

Thomas Rotherham Sixth Form College

Inspection report

Provider reference 130530

Published date May 2009

Audience	Post-sixteen
Published date	May 2009
Provider reference	130530

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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 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: health, public services and care; science and mathematics; arts, media and publishing; languages, literature and culture and preparation for life and work.

Description of the provider

1. Thomas Rotherham College is a sixth form college located one mile from the centre of Rotherham. It was established as a sixth form college in 1967 on the site of a former grammar school which dates back to 1483. There are two colleges of further education (FE) in Rotherham that offer mainly vocational provision. The core business of the college is the provision of full-time general education courses for 1,441 students aged 16 to 18, 93% of whom are on level 3 programmes and 7% on level 2 programmes. The college provides for 375 adult students of which 266 are enrolled under adult responsiveness and 109 enrolled under employer responsiveness including Train to Gain programmes. Inclusive in these 16 to 18 and 19+ students are 433 Skills for Life students.
2. Rotherham, in South Yorkshire has a population of around 250,000 and is ranked 68th out of 354 English local authorities for overall deprivation using the index of Multiple Deprivation 2007. The number of people with no qualifications is higher than the national average. Educational attainment at all measures is below the national average with nearly half of the borough's young people failing to achieve level 2 by 16. In 2008 the GCSE 5A* to C grade pass rate was 54.6% which is lower than the national average of 66.3%. At the time of inspection some 12.9% of students are from a minority ethnic heritage which is above that of the local area of 3.4%.
3. The college mission is 'To be a centre of educational excellence in Rotherham where students from local communities achieve advanced skills and qualifications and join together in lifelong learning in a welcoming supportive environment'.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Health public services and care	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Science and mathematics	Good: Grade 2
Arts, media and publishing	Good: Grade 2
Languages, literature and culture	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. Effectiveness of provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level courses are high. Pass rates on GCE AS courses have improved and are now good. However, the success rates on a substantial minority of subjects are significantly below the national average. Students on GCE A and AS courses make good progress compared to their incoming level 2 attainment.
5. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Inspectors observed some satisfactory and inadequate teaching which was not responsive to individual student needs and where students made little progress. The best lessons were well planned and students were effectively challenged and motivated. Students enjoy good additional learning support on full and part-time provision. Assessment practice is sound. Student progress is regularly reviewed and students receive detailed feedback on their work. A satisfactory lesson observation system is in place but there are insufficient measures to improve teaching.
6. The college provides a satisfactory range of provision to meet the needs of students and employers. There is a broad range of GCE A and AS courses. Opportunities for progression are satisfactory in most areas. Some programmes are enhanced by a range of enrichment activities; however, some cross-college activities are not well attended. The college works well with key partners to provide an inclusive environment and social and educational inclusion is good.
7. Students benefit from good guidance and support. Pre-entry guidance is thorough. The most vulnerable students are quickly identified and well supported. Students receive a wide range of support. Students' views are gathered in a wide variety of ways and used effectively to improve services. The college has recognised that the current student council does not sufficiently reflect the diversity of the student body.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. Governors work well with senior managers to monitor closely the college performance. Self-assessment reports do not sufficiently drive improvements. The accommodation and learning resources provide an excellent environment for learning. Safeguarding arrangements do not meet Government requirements.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

9. The college shows good capacity to improve. Governors and senior managers have provided a strong focus on improving student outcomes. Significant improvements have been made to support the most vulnerable students and academic support is good. While there is a well established self-assessment system which identifies broad strengths and areas for improvement, it is not

having the required impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Staff are very committed to the vision and mission of the college and are responding well to the targets set by senior staff. The college has made considerable improvements to its accommodation and provides excellent learning resources for students.

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

10. The effectiveness of steps taken by the college to promote improvement is good. Many of the areas identified at the last inspection have been addressed. Improvements have been made in pass rates in GCE AS level courses and in high grades at GCE A and AS levels. Good tracking systems have been developed to improve the monitoring of student progress and individual learning plans are used effectively with students who are at risk of under-achieving. Teaching remains satisfactory. Progress has been made in the sharing of good practice.

