

# South Thames College

## Inspection report

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| Provider reference | 130420    |
| Published date     | July 2009 |

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Grading

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

The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in health and social care; hairdressing and beauty therapy; music and performing arts; literacy and numeracy; English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); and business, administration and law.

## Description of the provider

1. South Thames College is a general further education (FE) college in south west London with centres in Wandsworth, Putney, Tooting and Roehampton. Provision ranges from pre-entry to degree level courses and the majority of students are on programmes leading to vocational qualifications. In 2008/09, the college enrolled over 1,800 students aged 16-18, mainly on full-time courses, and around 7,700 learners aged 19 or over, mostly on part-time courses. Around half of the FE enrolments are at entry level or level 1. Provision at level 3 represents less than 15% of total enrolments. Literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision together account for around 40% of the curriculum offer.
2. The college's curriculum includes relatively small work-based provision with 71 learners, a school link programme and also ESOL provision for overseas students. Over 1,500 trainees are participating in Train to Gain programmes. The college is the main provider of Wandsworth Local Authority's (LA) adult and community learning.
3. Most students live locally and around three-quarters live in areas classified as socially disadvantaged. Just under half of all students identify themselves as white, 15% as Black African and 12% as Black Caribbean. The college is in the midst of a major capital project with a new building on the Wandsworth site due to open in September 2009. Plans to merge with another college are well advanced, although not yet finalised.

## 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 and social care                  | Inadequate: Grade 4   |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy         | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Music and performing arts               | Good: Grade 2         |
| Literacy and numeracy                   | Good: Grade 2         |
| English for speakers of other languages | Outstanding: Grade 1  |
| Business, administration and law        | Good: Grade 2         |

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the college is good. Inspection evidence confirmed the college's own judgement that achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management are good.
5. With an upward trend in success rates over the last three years to above the national average, most students are successful in gaining appropriate skills, knowledge and qualifications. Success rates are outstanding for adults on long level 1 programmes, most ESOL learners and many music and performing arts students. Achievement and standards are satisfactory in work-based learning, Train to Gain, hairdressing and beauty therapy and health and social care. They are good in business, administration and law and literacy and numeracy. As acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report, the low retention rate for students aged 16-18 on level 3 programmes remains an area for development.
6. Teaching and learning are good. The college's range of courses and progression routes serves the needs and interest of students well. The college works highly effectively in partnership with the LA, health and police services, employers, voluntary and community groups. Students enjoy participating in the extensive range of enrichment activities. They also benefit from good guidance and support and very good personal support from teachers and other staff. Target setting, as noted in the self-assessment report, needs to be improved if it is to be of real value to students and teachers. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. A key strength of the college is its safe, inclusive and respectful ethos.
7. Highly effective leadership and management have led to significant improvements since the last inspection. The quality of provision has improved in most of the curriculum areas inspected. However, the college's rigorous quality assurance arrangements have yet to have a discernible impact on health and social care provision and there has been slow progress in ensuring that all teachers are appropriately qualified, in line with recent workforce reforms. The college's response to equality and diversity is good, as is value for money. The college meets government requirements in relation to safeguarding.

### Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

8. The college demonstrates good capacity to improve. The thoroughness and accuracy of the self-assessment process is good. It is appropriately evaluative and action plans chart sensible and coherent plans for improvement. Quality assurance is good. Both students' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning show steady improvement. Lines of accountability are clear and management action to tackle pockets of weaker performance is increasingly rigorous. The proposed merger presents a potential risk to the pace of

improvement, although plans to ensure that this risk is minimised are well thought out.

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

9. The effectiveness of the steps taken to promote improvement is good. The college has made good progress in addressing weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Students' achievement has improved significantly, as has the quality of teaching and learning. Curriculum management has improved and quality assurance arrangements are increasingly having a positive impact. Both leadership and management, and support for students, have improved. Despite the college's best efforts, students' punctuality to lessons remains a concern.

### Key strengths

- good improvements in success rates over the last three years
- very high success rates for adults on long level 1 programmes
- outstanding ESOL provision
- effective use of lesson observations and staff development to improve teaching and learning
- highly effective management strategies to raise standards
- safe, inclusive and respectful ethos
- students' enjoyment of a wide range of enrichment activities
- good personal support for students.

### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- low retention rates for students aged 16-18 on level 3 programmes
- inadequate provision in health and social care
- ineffective use of target setting to monitor students' progress in some areas
- slow progress in ensuring that all teachers are fully qualified
- students' punctuality to lessons.

## Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grades:*

*Work-based learning*  
*Train to Gain*

*Satisfactory: grade 3*  
*Satisfactory: grade 3*

10. Achievement and standards are good. The proportion of students completing their courses and achieving their qualifications has risen steadily over the last three years and is above the national average when compared to similar colleges. The overall success rate of 82% reflects sustained improvements at all levels for both adults and younger learners. Those aged 19 or over, who account for around 75% of the college's student population, are more successful than those students aged 16-18.
11. The greatest improvements are at level 1, which has the most enrolments. Adults achieve particularly well on long courses at this level, with a very high success rate in 2007/08 of 90%. At level 2, adults and younger students perform less well but broadly in line with national averages. At level 3, too many students aged 16-18 failed to complete their courses in 2007/08. However, of those who remained, over 90% were successful in achieving their qualification. Those on short courses perform in line with national averages. Retention and achievement rates for pupils aged 14-16 are good.
12. Achievement and standards for those on apprenticeship programmes and Train to Gain are satisfactory. The overall completion rate for apprentices has improved significantly over the last few years but remains below the national average. In hairdressing, there has been a particularly marked improvement in performance but in other sector subject areas, too many trainees fail to achieve qualifications before their planned end date. Timely completion is also a concern on Train to Gain programmes. In 2007/08, only 70% achieved their qualification but there is evidence of improvement in the current year, with 93% of trainees still on the programme and making good progress.
13. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, an analysis of achievement by gender, disability and ethnicity identifies year-on-year improvements for almost all groups but indicates that Black Caribbean students aged 16-18 do not achieve as well as other groups at the college. With a higher retention rate in the current year, there are indications of improved performance for this group.
14. The standard of students' work is good in some curriculum areas, satisfactory in others and outstanding in ESOL. Students and trainees develop good vocational skills and appropriate academic knowledge, underpinned by sound language, literacy and numeracy skills. This plays a key role in enabling them to achieve economic well-being.



15. Attendance is satisfactory but lateness to lessons by students remains an area for improvement.

## Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

16. The quality of provision is good. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgements when carrying out joint lesson observations. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of individual students. Typically, in the better lessons, students all make good progress and participate enthusiastically in well chosen activities. ESOL teachers are particularly skilful in their use of question and answer, business teachers are very good at motivating students and teachers of music and performing arts model good professional practice, setting their students high standards. On Train to Gain programmes, one-to-one training is good and enables trainees to reflect on the skills they have developed very effectively. The less successful and on occasion inadequate lessons are characterised by a slow pace, poor punctuality, ineffective in-class support and, in a few cases, disruptive behaviour by students. The use of technology by teachers, which was reported as a key weakness in the last inspection, has improved and is now good.
17. Assessment is good. Feedback to students is clear and detailed with helpful suggestions about how standards could be improved. Systems to respond to feedback from external verifiers are rigorous. Trainers and assessors for work-based and employed learners are supportive and flexible in their assessment practice, often visiting trainees outside of normal college hours.
18. Additional learning support is good. Students undertake a thorough assessment of their needs when they enrol. The majority of students, who are identified as likely to benefit from additional help, accept the support and successfully achieve their qualifications. Teachers and support workers generally work well together and this integrated approach enables students to develop further their numeracy and literacy skills within a vocational context. In a few instances, the role of support workers in lessons is not planned sufficiently. The tutorial programme is good. Youth workers at the main college sites are highly effective in encouraging students to adopt positive attitudes, behave appropriately and contribute to the community. The tracking and monitoring of students' progress is good, particularly in ESOL and business. However, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report, the quality of target setting is variable and in some curriculum areas targets are too imprecise to be of value to students or teachers.
19. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. The wide range of programmes and clear progression pathways, particularly at entry level and level 1, support the college's commitment to inclusion. The college has developed strong partnerships with local schools, colleges and community groups. With specialist programmes for employers and trade unions and an expanding Train to Gain provision, the college is increasingly meeting the needs of employers. Students enjoy participating in an extensive range of

enrichment activities, many of which enable them to make a significant contribution to the college and to the local community.

