

Longley Park Sixth Form College

Inspection report

Provider reference 133991

Published date March 2009

| | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Audience | Post-sixteen |
| Published date | March 2009 |
| Provider reference | 133991 |

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Background information..... | 3 |
| Summary of grades awarded | 5 |
| Overall judgement..... | 6 |
| Key strengths and areas for improvement..... | 8 |
| Main findings | 9 |
| Sector subject area reports | 13 |

Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

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

The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

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

Scope of the inspection

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

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: health, public services and care; science and mathematics; information and communication technology (ICT); languages, literature and culture; arts, media and publishing; literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

Description of the provider

1. The newly built Longley Park Sixth Form College opened in September 2004 on the site of a former secondary school in North East Sheffield. The college plays a key part in the strategy to raise participation and attainment in the local area. North East Sheffield is an area with significant educational, social and economic challenges, with some wards among the most deprived in the country. The college works closely with seven partner schools and most of its students come from the local area. The majority of these partner schools have GCSE scores which are below both national and local authority averages. Longley Park offers a wider curriculum than the majority of sixth form colleges. Its range of General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level provision is the broadest in the city and it also offers a range of vocational courses at levels 1, 2, and 3. While the majority of students are enrolled on programmes at level 3, increasing numbers are on main programmes at levels 1 and 2. The college has grown steadily since its creation and at the time of the inspection there were 1,327 students enrolled with all but 139 aged 16 to 18. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than the national average but representative of the local area. There are more female than male students. Student numbers are highest in science and mathematics, arts and media, languages, literature and culture and skills for life.
2. The college's mission is to 'provide outstanding educational opportunities for the young people of North East Sheffield'. It emphasises its role in raising participation, aspirations and achievement in a caring and supportive environment, which celebrates diversity.

Summary of grades awarded

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Effectiveness of provision | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Capacity to improve | Good: Grade 2 |
| Achievement and standards | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Quality of provision | Good: Grade 2 |
| Leadership and management | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| <i>Equality of opportunity</i> | <i>Outstanding: contributory grade 1</i> |

Sector subject areas

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Health, public services and care | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Science and mathematics | Good: Grade 2 |
| ICT | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Arts, media and publishing | Good: Grade 2 |
| Languages, literature and culture | Good: Grade 2 |
| Literacy, numeracy and ESOL | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

3. The overall effectiveness of Longley Park Sixth Form College is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The college provides good opportunities for many students with low prior attainment at age 16. Overall success rates are good on GCE Advanced level but lower than average on GCE AS and some vocational courses. Many AS students, who initially fail, change to other qualifications where they are successful. Progression to higher education is good. Attendance rates are good and improving. Most students produce work of a satisfactory or better standard and make good progress.
4. Teaching and learning are good and arrangements to assure its quality are thorough and effective. Teachers use a good range of learning materials and information learning technology (ILT) is used extensively to enhance learning. Teachers pay considerable attention to the individual needs of students during lessons. The monitoring and recording of student progress and performance is particularly effective. A high proportion of learners receive individual learning support including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or complex needs. Learners receiving additional learning support achieve well.
5. The college's response to meeting the needs of students and the local community is good and its promotion of social inclusion is outstanding. Through its broad vocational curriculum it has successfully widened participation by many students who previously left school with very few qualifications. Educational inclusion is good. A review of the curriculum has enhanced opportunities for many students to progress from foundation to higher levels. There are good opportunities for work-related learning in some curriculum areas but insufficient opportunities in others. Enrichment opportunities and participation in them are good.
6. Guidance and support for learners are now good. Pre-course advice and induction are effective and personal tutors offer good support to students, particularly those at risk of not making progress. Careers advice and guidance are good. Students report that they feel safe, well cared for and encouraged to be healthy. Group tutorials are not consistently effective.
7. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college is successful in its mission to widen participation and equality of opportunity is outstanding. Financial management is satisfactory and resources and accommodation are outstanding. Accommodation offers very good access for people with restricted mobility. Governors are experienced, knowledgeable and challenging. Quality assurance procedures have contributed to good teaching and support but are not yet fully effective in driving up standards in some areas. Self-assessment is broadly accurate although the significance of a few weaknesses is underestimated. Strategic planning is satisfactory with clear measures to improve attendance, retention and success rates, but further development is needed to improve skills for life provision and to clarify current strategic objectives.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