Key strengths

- good achievement and standards
- hard working students who enjoy their studies
- good guidance and support for vulnerable and under-achieving students
- good strategic leadership and direction
- very good resources and accommodation.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates on a minority of subjects
- insufficient measures to improve the quality of teaching
- the quality of curriculum management
- the promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum
- the lack of compliance with safeguarding requirements.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

11. Achievement and standards are good. This is not reflected in the self-assessment report. GCE A level students aged 16 to 19 make good progress and their success rate is high. The success rate was similar to the national average for sixth form colleges in both 2007 and 2008. The progress they make compared with their incoming level 2 attainment is good overall. Success rates are high overall. The higher grade pass rate is also good, similar to the national average in most subjects. In a few subjects progress is significantly below that expected.
12. GCE AS students aged 16 to 19 also make good progress and achieve a good overall higher grade pass rate. The overall success rate for AS subjects has lost ground to the national average. However, when general studies results are excluded, the rate was satisfactory in 2008, slightly below a similarly constructed national average. The proportion of subjects in which students make lower than average progress is small. However, success rates in a minority of subjects are significantly below their national average.
13. The success rates on advanced vocational courses are good and on intermediate level vocational courses satisfactory. In a few courses they are low, for example in health and social care, at both levels. The higher grade pass rate in GCSE mathematics is high, well above the national average. Success rates for the three key skills are consistently high at both levels 2 and 3. There is no significant difference between the performance of males and females or between the individual ethnic groups.
14. Some 70% of the advanced level leavers in 2008 progressed to higher education (HE) and a further 14% progressed to FE or employment with training. The destinations of 8% of the leavers are unknown to the college.
15. Attendance is high, at 93%. Students are hard working and enjoy their learning. Most students make good progress in lessons and produce work of an appropriate standard. In science lessons, for example, students demonstrate good practical skills and in health and social care students produce work of a good standard. Some students excel in individual endeavour or attain high standards in individual and team sports.
16. Adult students constitute about 10% of the college's enrolments and receive about 5% of the teaching. The success rate at level 1 fell in 2008 and was low in that year. At level 2 the success rate is consistently low. The key area for improvement is retention. The college has reviewed and changed its course offer this year and strengthened its initial advice and guidance. Retention so far in the current year, at both levels, is much improved compared with the same time last year.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. The quality of provision is satisfactory as is teaching and learning. This is not recognised in the self-assessment report. In satisfactory and inadequate lessons observed by inspectors some teaching was dull, lacked challenge and students made little progress. All curriculum inspectors identified aspects of teaching for improvement for example in health and social care checking of learning was ineffective. In the better lessons teaching was well planned and varied to maintain the interest and motivation of students. Most teachers manage classes well with a good balance of individual and group work activity. Teachers generally display good levels of subject knowledge. A team of well trained observers carry out annual observations which support a satisfactory system of lesson observations. Good practice is shared through a peer observation system and advanced skills teachers work well with staff providing coaching and training sessions across and within departments. However, the sharing of good practice is not yet consistent across the college.
18. Good additional learning support is provided to those students who need it across both full and part-time provision. Initial assessment is thorough and used well to inform teaching and the provision of additional support. Learning support takes a variety of forms to suit the needs of individual students. The take up of learning support is good. College data indicate that students who receive additional learning support achieve or exceed their expected grades.
19. Assessment practice is sound and within some curriculum areas, for example health and social care is good. Student progress is regularly reviewed and parents are kept well informed. Assessment tasks are varied and appropriate to the subject area and well phased throughout the year. Students receive detailed feedback on their work and are clear about how to make improvements. Internal moderation systems are effective and action points from external examiners are followed up promptly. Review sessions are particularly appreciated by students. Students enjoy good outcomes in key skills and these are effectively embedded into the curriculum.
20. Insufficient measures are in place to improve teaching. While the college does an overall analysis of teaching observations, action points are not identified to drive improvements. Effective measures are in place to improve unsatisfactory teaching but these are not extended to develop those teachers who are judged to be satisfactory. Few curriculum self-assessment reports identify teaching as an area for improvement and actions tend to focus on aspects of teaching rather than setting targets to improve the overall teaching profile. Teachers are not set individual targets as part of their appraisal to improve their teaching and action points from the previous observation are not routinely followed up.
21. The college provides a satisfactory range of provision that meets the needs and aspirations of its students in most areas. It attracts a greater proportion of learners from minority ethnic heritage than is represented in the local area. Students who study level 3 courses are able to choose from a broad range of AS and A2 subjects and a small programme of vocational qualifications. There is a small but growing programme of level 2 courses and opportunities for