20. Support and guidance are good. Financial support for students is well targeted at those most in need. Support for vulnerable students and for those with a disability is highly effective. The range of specialist support offered is very good, notably for dyslexia, mental health issues and hearing impairment. Specialist equipment is readily made available for students with visual impairment and/or restricted mobility. Students' views are actively sought and their opinions contribute to developments in the college. Careers advice is good. Promotion of healthy eating has a high profile and students report that they feel safe.
21. Educational and social inclusion is good. The college is highly inclusive and attracts students from those groups who are under-represented in further education and training. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good. Students with low levels of prior attainment, and those who need to improve their English language skills, benefit from the college's successful provision in preparation for life and work. In addition to provision on the main sites, the college offers a range of extensive part-time community learning in venues across south west London.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Good: grade 2*

22. Leadership and management are good. The principal combines vision and determination in setting high standards for staff and students. Together with other senior leaders and governors, the Principal promotes a clear strategy focused on improving students' achievements, whilst at the same time pursuing an ambitious rebuilding programme and a prospective merger with another college. Good progress has been made in establishing a culture that gives priority to supporting students to succeed on their courses in a safe and inclusive environment. The aspirational values that underpin this culture are subscribed to by most staff, although there is scope for further improvement in ensuring communication between senior managers and teachers is consistently effective in establishing a shared vision.
23. Over the last three years, success rates have improved significantly, particularly for adult learners. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. Provision in ESOL, which constitutes a significant proportion of the college's curriculum, is outstanding. It is good in most other curriculum areas but in health and social care it is unsatisfactory. Curriculum management is good in most areas, with outstanding leadership in ESOL.
24. Quality assurance procedures are effective in driving up standards in most aspects of the college's work. Recent initiatives to address weaknesses in work-based learning and Train to Gain programmes are beginning to have a positive

impact. Course reviews and self-assessment reports are self-critical and generally use data well to evaluate the quality of provision and determine what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. Further refinements that will enable more frequent and sophisticated reviews of progress against targets are being introduced. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and appropriately evaluative. Procedures for reaching and moderating judgements about the quality of provision are rigorous. However, as the college recognises, the impact of quality assurance arrangements is not yet consistent across every aspect of the college's work.

25. The college's internal lesson observation scheme is effective, both in reaching accurate judgements about teaching and learning and in helping teachers to evaluate and improve their practice. Most lesson observation reports are perceptive and helpful to teachers. Staff development is comprehensive and focuses appropriately on a combination of individual needs, college priorities and external requirements. However, the college has made slow progress in responding to the requirement that all teachers should be fully qualified according to their teaching role.
26. Accommodation and resources are good and both staff and students are justifiably excited about the potential of the new building that is to open fully in September 2009. Further redevelopment is planned, pending confirmation from the relevant funding bodies.
27. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. In addition to meeting the statutory requirements relating to race, disability and gender, staff and students do much to promote diversity and encourage respect and tolerance for others. The diversity of the college community is celebrated and cross-college events and the work of an inter-faith group contribute to students feeling safe and respected regardless of their background. With the support of the college, students make a significant contribution to community cohesion; for example, through some exemplary project work designed to reduce inter-group conflict and knife crime. Teachers are sensitive to cultural and religious difference, although the active promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum is better in some areas, for example in ESOL and the performing arts, than in others. College data on students' success rates are analysed to check for differential achievement between groups, and findings are acted upon. Such analysis is not always in evidence at course level.
28. The college meets government requirements in respect of child protection and safeguarding vulnerable adults. Despite the high profile given to this work, the college has not ensured that all teaching staff receive full training within an appropriate timescale.
29. Governance is good. An impressive range of skills and experience is represented on the corporation. Governors know the college well and they exercise a judicious balance of support and challenge in respect of the college's academic and financial performance. Financial management is prudent and the college provides good value for money. Plans for merger with another college

are well advanced and are underpinned by a sensible and realistic strategy to both broaden provision and improve its quality.

## Sector subject areas

### Health and social care

Inadequate: Grade 4

30. The college offers full- and part-time courses in health and social care and early years from entry level to level 4, including National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3. There are 227 students aged 16-18 and 168 students aged 19 or over. The college is part of a consortium offering the new diploma in society health and development.

### Strengths

- high success rates on the NVQ in children's care learning and development and on access to care
- good teaching and learning on the access course
- good range of courses with clear progression pathways
- successful management initiatives to improve retention on many courses.

### Areas for improvement

- low success rates on introductory courses in health and social care, NVQ in care and national diploma in care
- poor provision at level 1
- too much inadequate teaching and learning
- inadequate planning for the use of learning support in classes
- insufficient use of individual learning plans to track and monitor students' progress
- negative impact of staffing shortages on students' experience.

