

East Berkshire College

Inspection report

Provider reference 130604

Published date June 2009

Audience	Post-sixteen
Published date	June 2009
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Contents

Background information.....	3
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement.....	6
Key strengths and areas for improvement.....	7
Main findings	8
Sector subject area reports	12

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, social care and early years; engineering and motor vehicle; construction; visual and performing arts and media; literacy, numeracy and key skills; and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

Description of the provider

1. East Berkshire College is a large general further education (FE) college situated in the towns of Slough and Windsor. The college's mission is 'to provide high quality education so that our learners, whatever their ability, reach their potential'. The college operates in a competitive educational environment that includes two nearby FE colleges and 12 local schools with sixth forms. Unemployment rates for Berkshire are the lowest in the South East, although there are significant areas of economic deprivation in Slough. About 30% of students are of minority ethnic origin. Across the college's catchment area the proportion of the population from black minority ethnic heritage varies from 11% to 38%.
2. In 2007/08 the college enrolled 11,078 learners (4,570 full-time equivalents), just over half of whom were adults. Around 60% of learners aged 16 to 18 and 50% of adults were studying at levels 2 and 3. Around 30% of learners aged 16 to 18 on courses at level 3 were studying for General Certificate of Education (GCE) A levels, with the remainder on vocational programmes. The college has two main sites, one at Langley and a recently rebuilt site in Windsor. The Langley campus houses most of the vocational courses and the Windsor campus houses A-level provision and a range of full-time and part-time programmes for adults and young people. In addition, the college runs Skills for Life provision, including a large ESOL offer from a wide range of community locations in the local area.
3. The college has a large work-based learning contract with some 500 apprentices, of whom around one third are on advanced apprenticeships. Over 90% of all apprentices are on either construction or engineering courses. The college is the lead partner for a developing Train to Gain consortium and has around 600 of its own learners. Most of these are on courses in health and care, engineering or construction. There are small numbers of pupils aged 14 to 16 studying part time at the college, as part of well-established links with local schools.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Health, social care and early years	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Engineering and motor vehicle	Good: Grade 2
Construction	Good: Grade 2
Visual and performing arts and media	Good: Grade 2
Literacy, numeracy and key skills	Outstanding: Grade 1
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. This is a good college with good capacity to improve. Achievement and standards are good overall and are satisfactory for apprentices in work-based learning. There has been a significant improvement in long course success rates in the past two years and success rates for all learners on long courses were above average in 2007/08. Managers are strongly and successfully focused on the continuous improvement of the provision, recognising the improvement needed in success rates for apprentices at level 2. The quality of provision in work-based learning was inadequate at the last inspection and is now good. Learners' progress in vocational and academic qualifications at level 3 is good overall but is inconsistent across the range of subjects. Attendance and punctuality are good but are an area for improvement in a significant minority of the college's provision.
5. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are good. Learners' personal and vocational skills are well developed. Lesson observation is accurate and is leading to improvements in teaching and learning. Support for teachers to improve the quality of lessons is good. The promotion of equality and diversity is good; but the reinforcement of equality and diversity in lessons and learner reviews is sometimes insufficient.
6. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs of learners is good. The college meets local social and economic development needs well. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. Guidance and support for learners are good.
7. Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the principal and senior management team is strong and is well supported by governors. Together they provide a vision and strategic direction that is highly responsive to local and national priorities. Self-assessment is self-critical, evaluative and mostly accurate in identifying the strengths of provision and areas for improvement. Accommodation and resources are good, in particular at the Windsor campus. Value for money is good, reflecting good achievement and standards. Financial management is outstanding.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

8. Capacity to improve is good. The college has made good progress since the last inspection. Leaders and managers have a good record of setting and meeting targets to improve provision. Quality assurance systems are rigorous and closely linked to the college's strategic objectives for improvement. Course reviews and the self-assessment process are comprehensive, with well-planned involvement of staff and thorough use of monitoring data. The current self-assessment report is self-critical, evaluative and mostly accurate in identifying the strengths of provision and areas for improvement. The training,

development and support for staff are good and contribute well to the college's strategy for continuous improvement. The college is responsive to local and national priorities. Governors have appropriate expertise and experience. They scrutinise the performance of the college closely and challenge managers appropriately. Resources are good and carefully planned.