- progression are satisfactory in most areas. The small programme of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses meets the needs of local employers and additional courses help adults develop employability skills.
22. The college works particularly well with partner schools, local universities and local colleges in designing its curriculum. Most students benefit from good opportunities for work experience. Some students contribute positively to the wider community and develop good advocacy skills. Most students prepare well for progression to HE or employment. The college works hard to attract students who might otherwise not participate and able and talented students are encouraged to progress to HE. Social and educational inclusion is good.
 23. Students' programmes are enhanced by a broad range of enrichment activities including themed weeks on topics such as diversity and health and additional short courses. Over 400 students participate in the extensive range of sport activities. The college recognises the need to explore further issues such as environmental change and to analyse participation by particular groups of students. Some activities are not well attended.
 24. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that students benefit from good guidance and support. Good information, advice and pre-entry guidance enables students to make informed choices about their courses. Early withdrawals are monitored and retention rates are improving.
 25. Vulnerable and under-performing students are quickly identified and cared for through collaborative action by teachers, personal tutors, learning mentors and student support staff. Students with specific learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported. Around 38% of college students benefit from additional on-course support.
 26. Personal tutors set appropriate targets for students who appreciate particularly the encouragement to stay motivated and being able to monitor their own progress. Systems for monitoring attendance, punctuality and learner progress are rigorous. The group tutorial programme encourages students to practise safe and healthy lifestyles and there is strong support for students' emotional wellbeing.
 27. Prospective students receive high quality guidance and transition arrangements are exemplary. Careers guidance is successful in helping students progress into HE, employment or further training. Students' views are used effectively to improve services for them. Pastoral care, financial and welfare advice and support are good and the college works well with other agencies.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Contributory grade:**Equality of opportunity**Satisfactory: grade 3*

28. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Inspectors confirm this is correctly identified in the self-assessment report. The Principal provides strong leadership and has developed an open and consultative style of management that is valued by staff. The senior team sets very clear direction focused on quality improvement. The college has responded well to most areas for development in the last inspection. However, it has not yet been able to consistently improve the quality of teaching and learning. There has been an increased emphasis on the sharing of good practice but the effectiveness of curriculum management remains variable.
29. Governance is effective. Governors are highly supportive of the college and they work well with senior managers. The quality of information provided for governors has improved. They now monitor closely the college's performance and provide effective challenge. At the time of inspection the membership of the governing body did not reflect the gender and ethnicity profile of the college.
30. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. Since the last inspection considerable emphasis has been placed on a more rigorous assessment and grading of provision. The roles of the small team of curriculum managers have recently been redefined to strengthen monitoring and support for subject teams. Staff are fully involved in the quality assurance processes.
31. The quality of curriculum management is variable. Course reviews and development plans are variable. Self-assessment reports do not pinpoint strengths and areas for development sufficiently accurately to drive forward improvements. Development plans do not consistently identify specific actions for improvement or set realistic and challenging targets for improvement.
32. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The college meets statutory requirements. The monitoring of the achievement of different groups is not embedded into the self-assessment processes at course level. The promotion of equality and diversity does not have a sufficiently high profile in curriculum areas.
33. The procedures for safeguarding students do not meet current government requirements. The college does not have in place a single central record of checks carried out on staff and arrangements for approving and reporting on policies and procedures are not sufficiently robust. Governors have not approved the relevant policies and have not received the appropriate training. All staff have CRB clearance. However, there is no risk assessment for new appointments when CRB checks are delayed. Arrangements for managing issues relating to child protection are strong. Students say they feel safe in college.