8. The college's capacity to improve is good. Self-assessment is broadly accurate both in overall judgements and grades awarded to the provision. Self-assessment and quality assurance are used effectively to focus the agenda and strategies for improvement. The self-assessment report accurately identifies most areas for improvement but does not emphasise sufficiently their significance in a few areas. Leaders inspire staff and learners to improve. Appropriate action has led to improvements in attendance, the quality of teaching and support, progression to higher education and in-year retention rates. Learner involvement strategies are effective as are arrangements to keep students safe. Management information is used effectively to analyse areas for improvement and to monitor students' participation and performance. Staff are very committed and confident in the capacity of and direction from managers. The college has broadened its curriculum and has a well developed strategy for inclusion and for widening participation including by students from minority ethnic communities. Overall success rates are improving but too slowly in some areas. The college successfully engages and retains students who would previously have dropped out of education; many of these subsequently achieve their qualifications. The college successfully meets its targets in areas such as recruitment but has further work to do on some success rates. The college's financial position is good and the college is in a good position to implement further improvements.

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

9. This is the first full inspection of the college. Progress since the last monitoring visit is satisfactory. Sound leadership and management have enabled the college to steadily improve learners' achievement in many areas including at GCE AS and A2 levels. There are further improvements in 2008 in progression to higher education and to the value added achievement of students particularly at GCE AS level and on the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses. The college has put in place measures to improve success rates in some of its vocational provision. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last self-assessment. The financial position of the college continues to be good.

Key strengths

- high success rates for students receiving additional learning support
- good progress by many students on GCE AS and national diploma programmes
- good progression to higher education
- good teaching and use of information learning technologies
- outstanding specialist accommodation and resources
- very effective monitoring of students' progress and performance
- the extensive range of provision and effective links with schools
- outstanding arrangements to keep students safe and well
- good support for students
- outstanding promotion of equality, diversity and social cohesion.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates for students on AS programmes and some vocational courses
- insufficiently developed arrangements for improving learners' skills in language, literacy and numeracy
- the links with employers in some curriculum areas
- the effectiveness of group tutorials
- links between lesson observations and professional development of staff
- the slow progress of initiatives to raise success rates
- aspects of self-assessment
- insufficiently developed strategic planning in some areas.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. On the GCE A level provision they are both good. The success rate for GCE A levels improved in 2008, from being slightly below to around the high national average for sixth form colleges. These students make good progress. A comparison of their points scores at GCSE on entry and at A level, places the college above the median position for all sixth form colleges and close to the top 20% of all A level providers. Progress is good across many individual subjects and none have a significantly negative score. The college is close to the top quartile of sixth form colleges using the new contextual value added measure.
11. Achievement on the GCE AS provision is good but overall standards and success rates are below average. The college has now raised its entry requirements at GCSE in recognition that some students on AS programmes with much lower prior attainment levels were failing. For those students whose entry attainment is typical of sixth form colleges the success rate is high. The extended induction, as one of several additional measures to improve success rates for current students, has contributed to improved retention. The college works successfully with students with low prior attainment who fail to progress to the A level second year and 70% succeed on other qualifications. Those AS students who complete their AS year make good progress, placing the college close to the top 16% of all A level providers by this measure.
12. Excluding skills for life provision, vocational provision for students aged 16 to 18 at levels 1, 2 and 3 accounts for about 20% of all enrolments. The success rates are satisfactory at levels 2 and 3 compared with general further education (GFE) colleges serving a high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. At level 1 the success rate was at the average in 2007, but fell and was low in 2008. Success rates on GCSE courses are around the national average for 16 to 18 students and are high for adult learners. Performance by minority ethnic groups is around the national average for similar groups. Pakistani and black Caribbean students do better. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and students receiving additional learning support achieve well. The overall success rate for the few adult students is satisfactory. The college offers adult literacy and numeracy courses to better meet the needs of students, instead of key skills qualifications in communication and application of number, where the success rates were low.
13. Progression rates between levels within the college are satisfactory and progression by level 3 students to higher education is good. Two thirds of the students who completed advanced qualifications in 2008 progressed to higher education, including some to prestigious universities. Attendance rates are high. Students enjoy their studies and produce work of an appropriate standard. Arts students produce practical work of a high standard. Students behave well and make a positive contribution to the life of the college and the wider community.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

14. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a variety of approaches and questioning techniques to promote effective learning. ILT is used effectively and students routinely use the virtual learning environment (VLE) to extend their learning outside of lessons. Students participate well and develop good communication skills and understanding of theory. In a few lessons teachers do not check sufficiently on learning and homework is not set consistently. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are well qualified. Teaching resources are good. The judgements of college observers on the quality of teaching and learning are accurate and teachers receive good and detailed feedback. The college recognises the need to strengthen procedures for moderating judgements.
15. Assessment and internal verification practice is rigorous and meets the needs of learners. Assignments are marked thoroughly and students get useful guidance on how to improve. The monitoring and recording of student progress and performance is particularly effective. Attendance, punctuality, assessment, homework and progress against predicted grades are monitored frequently. Measures to alert tutors to concerns about at-risk students result in prompt and effective action to support and keep students on programme. Science students have extra lessons to support their progress.
16. Additional learning support is good with early identification of need and good take-up. A high proportion of learners receive individual learning support including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or complex needs. This helps these learners to achieve well. Very good use is made of specialist resources to remove barriers to learning and help students achieve their potential. Learners receiving additional learning support achieve well. The college offers adult literacy and numeracy courses to replace key skills at levels 1 and 2 to better meet students' needs. The college no longer offers key skills except in ICT.
17. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. A good range of subjects at all levels supports progression and 60% of courses are vocational. The curriculum is modified to reflect changing needs and student interest for example in the growth in media courses. Recruitment has steadily increased and the college engages and prepares Year 10 and 11 students well for transition to college. Schools particularly value the support given to particular groups of learners by college transition officers.
18. The comprehensive programme of enrichment activities is well attended. There is good response to programme requests, often from hard-to-reach learners, for example, boxercise for women. Good use is made of learner support funds to ensure that cost is not a barrier.
19. The college's approach to engaging with employers and preparing students for the workplace is inconsistent. Links are well developed in business, travel and tourism but poor in other subjects such as ICT.
20. Guidance and support for learners are good. Effective pre-course advice and induction includes learners signing an 'induction passport' to confirm their

readiness to study. Tutors use 'Learning Conversation Days,' to identify students at risk of not making progress. Careers advice and guidance are good and the college recently gained the Sheffield Careers' Quality Standard. Good processes ensure learners stay safe and healthy with an extensive focus on health and community safety in the enrichment programme.

21. The quality of group tutorials is inconsistent, as identified in the self- assessment report. They do not always motivate learners or support their success and learners state that they have little value.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: grade 1

22. Leadership and management are satisfactory as stated in the self-assessment report. The college has made good progress towards raising participation and educational achievement post-16 in the local area. Strong relationships with schools have led to a steady increase in the recruitment of Year 11 pupils. Students' prior attainment on level 3 courses varies widely. Where this attainment meets standard entry requirements they do well; they make good progress with high success rates and good progression to university.
23. Strategic planning is satisfactory. Through its carefully developed strategies the college has successfully raised participation levels in North East Sheffield and is highly regarded in the local area. Strategies are strongly supported by governors, staff and parents, including those to improve the low success rates on GCE AS courses and vocational courses. These support the college's inclusive mission to raise success rates without significantly raising entry requirements. However, the college was slow to develop this and to complete strategies to improve skills for life provision. Formal expressions of the college's strategic direction and summary strategic objectives for the current year are underdeveloped.
24. Quality assurance arrangements are thorough and implemented satisfactorily. They are clearly documented and well understood by staff. Judgements in the self-assessment report are broadly accurate and supported well by evidence. Some strengths are overstated and some areas for improvement are missed. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching are well managed. Judgements about the quality of lessons are accurate and inform performance management of teachers. Quality improvement plans are implemented systematically. Some actions are insufficiently precise to improve the low success rates in some areas.
25. Governance is good. Governors have a wide range of experience and valuable expertise. They passionately support the college mission of widening participation in North East Sheffield, contribute well to strategic planning and provide a suitable level of challenge and support to college managers.
26. Communication is good with meetings that support the work of college committees and working groups. Curriculum management is variable, good in some areas, satisfactory in others. Management information is readily accessible, accurate and supports college management and quality assurance well. Links

with schools and external support agencies are strong but they are underdeveloped with employers.