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

9. The college has made good progress since the last inspection to improve the provision. Success rates have improved significantly and were above average for all learners on long courses in 2007/08. The quality of provision in work-based learning, inadequate at the last inspection, is now good. The college has introduced successful measures to improve target-setting, individual learning plans and the management of learning support staff in lessons. The quality of provision and overall grade profile have improved from the last inspection. The replacement building at Windsor has significantly improved the standard of accommodation at this site. The college responds well to new initiatives; for example, in the development of Train to Gain programmes. The college has a broad range of provision that is delivered at community venues to meet the needs of the local area and works well with an increasing number of employers.

Key strengths

- good and improving success rates
- good teaching and learning in many areas
- strong development of personal and vocational skills
- good support for teachers to improve the quality of lessons
- outstanding educational and social inclusion
- good support and guidance for learners
- strong leadership, vision and strategic direction that is highly responsive to local and national priorities
- successful focus on the continuous improvement of the provision
- good quality accommodation and resources, in particular at the Windsor campus
- outstanding financial management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- learners' inconsistent progress in vocational and academic qualifications at level 3
- attendance and punctuality in a significant minority of the college's provision
- success rates for apprentices at level 2
- the reinforcement of equality and diversity in lessons and in learners' reviews.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Work-based learning (WBL)

Satisfactory: grade 3

10. Inspectors agree with the college's self-assessment judgements that learners' achievement and standards are good overall and in Train to Gain, and that they are satisfactory in apprenticeships.
11. At the last inspection retention and pass rates were generally above national average. The modest rise in the college's overall long course success rate from 2004/05 to 2006/07 did not keep pace with the sharper rise in the national average. The college's performance fell behind the national average over this period.
12. For all learners at level 2 and for adults at level 3, the impact of strategies to improve learners' achievement was evident in 2006/07 with a rise in success rates of at least 10 points. College data show a very significant improvement in 2007/08, so that overall long course success rates were above average for the first time since 2004/05. In-year retention data for 2008/09 show a continuing improvement on the previous year. In 2007/08 success rates for all learners on long courses were well above average at levels 2 and 3, accounting for the majority of learners aged 16 to 18 and around half of adults. At level 1 success rates were closer to but still above average, considering the mix of adult provision.
13. Success rates for apprentices were low at the last inspection. They have been broadly average for apprentices at level 2 in each of the past three years, accounting for around two thirds of all work-based learning apprentices. In 2007/08, for the first time in three years, overall success rates were above average for advanced apprentices and significantly more of them completed by their planned end date compared to the national average. The college is aware that timely success rates in Train to Gain are satisfactory and has taken appropriate and well-conceived steps to improve these.
14. Learners make better than expected progress from their GCSE results. In GCE A-level courses in 2007/08 they made very good progress but there was significant variation across the range of subjects in vocational and academic qualifications at level 3. Learners enjoy their studies and the standard of their work is good. Their attendance and punctuality are good overall but this is an area for improvement in a significant minority of the provision. They develop high levels of practical and work-related skills on vocational courses and work safely. Progression into higher level courses is good. Key skills success rates have improved since the last inspection and are now high. As a result, learners are extremely well equipped for their future social and economic well-being. The college monitors carefully the performance of learners by gender, disability

and ethnicity. Where the college has identified under-performance by particular groups of learners, managers have taken appropriate and successful action to bring about improvement.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

15. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are good, as reflected in the college's self-assessment report. The college is committed to continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning through a good range of formal and informal mechanisms, such as internal inspection reviews and good use of students' views. The senior lecturer network and peer mentoring are very effective in disseminating good practice. Most observations accurately identify the key strengths and areas for improvement, though in a very few areas lessons are over-graded. Observers are well trained and give useful and helpful feedback. Lesson observation leads to measurable improvement. Action planning is systematic and staff value the well-directed and continuous support.
16. Lessons are well planned and teachers clearly identify the range of activities and support to address the differing needs of their students. The considerable investment in resources, particularly information learning technology (ILT), is helping to improve learning and teaching; this is a clear improvement since the last inspection.
17. Initial assessment of students' needs and appropriate support are highly effective and timely. Assessment is good and students receive prompt and clear feedback on what they should do to improve. Individual learning plans adequately reflect what students need to do, though a small proportion have targets that are too broad and not specific enough to be helpful. The review of targets, monitoring of progress and individual support in one-to-one tutorials are good. The college monitors tutorials well and its identification of the strengths and areas for improvement is clear and accurate.
18. Key skills are fully integrated into the curriculum and are well managed across the college. Students' acquisition and achievement of key skills are good.
19. The range of study support for students is both extensive and good. They are also able to use ILT successfully to access additional materials to support their learning outside of lessons. This links to one of the college's strategies for improving teaching and learning: to develop students to be independent, imaginative learners.
20. Though promotion of equality and diversity is well-planned and in many lessons is good, this is not consistent across the college; opportunities are not taken sufficiently in lessons and in learners' reviews to ensure that equality and diversity are embedded and consistently reinforced.
21. Responsiveness to the needs and interests of learners, employers and external partners is good. Courses provide good opportunities for progression. Strong and productive links exist with the community, schools, local authority and community organisations. The college works very collaboratively with local

employers who appreciate its highly responsive, open and flexible approach. Managers have good knowledge of the social and economic needs of the local area which they use well to develop very effectively tailored provision and to develop the skills of the local workforce.

22. Learners have good opportunities to broaden their experience and enhance their personal development through a well-organised, wide-ranging and flexible programme of enrichment activities. The programme focuses well on the needs of individual learners. Learners enjoy these additional activities and participation rates are high. They develop confidence and good personal skills and often obtain accredited qualifications through participating in activities such as sports coaching and volunteering. However, some learners in a minority of curriculum areas are not offered a sufficient range of enrichment. The college has recently invited departments to bid for additional enrichment activities against set criteria, to complement departmental curricula.
23. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. The college has excellent knowledge of its local community and has employed highly effective strategies to extend the learner's voice and promote inclusion. The college has been successful in recruiting hard-to-reach learners by offering relevant entry level courses at the college itself and at an extensive range of community venues. Support for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties is good.
24. Care, advice, guidance and support for learners are good. Potential learners receive useful and accurate information to assist them in choosing programmes of study most suited to their individual needs and abilities. Induction thoroughly prepares learners for the requirements of their courses. The college offers a wide range of good support to ensure learner welfare and to promote personal development. The centrally-located and accessible learner services and learner support departments are well promoted to learners. The college pays good attention also to the needs of part-time learners. Arrangements for the provision of information, advice and guidance for progression to other college courses, further training, employment or higher education are good and have improved in quality and availability since the last inspection. Links with Connexions and adult advice and guidance services, which assist the college in supporting learners both on site and in community venues, are good.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

25. Leadership and management are good, matching the college's own judgement in self-assessment. Leaders and managers are successfully focused on the continuous improvement of the provision. Strategic planning is robust and target-setting is rigorous. Managers monitor progress closely. Curriculum areas are well managed. Managers use data well to inform the progress and evaluation of measures taken to address identified areas of improvement.

Communication within and across the college is good. Staff have a good understanding of their roles in improving the learners' experience.

