and in the workplace. In the better lessons, a good mixture of activities and resources are deployed in order to hold students' interest and help them to learn quickly. However, in a significant minority of theory lessons teaching is dull, as teachers talk for too long without holding students' interest. Assessment practices are appropriate and teachers' comments on marked work are satisfactory. The teaching of key skills is good.

43.   There is a good range of craft courses and apprenticeships that provide clear progression routes from level 1 to level 3 and to higher level courses. Courses meet the needs of students and employers and good links with schools provide opportunities for pupils to take new construction qualifications taught

jointly by school and college teachers. There is a good range of enrichment activities that are enjoyed by full-time students.

44.   Support for learners is satisfactory. Initial assessment and guidance are effective in ensuring students choose the correct course. In-class support is well integrated in some lessons but is less effective in those lessons with too much teacher input. The support provided by course tutors has been effective in raising retention rates. Targets set in individual learning plans are not sufficiently clear and measurable for students to plan to improve their performance.

Leadership and management

45.   Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. Both the quality of provision and students' success rates have improved since the last inspection and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has been minimised. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and inspection evidence confirmed the areas for improvement identified. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The construction workshops are of a particularly high standard and offer students a chance to practise full-size tasks generally only found in the workplace.

Information and communication technology   Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

46.   At the time of inspection, 120 students aged 16 to 18 were studying on
       programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3 and 106 adult students on programmes at
       levels 1 and 2. There is also a range of short courses offered to adults. The
       offer is mainly vocational and includes the diploma in digital applications
       (DiDA), national vocational qualifications, and Business and Technology
       Education Council (BTEC) first and national diplomas in ICT.

Strengths

- imaginative use of ILT in the better lessons
- good use of learning support assistants in lessons
- good initiatives to meet employers' needs.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates
- unsatisfactory assessment arrangements
- insufficient checking of learning to improve student progress
- ineffective implementation of quality assurance arrangements.

Achievement and standards

47.   Students' achievement is inadequate. Success rates on many courses are low.
       For example, only 12% of students were successful on the DiDA course in
       2007/08. Success rates for adult students are also low on the certificate for IT
       users and computer literacy and information technology programmes.
       However, success rates on the BTEC national diploma have been improving
       over the past three years and in 2008 were high. Students demonstrate good
       practical work-based skills and are confident in the use of IT in a wide variety
       of situations. BTEC first diploma students have a good understanding of
       computer systems, and many progress onto level 3 courses or employment.
       Attendance and punctuality rates are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

48.   Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons ILT is used
       innovatively to motivate students to enjoy their learning and to make good
       progress. For example, on one course students were using picture characters
       that they created on the computer to produce a 40 second animation. In the
       less effective lessons, students are not challenged enough to fulfil their
       potential. Teachers sometimes talk for too long and fail to hold students'
       interest and their use of question and answer techniques to check learning is
       weak. Assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory. There are significant
       delays in assessing students' work in some instances.

49.   The range of courses is satisfactory. The opportunities for students to progress from level 1 to higher level programmes and higher education or employment are good. Students pay good attention to health and safety practices when working and these are reinforced regularly by teachers. Opportunities for enrichment are limited.

50.   Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Arrangements to ensure students are enrolled onto suitable courses have improved. The use of electronic individual learning plans is well embedded and individual progress reviews between students and tutors are satisfactory. Additional learning support staff are deployed well in lessons to support students and improve their progress.

Leadership and management

51.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. Management arrangements have recently improved, although quality assurance procedures have not yet been sufficiently effective in raising standards. The use of management information to monitor and improve students' progress is much improved. Initiatives to provide courses for local employers are effective. Self-assessment is broadly accurate, although judgements about the quality of teaching and learning are over-generous. Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted. Teachers are suitably qualified, although opportunities for vocational updating are limited. Accommodation and resources are good.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy   Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

52.   Courses are provided for full- and part-time students in hairdressing and
       beauty therapy at levels 1 to 3. Part-time courses include the certificate in
       Swedish massage and the diploma in Indian head massage. Apprenticeships
       and advanced apprenticeships are provided in hairdressing for 51 learners.
       There are around 50 students aged 14 to 16. Full-time courses are taken by
       228 students aged 16 to 18 and 77 adult students. Around 160 students take
       part-time courses.

Strengths

   •   high success rates on hairdressing apprenticeships
   •   high progression rates in beauty therapy in 2007/08
   •   good standard of students' work in beauty therapy
   •   good promotion of equality and diversity
   •   effective actions to improve student retention rates this year.

Areas for improvement

   •   low success rates on hairdressing NVQ level 1 and level 3 courses
   •   insufficient checking of learning in many lessons
   •   too few clients in hairdressing
   •   ineffective use of targets to improve students' progress
   •   inappropriate course structure on level 1 and level 2 hairdressing.

Achievement and standards

53.   Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are high on
       apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in hairdressing and on the
       diplomas in Indian head massage and epilation. Students aged 14 to 16
       achieve high success rates in skills for working life courses. However, success
       rates are low on hairdressing NVQ level 1 and 3 courses. Progression rates are
       high both from level 1 to level 2 and level 2 to level 3 courses in beauty
       therapy. The standard of students' work in beauty therapy is good and it is
       satisfactory in hairdressing.