27. Resources are outstanding. Accommodation is attractive and the building is an educational beacon in the area. Classrooms are well furnished and there is a plentiful supply of networked computers and good technical support. Teachers are well qualified, although too few in skills for life have specialist qualifications. There are good arrangements to induct and professionally develop teachers. The professional development programme focuses appropriately on teaching and learning and college priorities. Formal links between this programme and outcomes from teaching observations are not clearly expressed.
28. Financial management is satisfactory and the college's financial position is good. Health and safety arrangements are good and students feel safe in the college. The college provides satisfactory value for money.
29. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Strategies to ensure that the diverse student population works purposefully and harmoniously together are successful. Membership of tutor groups is carefully managed to help students integrate into the college. The college analyses data carefully to identify areas of inequality. The college identified underperformance by mixed race students and developed a bespoke programme which has helped close the gap. Analysis showed that minority ethnic students were over-represented in disciplinary procedures and measures have been introduced to rectify this. The college strongly promotes students' awareness through an equality and diversity week, black history month and a tutorial programme of debates about cultural issues. The college ethos successfully supports lower attaining students. The college works well with local agencies to tackle issues such as forced marriages, deportation and genital mutilation. Equality and diversity and safeguarding scenarios are part of the recruitment process for college staff. The college meets the legislative requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act.
30. The college is an inclusive learning environment and safety is assured through effective and unobtrusive security arrangements. Arrangements to safeguard children and vulnerable adults are excellent. The college meets the legislative requirements of national policies on equality and diversity.

Sector subject area

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

31. The college offers full-time courses at levels 1 to 3 in health and social care and childcare and at levels 2 and 3 in public services. Of the 308 full-time learners, 295 are aged 16 to 18 and 13 are 19+. There are 129 learners on early years courses, 114 on health and social care courses and 65 on public services courses.

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- well-planned assessment and constructive feedback to learners
- high level of support for learners at risk of failing to achieve
- high quality resources.

Areas for improvement

- low and declining retention rates on some courses
- ineffective group tutorials
- low impact of actions to improve retention.

Achievement and standards

32. In 2007/08, pass rates are above the national average on most courses. Success rates are high on level 1 courses in 2007/08 and the BTEC first diploma in health and social care from 2006 to 2008. On other courses they are declining mostly to around the national average but a few are below. Retention rates on level 1 and 2 courses declined in 2007/08 and some are now below national average. Many students work well on tasks they are given, collaborate well with other students and make good progress.

Quality of provision

33. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the well-planned lessons teachers use practical approaches that successfully involve all learners. Learners remain fully engaged throughout lessons through small group activities and robust questioning. Good attention is paid to their different individual needs. Some good use is made of learning technologies to promote learning. In weaker lessons questioning techniques are poor and teachers fail to check on learners' understanding or the progress they are making. The use of ILT does not involve learners sufficiently and is restricted to wordy PowerPoint presentations that learners are asked to copy down.
34. Students receive extensive support in planning and writing their assignments which they receive well before the deadline date. They receive good feedback on their work which enables them to make necessary improvements.

Extensive support is given to learners with low literacy and numeracy skills and low aspirations. They benefit from good additional learning support, and help with their assignments and writing. Students who struggle to keep up with their work or who attend poorly are given extra support and their progress is closely monitored.

35. Group tutorials are ineffective. Learners are satisfied with their courses and value highly personal tutorials but find that group tutorials do not meet their needs. They do not understand why they have to attend them.