34. Financial management is strong. The college has consistently improved the quality of its accommodation and provides an excellent environment for learning. The college provides good value for money. Learning resources are very good. There is good access to private study space. Teachers are well qualified. The college places a strong emphasis on staff development and arrangements are good.

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

35. The college offers full-time courses at levels 2 and 3 in health and social care and at level 3 in child care. There are 129 students currently enrolled on health and social care courses and 171 enrolled on child care courses. Of the 300 students currently enrolled on long courses, 54% are aged 16 to 18 and most of these are enrolled on GCE AS or A2 courses in health and social care. Most of the adult students are enrolled on Train to Gain courses in child care. In addition, 19 students are enrolled on short courses in counselling. The current cohort has a much smaller proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds than is present in the local population. Very few males are recruited onto full or part-time courses.

Strengths

- high success rates on the level 3 full-time course in child care
- sound assessment and good feedback to students
- good support for students.

Areas for improvement

- below average success rates on most courses
- ineffective checking of learning in many lessons
- weak development plan in health and social care.

Achievement and standards

36. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. In 2007/08, the success and retention rates on the diploma in child care and education were 10% above the national average. Most students on this course achieve high grades. Success rates improved on many long courses in 2007/08 but remain below the national average. Success rates on the GCE A2 courses in health and social care declined to below the national average in 2007/08 while those on the GCE AS courses are consistently below the national average. The standard of students' work has improved this year and is good on many courses.

Quality of provision

37. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The better lessons are well-planned. Teachers' practical approach involves all students and makes frequent and appropriate links to the vocational area. Students are fully engaged throughout the lesson and make good progress. Good attention is paid to students' differing needs through small group work. In the weaker lessons activities are teacher-led. Many students make little or no progress.

Checking of learning is ineffective and students are not challenged to demonstrate their understanding. There is little use of information learning technology (ILT) to promote learning.

38. Assessment is sound and students receive constructive feedback on their work that enables them to make good improvements. Assignments are well scheduled. Moderation, standardisation and internal verification processes are well implemented.
39. The response of the college to meeting learners' needs and interests is satisfactory. Good numbers enrol on most full-time courses. Students feel that they are working in a safe and healthy environment. The college attempts to respond to community needs but there are generally low success rates on the part-time courses and low numbers on some community based courses.
40. Support and guidance for students are good. All have a personal tutor whom they find helpful and supportive. All have good access to a wide range of student services. All students have access to good learning support.

Leadership and management

41. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are kept well informed. Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted through the curriculum. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. The development plan in health and social care has not succeeded in raising success rates. Course targets are set at the national average for the previous year. As a result, staff and students are working towards course targets that are below the national average for the current year.

Science and mathematics

Good: Grade 2

Context

42. There are about 1,400 enrolments on science and mathematics courses. Almost all are aged 16 to 18. There are 32 part-time students aged 19 and over studying GCSE mathematics in the evening. Full-time courses include GCSEs in science and mathematics and GCE AS and A levels in applied science, biology, chemistry, geology, physics, psychology and mathematics and further mathematics. There are particularly large numbers in psychology, biology and mathematics.

Strengths

- high success rates in GCSE mathematics
- high pass rates with positive value added in GCE AS psychology
- consistently high success rates in GCE A level
- good teaching with skilful use of ILT to enhance learning
- good subject support for students.

Areas for improvement

- most success rates at GCE AS level are below national average
- insufficient management action to improve checks on student learning.

Achievement and standards

43. Success rates in GCSE mathematics are above the national average. Success rates in GCE A levels are consistently high. In AS psychology where pass rates are above national average students make particularly good progress. AS success rates in geology, biology and mathematics are below national average, however, all AS success rates are improving. Although the percentage of high grades being achieved is below national average more able students do achieve at least as well as would be expected based on their GCSE performance. In practical science classes students show good laboratory skills. In psychology they contribute positively to class discussions.