Quality of provision

54.   Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the most effective lessons students'
       knowledge, practical and client care skills are well developed. Teaching is
       good in these lessons and students work professionally. Most lessons are
       satisfactory but learning is often not checked sufficiently well to ensure that all
       students are making good progress. Many practical sessions in hairdressing
       have too few clients for students to work with and develop good skills.
       Students' written work is marked appropriately and feedback is clear. Targets
       set for students are not sufficiently focused on developing their abilities.

55.   The range of provision and progression routes are satisfactory. Course enrichment activities are good and there are productive links with local hairdressing employers. However, the course structure for hairdressing at levels 1 and 2 is inappropriate. Many students are enrolled onto the level 1 course in the first year when this is not suitable for them, before progressing onto level 2 in the second year. As a consequence, time is wasted, students are assessed too much and their progress is slow.

56.   Support and guidance for students are satisfactory. Links with schools are good and induction into the courses is thorough. Careers advice is helpful.

Leadership and management

57.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. Effective actions, including the close monitoring of students' attendance and progress, have improved student retention rates in the current year to over 90%. Although the self-assessment report is broadly accurate, not all of the strengths and areas for improvement are identified. The promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum is good. Diversity is celebrated and students use specialised techniques for working on different types of clients.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL   Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

58.   Around 500 adult students attend part-time literacy and numeracy classes in
       community venues or at the college. The college also offers part-time courses
       for 152 students in ESOL. In addition, some 1,100 students aged 16 to 18
       take key skills communication and application of number as part of their full-
       time vocational programmes.

Strengths

- high and improving pass rates on key skills at levels 1 and 2
- good development of students' skills and confidence on ESOL programmes
- good teaching and learning on ESOL programmes
- good development of students' literacy and numeracy skills in vocational
  lessons
- effective action to improve the quality of ESOL provision
- good promotion of equality and diversity.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on literacy and numeracy programmes at entry level and
  level 2
- lack of students' engagement in literacy and numeracy lessons
- slow progress in improving literacy and numeracy programmes.

Achievement and standards

59.   Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Key skills level 1 and 2 pass rates
       are high and improving and success rates are above the national average.
       Success rates are low on literacy and numeracy courses at entry level and
       level 2. This is because too many students leave their courses before the end.
       ESOL students develop good language, study and employability skills and
       improve their self-confidence. Attendance and retention rates on some ESOL
       courses are low.

Quality of provision

60.   Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching on ESOL programmes
       is good. Teachers pay good attention to the individual needs of students and
       provide well-paced, stimulating activities. They use computer resources well to
       develop students' awareness of citizenship issues and to improve their
       language and employability skills.

61.   Students develop good literacy and numeracy skills in many of their vocational
       lessons. For example, in sport studies students worked out the range and
       average values of the group's blood pressure and heart rates. In a
       photography lesson, students worked very effectively on their communication
       skills through presentations on favourite photographers.

62.   In discrete literacy and numeracy lessons, students are often insufficiently engaged. They spend too much time listening to teachers and have too few opportunities to work in small groups or individually on practical activities. Teachers over-rely on question and answer techniques to check learning.

63.   The range and responsiveness of programmes are satisfactory. Good partnership links have been established with community groups and agencies. However, only a few students enrol on community literacy and numeracy programmes.

64.   Support and guidance for students are satisfactory. A student experience manager effectively supports students with poor attendance or personal concerns.

Leadership and management

65.   Leadership and management are satisfactory. ESOL managers have effectively addressed all areas for improvement. Lesson observations are effective in improving teaching. Staff use data effectively to analyse performance. Self-assessment is thorough and accurate. However, slow progress has been made in improving literacy and numeracy programmes. Self-assessment is insufficiently focused on students' achievement and the standard of their work.

66.   Equality, diversity and community cohesion are well promoted on all courses. Lessons observed included themes on discrimination in the workplace, areas of deprivation, the impact of the current recession in the locality, arranged marriages and access to employment for women.

Business, administration and law   Good: Grade 2

Context

67.   The college offers full- and part-time courses in business, accounting, law, management, marketing and administration. Students work towards a range of qualifications, including NVQs in accounting, administration, team leading and customer relations, BTEC first and national diplomas, and certificates and diplomas in marketing, law, management and book-keeping. Apprenticeship programmes are offered in accounting, administration and team leading. Seventy-two students aged 16 to 18 and 417 adults are on long courses. Sixty-six students aged 14 to 16 attend a first diploma course.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- high standard of student work at all levels
- well planned learning activities that engage and motivate students
- good academic and pastoral support for all students
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- inconsistent use of questioning techniques to monitor the learning of all students
- insufficient employer involvement in provision for full-time students.