Leadership and management

36. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication is good. Staff have good access to computers and the college VLE at college and in the home. Resources are good. Well-equipped classrooms provide stimulating learning environments with data projectors, interactive whiteboards and good displays of learners' work. Learners have good access to computers and laptops are loaned to students who do not have them at home.
37. Successful steps are taken to promote equality and diversity. Self-assessment is broadly accurate. Actions to improve retention and success rates have not yet had much impact. Retention rates declined further on many courses in 2007/08. At the time of the inspection, in-year retention rates have improved on some courses, but have declined on others.

Science and mathematics

Good: Grade 2

Context

38. The provision includes GCE AS and A level courses in a wide range of science and mathematics subjects and GCSE biology and mathematics. There are free-standing mathematics units, diplomas in applied science and a first certificate in applied science for local schools. In 2008/09, nearly all of the 267 learners are full-time and aged 16 to 18.

Strengths

- good progression to higher education
- high success rates and value added in psychology
- much good teaching and learning
- wide range of courses
- good learner support through specialist workshops
- well resourced specialist classrooms and laboratories.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates in GCE AS natural science and mathematics subjects
- low pass rates A* to C on GCSE human physiology and health
- insufficiently self-critical self-assessment.

Achievement and standards

39. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are high in psychology and on most level 2 programmes. Overall success rates in GCSE mathematics are low in 2008 but the achievement of high grades is around the national average, having been high in the previous two years. A* to C pass rates in GCSE human physiology and health are poor. Retention rates are high on most GCE AS courses but success rates are low except in chemistry. Retention rates are low on the BTEC national diploma in applied science. Students with low levels of prior attainment achieve very high standards in advanced level programmes including A2 psychology, physics and chemistry and the national diploma in applied science.

40. Progression to higher education is good. There are high rates of progression from many level 2 to level 3 and from AS to A2 programmes. Learners' work is good, particularly in vocational subjects.

Quality of provision

41. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned; focus on learning and a variety of activities are used to sustain interest, including the effective use of ILT. There are good working relationships between teachers and learners. Learners make good use of the college's VLE for research. A few teachers fail to check sufficiently on learning.
42. Assessment practice is good and marked work is returned promptly, with helpful suggestions for improvements. On BTEC courses, internal verification practice is good.
43. A new six week induction programme is designed to ensure learners are placed on appropriate courses through regular assessment of their progress. In 2008/09 after an extended induction nearly a third of learners were transferred from AS to more suitable programmes. This approach is designed to remedy the poor performance in AS subjects and early signs indicate that students are making better progress.
44. Learners enjoy their learning and appreciate the specialist help provided in support-workshops. Text messages are used to contact absent learners and regular absentees are interviewed by the director.
45. Learners on vocational courses benefit from work placements which help improve their aspirations and self-confidence. There is a wide range of curriculum based enrichment.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are good and staff feel well supported by managers. Teachers are very well qualified. Laboratories, classrooms and learning resources are of a high standard. Technical support is good. The internal observation process is thorough. Managers have strived to develop a culture of sharing good practice and strategies to address the poor performance in GCE AS subjects. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.
47. Self-assessment practice is insufficiently rigorous and not enough attention is given to feedback from learners.

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

48. There are full-time courses at levels 1 to 3 for around 125 full-time students. Nearly all are aged 16 to 18. About half of these are on vocational courses. Information technology (IT) courses include GCE AS and A level and computing at AS level. Vocational courses include the diploma, certificate and award level qualifications for IT practitioners and an introductory diploma at level 1. Key skills in IT are offered at level 2.

Strengths

- high success rates on GCE A-level IT and the first diploma course
- effective use of ILT to support learning
- good progress in improving curriculum leadership.

Areas for improvement

- consistently low success rates on GCE AS level courses
- insufficient opportunities for work experience and links with employers
- slow implementation of strategies to improve standards.

Achievement and standards

49. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on the level 2 diploma in IT are consistently high. GCE A-level ICT success rates improved and were high in 2007/08. Although improving in 2007/08, success rates on AS courses have remained below the national average for the last three years. Success rates on national diploma courses were high and are now satisfactory. The quality of learners' written and practical work is generally satisfactory but varies considerably reflecting the very low initial entry qualifications of many students. Progression rates from levels 1 to 3 are satisfactory and progression to higher education is good. Some students gain employment after achieving partial qualifications. Attendance is satisfactory. Students are also able to obtain industry standard qualifications in addition to their main course of study.