26. Quality arrangements are well developed and are systematically applied across the college's provision to identify actions and targets for quality improvement. The detailed self-assessment report is self-critical, generally accurate and used well to plan quality improvement.
27. A high priority and good support are given to staff training and development, in support of the college's strategic objectives for improvement. Staff have a wide range of opportunities for professional development to develop their roles and share good practice.
28. Resources are used efficiently and effectively to meet learners' needs. Staff deployment and costs are carefully planned. Value for money is good and financial management is outstanding. The standard of accommodation and resources is good, in particular at the Windsor site, although there is some cramped accommodation at both sites.
29. Links with other services, organisations and employers are well developed. The college has a strong commitment to supporting the economic and social development of the local area. Managers' involvement in local networks informs successfully the college's curriculum planning so that it is responsive to the needs of both the community and of employers.
30. Governance arrangements are good. Governors have appropriate skills and experience and are well informed about the college's performance. The board sets and monitors stringent targets for senior managers.
31. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements. Appropriate vetting checks and recent training have been carried out for all staff, including governors.
32. Equality of opportunity is good. The college's response to recent legislation, including race, gender and disability, is good. Leaders and managers demonstrate a strong commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity. They ensure a high profile is given to equality throughout the college's provision and through the learner involvement strategy. Recruitment of staff and their progression is carefully monitored by ethnicity, gender and disability to avoid discrimination. There is a planned implementation programme for impact assessments of the college's equality and diversity measures with some recent progress.

Sector subject areas

Health, social care and early years

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

33. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in health and social care and early years from entry level to level 3, including national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3. There are 455 learners on full-time courses mainly aged 16 to 18 and 752 learners on part-time courses mainly aged over 19. The college offers early years courses in the community for adult learners.

Strengths

- high success rates on the caring for children award and the diploma in pre-school practice
- good support for learners
- good range of early years provision in the community
- effective management strategies to improve provision.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient challenge for the faster-working learners in too many lessons
- inappropriate use of resources and a heavy reliance on worksheets in a significant proportion of lessons
- insufficient promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning
- poor management of learner behaviour in weaker lessons.

Achievement and standards

34. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are high on the award in caring for children and the diploma in pre-school practice but they have been particularly low on the NVQ in health and social care. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory and most learners display a good knowledge and understanding of their work. Learners develop good employment skills on their courses and many are able to link effectively the work they do in college to their practical experience.

Quality of provision

35. The quality of provision is satisfactory as are teaching and learning. However, the proportion of satisfactory and inadequate teaching is too high. In the better lessons learners are able to take control of their learning and there is a good balance between teacher input and learner activity and feedback. In the weaker lessons there is too heavy a reliance on worksheets. In others the resources available for learners are inappropriate and do not allow them to fully explore the topics. In a minority of lessons the disruption from a small number of learners impeded learning. In too many lessons the needs of the faster-working

learners were not met. There was little evidence of equality and diversity being actively promoted in lessons. In one lesson learners were planning a challenging play environment but they had not given any thought to the needs of children with disabilities or to children from a range of cultures and the impact of clothing.

36. Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers mark work fairly and provide constructive feedback to help learners improve their work.
37. Provision meets the needs and interests of learners and employers well. The range of courses provides good progression routes to employment or higher education. There is a good range of early years provision in the community which meets the needs of learners who would not normally attend college. Progression from these courses is high.
38. Support and guidance are good. Tutorials are well planned for full-time learners and fully encompass the Every Child Matters themes. Part-time learners receive satisfactory support. Support for learners with additional needs is good and learners receiving support achieve well.

Leadership and management

39. Leadership and management are good. Strategies to improve poor retention on some courses have been very successful. Staff have appropriate qualifications and many are working towards teacher training qualifications. There has been some good staff training and development in teaching and learning but this has yet to have a full impact in the classroom. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. The self-assessment report had accurately identified the strengths but had failed to identify some of the significant areas for improvement.

Engineering and motor vehicle

Good: Grade 2

Context

40. The provision consists of courses in motor vehicle, manufacturing, welding and electrical/electronic engineering at levels 1, 2 and 3. Currently 233 learners are on full-time programmes and most are aged 16 to 18. A further 146 learners, mostly adults, are on part-time courses. The college also offers also a range of self-financing evening courses where 41 learners were enrolled. There are also 88 adult learners on work-based, Train to Gain programmes and a small number of learners aged 14 to 16.