Achievement and standards

68.   Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high and improving on most courses. Students on the national diploma course make significant progress in comparison with their prior attainment and many achieve high grades. Retention rates improved significantly in 2007/08 after decreases on a number of courses in 2006/07. The standard of students' work is good. Written work exhibits good understanding of business concepts and the ability to apply them to practical situations. Students demonstrate good skills of research and analysis. In lessons they articulate their ideas confidently. Students on part-time courses use their practical experience of work effectively to solve business problems. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of provision

69.   Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned, with objectives that are explained clearly to students. Teachers use a range of well-designed activities that engage and motivate students and enable them to develop and demonstrate their learning. For example, students were able to demonstrate skills in the preparation and presentation of plans for new businesses and to participate in panels to critically evaluate them. In a significant minority of lessons teachers do not use questioning techniques effectively to monitor the

learning of all students. Assessment and the monitoring of students' progress are good. Teachers give clear and constructive feedback to students on how to improve their work.

70.   The range of provision is good, although there is no provision for full-time students at level 1. Vocational enrichment activities are well planned, although only a few are linked directly to assessment and skills development. The systematic involvement of employers in the provision for full-time students is insufficient.

71.   Guidance and support for all students are good. Individual tutorials for both full- and part-time students have a clear focus on academic performance against targets. They contribute significantly to student motivation and attainment. Teachers provide high levels of support, both academic and pastoral, to all students on an informal basis outside lessons.

Leadership and management

72.   Leadership and management are good. Curriculum managers give priority to the improvement of student experience and success. Course teams work well together to implement actions for improvement. Well-managed quality assurance procedures have raised standards, and self-assessment is accurate. Communication within the area is good and sharing of good practice is effective. Teachers make effective use of staff development opportunities to support professional and vocational updating.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	*Diff*	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	*Diff*
1 long	05/06	661	66	69	-3	1544	70	65	5
	06/07	525	67	74	-7	1410	73	70	3
	07/08*	755	75	N/A		863	66	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…
	06/07	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…
	07/08*	10	80	N/A		1	0	N/A	
NVQs	05/06	189	68	72	-4	108	69	74	-5
	06/07	130	68	75	-7	150	81	75	6
	07/08*	164	75	N/A		32	69	N/A	
Other	05/06	472	66	69	-3	1436	70	65	5
	06/07	395	67	74	-7	1260	72	70	2
	07/08*	581	75	N/A		830	66	N/A	

*   college data

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	*Diff*	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	*Diff*
2 Long	05/06	1084	62	66	-4	2074	70	66	4
	06/07	1047	57	70	-13	2109	75	69	6
	07/08*	1069	62	N/A		1793	78	N/A	
GCSEs	05/06	299	60	68	-8	136	58	67	-9
	06/07	261	56	71	-15	105	65	70	-5
	07/08*	239	50	N/A		113	77	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	9	33	69	-36	17	71	68	3
	06/07	30	60	73	-13	20	65	71	-6
	07/08*	46	74	N/A		2	100	N/A	
NVQs	05/06	187	72	65	7	360	66	68	-2
	06/07	240	66	68	-2	370	66	69	-3
	07/08*	308	70	N/A		630	79	N/A	
Other	05/06	589	61	66	-5	1561	72	65	7
	06/07	516	54	70	-16	1614	78	69	9
	07/08*	476	61	N/A		1048	77	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	610	64	71	-7	974	60	64	-4
	06/07	576	67	73	-6	747	71	68	3
	07/08*	566	74	N/A		731	79	N/A	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	75	65	87	-22	95	43	72	-29
	06/07	8	63	87	-24	9	89	76	13
	07/08*	6	83	N/A		3	100	N/A	
AS Levels	05/06	88	35	67	-32	91	35	55	-20
	06/07	33	55	69	-14	35	43	59	-16
	07/08*	11	55	N/A		28	32	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	40	83	66	17	1	0	57	-57
	06/07	11	45	59	-14	1	0	59	-59
	07/08*	3	100	N/A		...	...	N/A	
NVQs	05/06	32	88	71	17	262	69	63	6
	06/07	55	75	74	1	120	84	69	15
	07/08*	45	84	N/A		178	81	N/A	
Other	05/06	375	66	65	1	525	63	64	-1
	06/07	469	68	70	-2	582	70	69	1
	07/08*	501	73	N/A		522	80	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	43	63%	52%	56%	43%
		timely	57	25%	34%	21%	27%
	06/07	overall	58	69%	63%	64%	56%
		timely	65	32%	43%	28%	38%
	07/08#	overall	69	83%	68%	70%	63%
		timely	56	68%	48%	55%	44%
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	121	55%	57%	48%	51%
		timely	157	29%	37%	29%	33%
	06/07	overall	128	66%	64%	59%	60%
		timely	127	24%	47%	23%	45%
	07/08#	Overall	172	87%	67%	80%	64%
		timely	124	70%	53%	69%	50%

*   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 2009.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	17	100%
		timely	31	55%
	2007/08	overall	570	90%
		timely	574	73%
	2008/09 (3 months)	overall	364	61%
		timely	980	22%

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 6

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college, 2007 to 2009

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate* (%)	Progression rate** (%)
2006/07	21	48	71
2007/08	39	83	50
2008/09 (7 months)	12 ***	75	42

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the three months or greater of the LSC contract year

*   These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme
**   Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period.
*** Leavers to date in 2008/09

Note: E2E 'achieved objective' and 'progression' rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection

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