Quality of provision

50. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as identified in the self-assessment report. Teachers are well qualified. In the better lessons, teachers ensure that students are challenged appropriately, take responsibility for their own learning and focus on their work. In less successful lessons, activities take too long, students do not participate sufficiently in discussions and teachers do not spend enough time checking the extent of individual students' learning. Most students enjoy their courses and learn to study independently. Many continue their studies at home. Level 3 students use online teaching materials to extend their knowledge of computer networking. Students have insufficient opportunities for work experience and links with employers are underdeveloped.

51. Assessment of learners' work is satisfactory with mostly prompt and thorough marking of students' work. Teachers make creative use of the good resources to enhance learning.
52. The range of courses is good at level 3. The provision is highly inclusive and learners feel safe and welcome at college.
53. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Learners receive well targeted support through additional workshops and revision programmes. Tutors effectively ensure the timely completion of coursework. Good in-class additional learning support is provided for level 1 and 2 students. Students receiving additional learning support achieve well.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The changes implemented by the new curriculum manager are having an impact. There is a clear focus on improving teaching and learning. Staff share good practice and actively promote equality and diversity. Data are used well to identify areas for improvement but targets for improvement are not always sufficiently challenging. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate but overestimates some of the strengths. Progress in eliminating some weaknesses has been slow and success rates on some courses continue to be low.

Arts, media and publishing

Good: Grade 2

Context

55. The college offers a range of full-time art and design, performing arts, music, dance and media courses at levels 1 to 3. Courses include GCE AS and A level, national awards and diplomas. There are 167 students aged 16 to 19.

Strengths

- high success rates on national diploma and advanced art and design in media
- high standards of practical work
- good teaching and learning
- good support for students
- strong curriculum leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on some vocational courses in performing arts and media
- underdeveloped use of data in self-assessment.

Achievement and standards

56. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high on the national diploma in art and design and in GCE advanced art and design and media. Pass rates are high on nearly all courses. Success rates have improved on the First Diploma courses to around the national average. There are low success rates on the National Diplomas in performing arts and media in 2007/08. Progression from level 2 to level 3 and from level 3 to a range of higher education courses is good.
57. Practical and written work is of a high standard. Students explore ideas well and most have well developed critical skills. Students enjoy their studies and often support their less able peers. They apply themselves to tasks quickly. Art and design sketchbooks are lively, experimental and used effectively to develop ideas. They include a range of primary and secondary source materials including collage, objective drawing and textures. Performing arts students understand technical vocabulary and have well developed performance skills. Many can play instruments to performance standard. Media students use good technical skills in designing posters and in producing promotional films. Most students can explore contentious and complex issues as subjects for making a news programme.

Quality of provision

58. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is challenging and encourages students to develop their critical, creative and practical skills. Students produce good practical and written work in response to innovative practical tasks set by teachers. Teachers make good use of ILT and paper based resources to promote learning. In a few lessons not all students are sufficiently challenged and some contribute little to group activities or discussion. Assessment is accurate;

assignments are marked promptly and feedback helps students improve their work. Resources are good; there is good quality equipment and accommodation.

59. The range of provision is good and meets the needs of students well. Support for students is good and teachers have good links with specialist support services. Advice and guidance and support for progression are effective. Additional learning support for students with particular learning needs is good. Students make good use of progress reviews to improve their work and their independent learning skills.

Leadership and management

60. Curriculum leadership and management are good. There is good progress in making improvements, including retention rates on most courses. The curriculum is responsive and flexibly meets the needs of students including those from partner schools. Teams share a commitment to raising standards. Equality and diversity are well promoted. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Insufficient use is made of college performance data to review the provision. Course action plans do not always identify precise targets for improvement.