Strengths

- high success rates for most full-time courses
- very high key skills success rates
- good development of students' practical skills and technical knowledge
- good teaching and learning that closely meet learners' needs.
- broad and inclusive range of courses
- highly effective target-setting for learners on full-time motor vehicle courses
- good links with employers, schools and other partners
- outstanding resources in motor vehicle
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on motor vehicle level 1 award in vehicle body and paint operations
- low retention rates on a significant minority of courses
- low timely success rates on level 2 and 3 apprenticeship programmes
- inconsistent support to meet the individual needs of some female learners.

Achievement and standards

41. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates have been higher than the national average for most courses in the last three years. Learners' achievement in key skills is very high. Pass rates are extremely high, although low retention rates have reduced success rates on a significant minority of courses. Apprenticeship and advanced learners do not achieve their framework qualifications on time. Attendance is satisfactory on most courses.
42. The standards of learners' work and technical knowledge are high. Learners in welding competently fillet-weld brackets and have made a realistic, life-sized 'Iron Man' to very high industrial standards. Motor vehicle learners proficiently carried out complex diagnostic testing on electronic engine management systems.

Quality of provision

43. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are good, closely meeting learners' needs. Teaching resources in motor vehicle are outstanding. In many lessons, teachers and learners use a wide range of equipment, such as industry-standard equipment, simulator rigs and a range of good vocational software programs to support and extend learning.
44. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are good. Learners' tracking documents are particularly well designed in motor vehicle. Teachers conduct regular, fair and rigorous assessments of learners.
45. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners is good. There is a broad range of courses which successfully widens participation. Links with schools, employers and other partners are good. However, course provision for learners aged 14 to 16 is limited. There is satisfactory progression between programmes.
46. Guidance and support for learners are good. Tutorials are well planned and provide appropriately stretching targets for learners, particularly in motor vehicle. However, a small number of female learners do not receive sufficient support to meet their individual needs in a male-dominated working environment.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are good. Weaknesses identified at the last inspection have successfully been addressed. The self-assessment report reflects the provision accurately. Quality improvement processes are thorough. The new head of school has a very good understanding of the area's strengths and weaknesses. Actions for improvement are well conceived.
48. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a diverse range of teachers and learners of minority ethnic heritage. Initiatives to increase female participation have been implemented but overall numbers remain low.

Construction

Good: Grade 2

Context

49. The college offers full- and part-time courses from level 1 to level 3 in building crafts and services, including apprenticeships. Technical and professional studies range from entry level to foundation degree. Of the 757 learners, 405 are part-time and 380 are adults. A further 226 learners were on apprenticeships with around one in five at advanced level. The provision includes vocational programmes for 39 school pupils aged 14 to 16. Some 125 learners are following a variety of construction qualifications through Train to Gain.

Strengths

- high and improving success rates
- good key skills success rates
- high framework completions on advanced apprenticeships
- good teaching and learning
- good range of programmes meeting learners' and employers' needs
- very effective learning support
- good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- low retention on the introductory certificate in construction.

Achievement and standards

50. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates have improved significantly and are now well above the national average. Retention rates have improved and are now satisfactory overall; however, they remain low on the introductory certificate in construction. Current in-year overall retention is high at 92%. Key skills success rates are high. Advanced apprenticeship success rates are good, especially in heating and ventilation, and apprenticeship rates are satisfactory. The standard of learners' written and practical work is good. Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality on a minority of morning lessons was poor.

Quality of provision

51. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons well with regular and appropriate changes of activity that maintain interest and meet individuals' needs. They use information technology (IT) well, particularly for checking learning. Learners' occupational skills are well developed in workshops and in the workplace where they are encouraged to work tidily and safely. Assessment practices and internal verification are good and comments on marked work clear and supportive.
52. The range of provision is extensive and provides clear progression routes from entry to level 3 and to higher level courses where appropriate. This provision

meets employers' needs well, especially those of smaller companies. The development of entry level programmes has been particularly effective in meeting local learners' needs. The range of college enrichment activities is wide but these are not well attended by construction learners, whereas vocational enrichment such as trade competitions is well supported.