Quality of provision

44. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and supported by high quality worksheets. Teachers show good subject expertise. There is good use of ILT, for example, in GCSE mathematics to illustrate transformations of shapes. However, in many AS level lessons teachers do not question students sufficiently, particularly towards the end of lessons. There are a number of enrichment activities that enhance student learning, most notably geology field work in Iceland. Assessment is regular, gives students useful feedback about their progress and what they need to do to improve. It also informs individual student support needs. The strengthening of support has had a positive impact

on student retention and progress. Additional students' needs are identified early in the course. There is appropriate support in literacy, numeracy and specialist support where English is a second language.

45. The range of the provision is satisfactory. At level 3 it is good and is complemented by GCE electronics and environmental science.
46. Guidance and support for students are good. Initial guidance ensures that students are on appropriate courses. Close monitoring and timely intervention ensures that students are progressing appropriately. Students value their regular discussions with their personal tutor where they get helpful advice and are set targets for improvement. There is also helpful advice about career opportunities and HE applications. Students feel they are in a safe and healthy environment.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are good. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have largely been addressed. Monitoring of performance across the area is improving and having an impact in the quality of the provision. Self-assessment is becoming more accurate but does not identify sufficiently clearly areas for improvement such as the checking of student learning. Through yearly appraisal, individual professional needs are identified; however, the targets set are too general. Equality and diversity are promoted within the curriculum. Examination results are analysed for different ethnic groups and gender and inform management decisions. Accommodation and learning resources are good. Teachers are well qualified and in science assisted by capable technicians.

Arts, media and publishing

Good: Grade 2

Context

48. The college offers media, art, performing arts and music courses at AS and A2 levels. Most students are aged 16 to 19 and study full time. In 2008/09 a total of 527 students enrolled for subjects in the area of learning. All arts and media provision is at the main site.

Strengths

- high pass rates on all courses
- good teaching and learning in media
- significantly improved quality of provision in 2008/09
- good accommodation and resources.

Areas for improvement

- poor and declining retention on some courses
- insufficient strategies to improve teaching in art and performing arts
- insufficient development of student personal and professional skills.

Achievement and standards

49. Success rates are mainly good although the proportion of high grades is below national average in some subjects. Retention rates are below national average on some courses. This is highlighted in the self-assessment report. College data for 2009 indicates that in-year retention has significantly improved in all courses. Progression internally and to HE, often to prestigious and competitive institutions, is good. The standard of student work, especially in art and design, is good. Attendance and punctuality are now good in most areas.

Quality of provision

50. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in art, music and performing arts and consistently good in media. Teachers and students enjoy good working relationships. The use of ILT in studios and classrooms is excellent and students are expected to use the intranet to support and develop their learning. Assignments in all subjects are often demanding though sometimes too much attention is paid to anticipating examiners' perceptions rather than concentrating on the quality of creative work. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good, though in some cases, when students are sharing performance work, insufficient attention is given to peer assessment and active learning strategies. Teaching and learning are supported by the excellent accommodation and resources. Good practice is not always shared between teachers across the area of learning. In media, staff work to an agreed format for teaching that clearly benefits students' learning and achievement. Not all teachers insist on good professional practice and some students are

inappropriately dressed or insufficiently prepared for their lesson. Some behaviour in lessons is inappropriate.

51. The range of provision is satisfactory. A wide range of related subjects are available as is the opportunity to progress internally. Educational visits to galleries, exhibitions, performance and concerts enrich students' understanding and perception for their subjects. An innovatory partnership between the South Yorkshire Police and the media department has enabled students to access industry standard equipment and design promotional materials for public use.
52. Guidance and support for students are good. Learning support needs are identified at enrolment and appropriate support provided. The thorough tutorial system allows students and teachers to identify impediments to learning and implement appropriate action plans. Students appreciate the efforts made on their behalf. In addition to the subject workshops staff are constantly available to students. The quality of information, advice and guidance is good. Students feel safe and cared for.

Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management are good. Significant improvements have been made in all areas. New managers have developed successful strategies to improve teaching and student performance. Data is used effectively to monitor progress. Communication is good and all staff contribute to the self-assessment process, though some self-assessment reports are more rigorous than others. Accommodation and resources are excellent, especially for media, performing arts and music and well maintained by dedicated technician support. Managers appreciate the availability and responsiveness of the Principal. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.

Languages, literature and culture

Good: Grade 2

Context

54. The provision includes GCSE English, key skills communication level 3 and GCE AS and A level courses in English. There are 504 enrolments on GCE English courses. GCSE English has 80 enrolments. There is a small part-time GCSE English programme for adult students. Provision for modern foreign language courses has 112 enrolments. There are 162 students currently enrolled on part-time foreign language programmes. These community courses are nationally accredited and provide for beginners and the more advanced learner.

Strengths

- good success rates on all GCE English advanced courses
- consistently high success rates on all GCE French, German and Spanish courses, including the achievement of high grades
- much good teaching and learning with effective provision of learning support
- good range of courses for language study, including community provision and enrichment opportunities.

Areas for improvement

- below average A* to C pass rates in English GCSE
- insufficient teaching of independent learning skills for AS level students
- weak use of outcomes from classroom observations to improve teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

55. Achievement and standards are good. Student success rates have been consistently at or near national average in GCE English language advanced, GCE English literature advanced and GCE Combined English language and literature advanced. GCE English Language AS and GCE English Literature AS have good pass rates, though success and retention rates have declined over a three year period. Pass rates for GCSE English have been below the average for sixth form colleges by several percentage points for the last three years. Success rates are consistently high on all GCE French, German and Spanish courses. Outcomes on these courses show good achievement of high grades and positive value-added. Students work well, many achieve high standards and enjoy their studies. Students make good progress on community courses.

Quality of provision

56. Teaching and learning are good. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report. The best lessons are well-planned with challenging activities and imaginative use of ILT. Literature students were able to engage in informed discussion of Philip Larkin's poetry, listening to the poet's own recording of his work while watching a slide show prepared by the Larkin Society. There is good progress in listening and speaking skills as students benefit from the sustained use of French and Spanish in their lessons. In less successful lessons, the pace is slow, particularly where time is needed for reading source texts. The function of independent study as a means of encouraging students to take responsibility for preparing for the next class is undeveloped.
57. Preparation of coursework for GCSE English is thorough. Coursework tasks are carefully prepared and there are many examples of good writing. External moderators confirm the accuracy of the college's internal assessment of coursework. Twice weekly support sessions, individual appointments for coursework guidance and programmes for Oxbridge applicants give students good access to advice on progression and improving their own performance. Enhancement activities actively promote equality of opportunity. Enrichment opportunities include study days at Sheffield Hallam University, theatre visits, talks from external speakers and annual exchange visits with schools in France, Germany and Spain.

Leadership and management

58. Leadership and management are good. There are regular meetings between teachers and course leaders and much sharing of good practice. Teachers' qualifications and experience are good. The training programme for newly appointed subject leaders has resulted in sound management of the curriculum. There is a well developed system for monitoring the performance of individual courses and timely decisions are made to withdraw any that have persistently poor outcomes or low enrolments. Self-assessment reports are insufficiently perceptive about actions for improvement. There is a well developed programme of classroom observation though outcomes are not used effectively to investigate instances of poor performance.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

59. The college offers a range of key skills suitable for the 16 to 18 entry. 167 are enrolled on level 2 application of number (AoN); currently no students require communications at this level. Key skills are integrated within GCSE maths and English with some discrete groups. In community provision there are 127 entries for Skills for Life accreditation, largely linked to vocational training opportunities.

Strengths

- high success rates for AoN and communications
- good support for students
- good accommodation and resources.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates for literacy and numeracy at level 2
- insufficient attention to individual learning needs in AoN.

Achievement and standards

60. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. AoN and communication success rates at level 2 are well above national average, at 68% and 79%. Literacy and numeracy remain below the national average. Low retention is now successfully tackled through more accurate placement of students early in their courses. Many students progress through levels during the academic year. Twenty-seven per cent of students within Train to Gain and adult skills for Life provision have already achieved their 2008/9 target and 17% are now undertaking a higher level.