Languages, literature and culture

Good: Grade 2

Context

61. The provision includes GCSE and GCE AS and A level courses in English, five other languages and a small programme in Classical Civilisation. There are 128 enrolments in advanced English courses, and 55 on language programmes. Nearly all students are aged 16 to 18. Language programmes include Arabic and Urdu. The English GCSE course has 252 students.

Strengths

- high pass rates on level 3 English courses
- good value added in modern foreign and community language courses
- good and inspirational teaching
- excellent examination preparation
- good resources and study guides.

Areas for improvement

- low A* to C grade pass rates in English GCSE
- insufficiently thorough support arrangements for ESOL students on English GCSE.

Achievement and standards

62. Achievement and standards are good. Student outcomes on most AS and A level courses are good. In 2008, the success rate in Advanced English Language and Literature was 100%. Success rates on AS courses are high in 2008 and many students achieve high grades. Pass rates in Advanced English Language are consistently high. Success rates in French, Spanish and German are high and most students on Arabic and Urdu programmes exceed their target grades. Most level 3 students make very good progress except in Classical Civilisation where outcomes are poorer.

63. The achievement of high grades in English GCSE has been consistently just below the national average and was very low declining to 29% in 2008. The college has introduced a pre-GCSE course and this has led to some improvement in success rates. Progression to higher education is good. English students develop good skills in planning essays and are confident in discussing how social changes produce new vocabulary and idiom.

Quality of provision

64. Teaching and learning are good and teachers inspire students. Lessons focus firmly on activities that help students develop understanding and competence in writing. Students enjoy their studies. There is much good whole-class teaching and shared learning. Students are responsive, attentive and vocal. They contribute well to discussions of poetry from other cultures. There is good use of ILT to promote variety in lessons and good attention to the needs of individual students. Resources are good. Study guides are prepared by teachers to support students at the right level. A small library encourages literature students to extend their reading programme of the classics and contemporary authors. In a few lessons, learners are not able to demonstrate that they understand what they are writing and their answering of questions is limited.
65. There is good preparation for examinations through tasks that encourage students to achieve high grades. Learning objectives in modern foreign language classes closely match the needs of the qualification. Spanish students, asked to play the role of interpreter at a trade fair, learned to refine their oral skills and gain experience of the requirements of the examination.
66. Written work is marked carefully with advice to students on how to improve. Arrangements for additional support do not consistently support students whose first language is not English and who need further help with technical accuracy.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management are good. Course management and teamwork are strong. Teachers are well qualified and some have good experience as examiners. Managers place a strong emphasis on ensuring the students' experience is positive. Teachers actively promote equality and diversity. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. There is a better match between students' prior learning and their chosen courses although the development of pre-GCSE English courses has been slow.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

68. There are 432 learners, nearly all aged 16 to 18, on preparation for life and work courses from entry to level 2. In 2007, the college discontinued key skills qualifications, except in IT at level 2. Learners now enter for qualifications in adult numeracy from entry to level 2; ESOL speaking and listening; the certificate in English entry and adult literacy levels 1 and 2. Key skills in IT were not inspected.

Strengths

- motivational teaching and highly effective use of ILT
- good learner support
- very good accommodation and resources.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on most courses in 2007/08
- insufficient use of initial assessment to inform individual learning
- incomplete strategy and co-ordination of Skills for Life.

Achievement and standards

69. Learners' achievement is satisfactory overall. Falling retention rates in 2007/08 contributed to declining success rates in adult numeracy at entry and level 1 and the certificate in English. In 2006/07, success rates were satisfactory and around the national average on most courses. There are good success rates at 100% in 2007/08 in the certificate in adult literacy level 1. ESOL success rates are improving but remain significantly below the national average; however, many learners have partial achievement. Learners achieve qualifications over an extended period and show good progression from entry to level 1 programmes. Current learners reach appropriate standards for the level of study. Attendance rates have improved over the past three years.

Quality of provision

70. Teaching and learning are good. Lesson plans match activities to learning objectives and include differentiated activities. Teachers inspire learners with thoughtful and well-planned lessons. There is very good use of ILT including the VLE. Accommodation is very good and all classrooms are well equipped. All classrooms have interactive white boards and students use interactive technology confidently. There are good software programmes and high quality learning materials. A good discussion of equality and diversity matters occurred in a lesson on 'Racism and Sport'. Planning to deliver individual learning is less well developed. The results of initial assessment are not always used sufficiently to inform teaching. Some written feedback on learners' work gives insufficient guidance on how to improve. Oral feedback is thorough and constructive. There are good procedures for monitoring student progress particularly in numeracy. This has contributed to good internal progression.