53. Guidance and support for learners are good. Initial assessment identifies individuals' needs successfully. Good, well-planned in-class support meets these needs well. The support provided by vocational tutors and work-based learning assessors is strong and learners speak highly of this.

Leadership and management

54. Leadership and management are good. Managers have improved provision and success rates, particularly in work-based provision which was inadequate at the last inspection. Quality assurance is thorough and performance indicators are used well to improve performance. There is a strong culture of teamwork and sharing of good practice amongst staff. Formal teaching observations are carried out regularly and teaching has significantly improved. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.
55. The quality of resources is satisfactory. Tools and materials are plentiful and of good quality. The brick and plumbing workshops are spacious and well set out. Workshops for carpentry and joinery, kitchen fitting, plastering and maintenance operations are used well but are too small to comfortably accommodate the increasing numbers of learners.

Visual and performing arts and media

Good: Grade 2

Context

56. 'Creative Studies' offers full-time vocational and academic courses in art and design and performing arts at the Langley campus, and media, photography and performing arts at the Windsor campus. Just over 90% of full-time students are aged 16 to 18.
57. The provision is mainly at levels 2 and 3. First diploma courses are offered in art and design, media and performing arts. The level 3 courses are national diplomas and A levels in visual and performing arts and media. Just over 180 students are studying media or photography courses, 109 are on art and design and 60 on performing arts courses.

Strengths

- high success rates on first diploma and media courses
- particularly good development of creative and technical skills in art, design, textiles and photography
- good student progression to further levels of learning, including higher education
- very good personal and academic support for students
- good curriculum leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- low success and retention rates on national diploma art and design and performing arts courses
- narrow range of enrichment opportunities for art and design and media students
- uneven promotion of equality and diversity.

Achievement and standards

58. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high on first diploma courses and all media courses. Success rates are satisfactory on AS and A-level courses generally, although very good in photography. Success and retention rates are low on the national diploma art and design and performing arts courses and AS theatre studies. Current in-year retention rates show a significant improvement on these courses.
59. Students develop particularly good creative and technical skills in art, design, textiles and photography. Many students' work is accomplished, well finished, and innovative. Students' project work demonstrates a wide interpretation of themes, some good research and good use of a wide range of traditional and digital media. However, students' good camera work and editing skills in media are sometimes let down by poor technical and creative use of sound.

Quality of provision

60. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most students are well motivated and enjoy their work. Usually good classroom management and lesson planning underpin good learning. Teachers encourage students to experiment with different techniques. Critiques of work by teachers and by students are searching and challenging. In some lessons, teachers' views are too dominant so that learners do not participate sufficiently.
61. Teachers devise well-conceived and stimulating projects incorporating extensive creative options. Target-setting and reviews are sound. Assessment and internal verification are robust and well planned. Good arrangements are made in lessons to support students with additional learning needs.
62. Students' progression from level 2 to level 3 arts and media courses is good. A very high percentage of students on most courses progress to higher education. However, media students' progression rate is much lower and currently too few move directly into relevant employment.
63. Programmes adequately meet the needs and interest of learners. The range of enrichment opportunities for art and design and media students is narrow in comparison to the wide range available for performing arts students. Support for learners is particularly good.

Leadership and management

64. Leadership and management are good. A systematic and planned approach to performance improvement has been implemented successfully. Internal communication is good. Good practice is shared well. The scheme for observing teaching and learning is satisfactory.
65. Self-assessment is sound and identifies most of the strengths and areas for improvement found in inspection. The promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum is uneven. Parts of the curriculum area explore a much broader range of diversity themes than others.