Quality of provision

61. Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are generally well-planned. In good lessons careful questioning develops knowledge and confidence. In Skills for Life workshops and classes, a variety of activities are well adapted for individuals. However, in some key skills lessons teachers do not use assessed outcomes to plan and monitor individual progress. Support for students in class is good. In key skills some sessions are too didactic and overemphasise the requirements of accreditation. The use of textbook style workbooks does not adequately address individual learner needs. There is widespread and good use of information and communication technology (ICT), though for demonstration rather than interactive individual learning.
62. The range of provision is satisfactory. Increasing numbers now access vocational training linked to literacy and numeracy. Appropriate workshop

provision is offered for those unable to attend regularly. Discrete English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision is no longer offered but literacy groups and individual support for literacy and numeracy remain available to ESOL students. Key skills provision is flexible to ensure appropriate delivery for students' needs. Discrete classes are offered at level 2 for those below GCSE grade D in class with additional support available and well used.

63. Support for students is good. Initial advice and guidance is sound, 16 to 18 entrants are carefully screened and guided to appropriate key skills. Adults have careful assessment and entry advice. There are high levels of effective emotional and practical support for students. Support for those with disabilities and/or other difficulty is good.

Leadership and management

64. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Area self-assessment reports do not systematically identify or address issues within each of the composite areas. Integration of Train to Gain and Skills for Life provision is not well managed. The quality of teaching and learning does not have a sufficiently high priority; AoN sessions were not observed last year, yet require specific supportive approaches for weaker students. While the issues identified in college observations reflect those identified during the inspection, some grading is over generous. The accommodation including most outreach centres is good, with ready access to ICT and a range of appropriate resources. Opportunities for continuing professional development are good and staff report positive responses to requests for specific training. Equality and diversity are addressed well for ESOL students but are underdeveloped in other areas.

Students' achievement

Table 1

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	05/06	58	83	71	12	426	57	57	0
	06/07	33	70	73	-3	311	61	64	-3
	07/08*	20	65	NA		257	55	NA	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06			
	06/07			
	07/08*			
NVQs	05/06			
	06/07			
	07/08*			
other	05/06	58	83	71	12	426	57	57	0
	06/07	33	70	72	-2	311	61	64	-3
	07/08*	20	65	NA		257	55	NA	

* college data

.. numbers too small to publish

Table 2

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	05/06	430	84	78	6	159	53	65	-12
	06/07	348	81	82	-1	106	54	65	-11
	07/08*	331	82	NA		267	54	NA	
GCSEs	05/06	290	88	82	6	28	71	67	4
	06/07	245	86	83	3	29	55	68	-13
	07/08*	201	89	NA		44	70	NA	
GNVQs and Percursors	05/06			
	06/07			
	07/08*			
NVQs	05/06			
	06/07			
	07/08*			
Other	05/06	71	69	70	-1	121	50	62	-12
	06/07	84	76	79	-3	71	54	62	-8
	07/08*	130	73	NA	1	192	47	NA	

* college data

.. numbers too small to publish

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	4826	81	84	-3	88	45	65	-20
	06/07	4892	81	85	-4	86	72	69	3
	07/08*	5037	80	NA		55	60	NA	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	1882	89	93	-4	11	82	78	4
	06/07	1456	92	93	-1	12	92	80	12
	07/08*	1575	93	NA		8	100	NA	
AS Levels	05/06	2823	77	79	-2	8	75	58	17
	06/07	3318	76	81	-5	8	38	61	-23
	07/08*	3329	74	NA		10	60	NA	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06			
	06/07			
	07/08*			
NVQs	05/06	..				28	21	64	-43
	06/07	..				27	74	72	2
	07/08*	..				19	47	NA	
Other	05/06	76	82	79	3	41	46	62	-16
	06/07	115	79	80	-1	39	72	66	6
	07/08*	131	83	NA		18	56	NA	

* college data

.. numbers too small to publish