71. Learner support is good. Learners' needs are assessed before enrolment and appropriate levels of support put in place. Learners are placed on appropriate courses. There is good specialist support including the college level 1 tutorial.

Leadership and management

72. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Learners have a good range of opportunities to develop basic skills. The co-ordination of the provision, based in two directorates, is effective at an operational level. Communication between teams has improved. The college is developing a strategic approach to skills for life and the foundation learning tier as part of its response to the local area and national priorities. There is no self-assessment report for this area but there are subject quality reviews at course level. Overall findings are broadly accurate although some strengths are overstated and insufficient emphasis is given to areas such as the low retention rates in 2007/08.
73. Very few staff have specialist basic skills qualifications although good professional development includes opportunities to develop practice with entry and level 1 learners. Equality and diversity is well promoted.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

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

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 16-18 | | | | 19+ | | | |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|
| | | Starts - Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff | Starts - Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff |
| All Long Level 1 | 05/06 | 265 | 63 | 68 | -5 | 51 | 24 | 51 | -27 |
| | 06/07 | 463 | 74 | 69 | 5 | 55 | 31 | 55 | -24 |
| | 07/08 | 427 | 66 | - | | 16 | 44 | - | |
| Other | 05/06 | 265 | 63 | 68 | -5 | 51 | 24 | 51 | -27 |
| | 06/07 | 463 | 74 | 69 | 5 | 55 | 31 | 55 | -24 |
| | 07/08 | 427 | 66 | - | | 16 | 44 | - | |

Table 2

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

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 16-18 | | | | 19+ | | | |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|
| | | Starts - Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff | Starts - Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff |
| All Long Level 2 | 05/06 | 589 | 78 | 81 | -3 | 73 | 51 | 65 | -14 |
| | 06/07 | 784 | 81 | 83 | -2 | 122 | 61 | 68 | -7 |
| | 07/08 | 755 | 77 | - | | 79 | 70 | - | |
| GCSE's | 05/06 | 373 | 80 | 83 | -3 | 39 | 62 | - | |
| | 06/07 | 524 | 85 | 85 | 0 | 49 | 73 | - | ... |
| | 07/08 | 486 | 82 | - | | 47 | 81 | - | |
| Other | 05/06 | 216 | 74 | 74 | 0 | 34 | 38 | - | |
| | 06/07 | 260 | 73 | 77 | -4 | 73 | 52 | - | ... |
| | 07/08 | 269 | 77 | - | | - | - | - | |

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 16-18 | | | | 19+ | | | |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|
| | | Starts - Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff | Starts - Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff |
| All Long Level 3 | 05/06 | 1722 | 73 | 78 | -5 | 22 | 82 | 73 | 9 |
| | 06/07 | 1882 | 71 | 80 | -9 | 49 | 63 | 72 | -9 |
| | 07/08 | 1710 | 73 | - | | 70 | 79 | - | |
| A/A2 Levels | 05/06 | 494 | 89 | 91 | -2 | 8 | 100 | - | ... |
| | 06/07 | 515 | 89 | 92 | -3 | 17 | 76 | ... | ... |
| | 07/08 | 469 | 93 | - | | 39 | 92 | - | |
| AS Levels | 05/06 | 1072 | 65 | 72 | -7 | 14 | 71 | ... | ... |
| | 06/07 | 1077 | 64 | 75 | -11 | 30 | 60 | ... | ... |
| | 07/08 | 928 | 66 | - | | 22 | 73 | | |
| Other | 05/06 | 156 | 81 | 71 | 10 | - | - | - | ... |
| | 06/07 | 290 | 66 | 72 | -6 | 2 | 0 | ... | ... |
| | 07/08 | 313 | 64 | - | | 7 | 29 | - | |

Note: Data provided by the college is used for 2007/08.