Literacy, numeracy and key skills

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

66. Some 600 learners undertake courses in literacy and numeracy. Around 370 of these are adults. 'Advance to Go' courses in construction, motor vehicle, hairdressing, childcare and sport are provided for around 60 learners aged 16 to 18 as part of the college's work to widen participation. In addition, 1,725 students aged 16 to 18 take key skills communication and application of number as part of their full-time programmes. Learning support for literacy and numeracy is provided for 1,015 students in lessons and many of these students attend individual learning support sessions.

Strengths

- outstanding success rates
- good standards of work
- very good teaching and learning
- outstanding identification of and provision for additional learning needs
- highly effective action to meet the needs of learners and employers
- outstanding educational and social inclusion
- good leadership and management
- rigorous self-assessment and development planning to improve provision.

Areas for improvement

- learners' attendance
- learners' involvement in evaluating progress and setting individual targets for learning in a small minority of courses
- the reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality and diversity.

Achievement and standards

67. Inspectors found that achievement and standards are outstanding which agrees with the judgement in the self-assessment. Success rates are very high for literacy and numeracy and well above national average. Key skills success rates are high. Learners make good progress. Standards of work are good. Learners enjoy their courses and are highly motivated to gain new skills and achieve their qualifications. Literacy students showed high levels of reading skills in the recent 'Six Book Challenge'. They develop confidence in speaking and listening and gain the written skills needed for further progress. The college recognises in self-assessment that attendance rates on some courses are low.

Quality of provision

68. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are particularly good. Lessons are very well planned and teachers make extremely effective use of a good range of resources. Learners work well independently. Key skills provision is integrated extremely well within learners' main learning programmes.

69. The identification of and provision for students' additional learning needs is outstanding. Support for learners with dyslexia is particularly effective. Learners receiving support for literacy and numeracy gain their qualifications at or above the college average. Assessment is thorough and clearly understood by learners. On most courses, teachers negotiate relevant and specific targets with learners but in a small minority of courses learners are insufficiently involved in target-setting. Targets are sometimes too broad or insufficiently challenging.
70. The range of provision meets the needs of learners and employers well. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. Good partnership working ensures literacy and numeracy provision is located in disadvantaged communities. Courses on employers' premises inspire learners to improve their skills. Disengaged 16 to 18-year-old students successfully gain literacy and numeracy qualifications in vocational courses through a recently piloted 'Advance to Go' programme. Information, advice and guidance, and support for learners are good.

Leadership and management

71. Leadership and management are good. Self-assessment and development planning to improve provision are rigorous. The college observation process is sound and standards of teaching and learning are rising. The college has taken highly effective action to improve key skills provision. Steps to increase the rate of learners' attendance are sound and beginning to have impact.
72. The college provides an inclusive environment for all learners and the promotion of equality and diversity is good. However, teachers' plans for the reinforcement of learners' understanding in some lessons is insufficient.

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

Good: Grade 2

Context

73. ESOL provision is delivered at college centres and 20 community venues to a diverse student population over a wide geographical area. There are 1,428 students of whom 373 are full time and 146 are aged 15 to 19. Courses are offered at all levels from pre-entry to level 2 and the majority, 61%, are at entry level. Some 85% of the students are on externally accredited qualifications. The remainder achieve an internal college certificate.

Strengths

- high and much improved success rates on most courses in 2007/08
- good development of language and additional skills
- stimulating lessons that successfully engage students
- good learning and personal support
- very responsive and inclusive provision meeting the needs of the community
- successful focus on raising achievement and improving provision.

Areas for improvement

- low attendance and retention on some courses
- insufficient sharing of good practice
- limited progression opportunities.

Achievement and standards

74. Learners' achievement is good. Success rates are high and have improved significantly on most courses in 2007/08, having been well below the national average between 2005 and 2007.
75. Students develop a good range of language and additional skills. They extend their vocabulary and improve their fluency and literacy as well as developing related skills such as in IT and numeracy. They participate with enthusiasm and the standard of their written work is good. They enjoy learning, make good progress and successfully achieve learning targets.
76. Monitoring strategies are impacting favourably on improving attendance and retention, though both remain low on some courses. Progression within ESOL and to other college courses is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

77. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are good. Highly stimulating lessons successfully engage students. Teachers use a wide range of high-quality resources and skilfully deliver a variety of carefully prepared activities. Information and communication technology is well integrated and students have increased access to computer-based resources. Planning is very detailed. Activities and materials capture students' interest and are made relevant to

their diverse backgrounds. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. In less successful sessions more able students are not sufficiently challenged and weak questioning techniques hinder the checking and consolidation of learning.

78. A very responsive and inclusive provision meets the needs of local communities across a wide geographical area. The curriculum offer has been extended to cater for younger students. Students participate in an increased range of enrichment activities. Progression opportunities for students wishing to progress from ESOL to other courses are limited, particularly for higher level learners and for those wishing to continue to vocational training and academic courses.
79. Guidance and support for students are good. Individual tutorial sessions include detailed monitoring and feedback to students on achievement of their targets and their attendance. Support assistants provide helpful learning support in lessons. Students receive highly effective specialist personal support at both college and community centres.

Leadership and management

80. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are good. Operational management is effective across the two schools in which ESOL provision is located. Good focus has been placed on improving students' performance and the quality of provision. Teachers are experienced and well qualified. They are well supported and teamwork is good. Staff welcome the good variety of professional development opportunities. However, there is insufficient sharing of good practice to further develop the curriculum, or to inform students' choices and placements across the two departments. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The judgements made in the self-assessment report are broadly accurate but do not fully support the grade awarded.

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	1109	69	69	0	3359	60	65	-5
	06/07	1159	71	74	-3	3187	62	70	-8
	07/08*	1165	81			2488	74		
NVOs	05/06	63	59	72	-13				
	06/07	51	84	75	9				
	07/08*	51	82						
Other	05/06	1030	70	69	1	3352	60	65	-5
	06/07	1108	70	74	-4	3185	62	70	-8
	07/08*	1114	81			2478	73		

* college data.

Table 2

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 2	05/06	963	67	66	1	1456	59	66	-7
	06/07	943	77	70	7	1111	71	69	2
	07/08*	905	83			1166	79		
GCSEs	05/06	218	71	68	3	152	70	67	3
	06/07	209	78	71	7	181	80	70	10
	07/08*	170	82			206	84		
NVOs	05/06	197	64	65	-1	221	55	68	-13
	06/07	146	75	68	7	177	66	69	-3
	07/08*	171	85			169	79		
Other	05/06	516	65	66	-1	1070	59	65	-6
	06/07	529	77	70	7	739	69	69	0
	07/08*	521	83			780	78		

* college data.

Table 3

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 3	05/06	1027	66	71	-5	919	59	64	-5
	06/07	1097	70	73	-3	734	71	68	3
	07/08*	1372	82			593	78		
A/A2 Levels	05/06	198	87	87	0	99	67	72	-5
	06/07	161	88	87	1	62	74	76	-2
	07/08*	230	94			49	90		
AS Levels	05/06	372	62	67	-5	152	52	55	-3
	06/07	486	64	69	-5	126	59	59	0
	07/08*	607	80			108	75		
NVQs	05/06	47	72	71	1	121	59	63	-4
	06/07	46	91	74	17	68	84	69	15
	07/08*	38	97			114	88		
Other	05/06	329	60	65	-5	520	60	64	-4
	06/07	397	68	70	-2	467	72	69	3
	07/08*	497	77			322	80		

* college data.

Where there are small numbers of learners or where course types have been discontinued, these data have been omitted from the table for improved clarity.

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**	College framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	143	42	52	28	43
		timely	134	39	34	27	27
	06/07	overall	150	45	63	41	56
		timely	152	41	43	36	38
	07/08#	overall	130	43	68	71	63
		timely	139	40	48	61	44
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	174	66	57	51	51
		timely	172	47	37	41	33
	06/07	overall	260	69	64	66	60
		timely	240	60	47	55	45
	07/08#	Overall	153	59	67	66	64
		timely	140	46	53	56	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 and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record (ILR)

validated by the LSC