### Achievement and standards

31. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are low on some full-time care courses. In-year retention rates are poor on the second year of the level 3 childcare course and on the foundation for caring for children course. However, in-year retention on many other courses has improved. The standard of students' work is satisfactory but good on the childcare courses and on the national diploma courses in health and care. Childcare learners make effective links between their college work and work experience.

### Quality of provision

32. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are inadequate, although the SAR judges teaching and learning to be satisfactory. The weaker lessons are not planned well and some teaching is poor. Disruptive behaviour and poor punctuality by students adversely affect lessons. In some lessons, students make insufficient progress. Planning for learning support in lessons is inadequate. Teaching and learning on the access course is good, particularly in biology and mathematics.

33. Assessment is satisfactory. Most assignments are returned quickly with constructive comments from teachers that help students improve their grades. Initial assessment is satisfactory and the results have been used more effectively this year to ensure that students are on an appropriate course.
34. The range of courses available to students is good and there are clear pathways for progression. The college is part of a well-organised consortium that offers the new diploma in health, society and development. Both college and school staff work collaboratively to deliver the diploma.
35. Support and guidance for students are inadequate. Too many students report that they have not had group or individual tutorials for a long time. They report that individual teachers are very helpful and supportive but do not have time to give help outside the classroom. Individual learning plans are poor. Targets and associated actions are often too general to be of real benefit to students and teachers.

### Leadership and management

36. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of school has put in place good initiatives to help improve retention rates and, although punctuality and attendance are still an issue for some courses, retention has improved this year on most programmes. Teacher shortages in this area are having a negative impact on students' experience. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate although overly generous in terms of grading. Inspectors agree with the areas for improvement identified in the very detailed quality improvement plan.

## Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Context

37. The college provides courses in women's hairdressing leading to NVQs at levels 1 to 3, barbering at level 2, a hairdressing diploma at level 2 and an apprenticeship programme. Beauty therapy NVQ courses are provided at levels 2 and 3. Ninety-eight students aged 16-18 and 165 adult students study full-time. There are 24 apprentices. Thirty-one school pupils aged 14-16 attend college one day each week.

## Strengths

- good professional skills in level 3 hairdressing and level 3 beauty therapy courses
- well focused curriculum enrichment and links with the community
- good support for students
- successful actions to improve outcomes for students
- high quality specialist accommodation.

## Areas for improvement

- underdeveloped professional practices in a few lessons
- inappropriate course structure on level 1 and level 2 hairdressing courses
- insufficiently precise target setting in progress reviews.

## Achievement and standards

38. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates improved in 2007/08. They are satisfactory in hairdressing at level 1 and in beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3. Success rates are high in hairdressing at level 2 but pass rates are consistently below average. The success rate for hairdressing at level 3 was high in 2007/08. The completion of apprenticeship frameworks is satisfactory. Success rates for students aged 14-16 are high. Retention this year is high and predicted success rates are high on all courses.
39. The standard of students' work is generally satisfactory and skills developed at level 2 are sometimes good. Students demonstrate good professional skills in level 3 hairdressing and level 3 beauty therapy. Their practical and client care skills are very good. Students work safely and hygienically and to commercial times. However, professional skills are underdeveloped in a few lessons. For example, students do not always protect their hands when using chemicals and client care is not always of a suitable standard. Attendance is good.

## Quality of Provision

40. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are satisfactory. In good lessons, teachers monitor and help individual students to develop their work effectively. In weaker lessons, teachers do not always identify and address shortcomings in students' professional practice. Feedback provided by teachers

on written work helps them to improve. The assessment of practical work starts at an appropriately early stage of each course. Additional learning support is good.

41. The needs and interests of students are satisfactorily met. The range of courses is satisfactory overall. Curriculum enrichment is good. Students participate in many additional courses and visits to exhibitions which enhance their skills and understanding of industry. Students take part in national and regional competitions and provide services for many community groups. Employers provide valuable input to the curriculum, with demonstrations, careers talks and work experience placements.
42. The structure of level 1 and level 2 hairdressing courses is inappropriate. Level 1 hairdressing students develop skills at level 2 throughout the course but are only assessed at level 1. Level 2 skills are not assessed or recognised through their qualifications. Almost all students taking the level 2 hairdressing course have previous experience of hairdressing. It is intensive and provided in too short a timescale to be accessible to most learners without previous experience of hairdressing. Students taking both level 1 and level 2 hairdressing courses have all of the assessments for level 2 in the second year, rather than assessments being more evenly spread throughout students' training.
43. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Students receive good personal support. Target setting in students' progress reviews is not sufficiently precise or personal to be of real value in improving performance.

#### Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management are good and have led to improved success rates. Strategies to improve the number of clients are very successful. The retention rate this year and students' attendance are very good. Good plans are in place to improve the curriculum from September. Specialist accommodation is new and of very high quality. Equality of opportunity is good. The self-assessment report is evaluative and accurate.



## Music and performing arts

Good: Grade 2

## Context

45. The college offers full-time courses in music performance and music technology from level 1 to level 4 and courses at levels 2 and 3 in performing arts. Learners work towards introductory, first and national diplomas. The college does not offer part-time courses. Of the 194 learners, 122 are aged 16-18, over half are from a minority ethnic group and 69 are female.

## Strengths

- high success rates on music and performing arts courses
- good teaching and learning
- good development of personal and vocational skills
- students' enjoyment of a wide variety of activities, events and national competitions
- productive work with employers to promote professional practice
- effective strategies for improvement
- strong ethos of equality and diversity, dignity and respect.

## Areas for improvement

- punctuality and attendance at rehearsals for performances
- disruptive behaviour by students in a minority of lessons.

## Achievement and standards

46. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates have risen significantly since the last inspection and are now high and well above national averages. Progression to further courses at the college, to higher education and to employment is good. Students develop refined skills and perform to a high standard with confidence and flair. Learners studying music confidently exploit music technology and effectively relate theory to industry practice.

## Quality of provision

47. The quality of provision and of teaching and learning is good. Many teachers are practitioners in industry and set students high expectations, replicating professional practice. Performances to the public interweave dance, drama and music and students move skilfully between these different media. In one lesson a teacher listened attentively to a group playing their own composition and, through skilful probing, encouraged the students to reconsider their performance and to make appropriate improvements. Most students listen carefully to each other and respect alternative points of view. However, students' targets for achievement are not always clearly defined or monitored. Not all students who are assessed as requiring additional help with their literacy or numeracy accept the support on offer.

48. Provision meets the needs and interests of students well. Students participate in a wide range of activities, events and competitions. For example, for the second successive year music students won the national skills award for pop music and performing arts students took first prize at a National Theatre festival. In addition, students enjoyed competing for an entrepreneurial business skills award when the college, in conjunction with major employers, hosted a prestigious event based on 'Dragon's Den'.
49. The college has very effective links with employers. As a result, the curriculum has been successfully restructured to mirror industry practice and to meet the needs and interest of students. A very positive anti-knife and gun crime project, run in conjunction with local primary schools, reinforces the departmental focus on ensuring a safe learning environment.
50. The guidance and support of students are good. To ensure that students enrol on the most appropriate course, they participate in an audition or demonstrate their skills through recordings. Students are well supported and staff give freely of their time in running extra-curricula activities.

#### Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are good. The self-assessment report is robust and accurate and within the department there is a clear focus on improvement. The promotion of equality and diversity is excellent and the department has a strong ethos of dignity and respect. Through their performances, students demonstrate that they can deal sensitively with issues such as alcohol and drug abuse. Standards of behaviour are not consistently maintained in a minority of lessons and poor punctuality at rehearsals disrupts others' learning. Both of these issues were cited as weaknesses at the last inspection.

## Literacy and numeracy

Good: Grade 2

### Context

52. Some 373 students undertake literacy and numeracy courses on full-time and part-time courses from entry level to level 2. Of these, 17 students aged 16-18 are enrolled on 'passport to skills for working life' courses. Over 150 students have literacy and numeracy support on mainstream courses, mainly in-class. In the current year, 420 students are enrolled on key skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2 and 640 are registered for functional skills. Approximately 60 students are studying for GCSE English and/or mathematics.

### Strengths

- very high success rates in discrete literacy and numeracy provision
- good progression rates
- good development of skills
- good teaching and learning
- very good enrichment
- good support for students with literacy and numeracy needs
- highly effective leadership.

### Areas for improvement

- insufficient planning to meet individual needs in a minority of lessons
- insufficiently precise target setting.

### Achievement and standards

53. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are very high for discrete literacy and numeracy provision and above national averages. Key skills success rates have improved significantly over the last three years but remained low in 2007/08 at 56%. Standards of work are good. Literacy students become confident readers and improve their written skills. They develop confidence in speaking and listening skills and make good presentations. Numeracy students enjoy using numbers and learn to estimate and calculate. Progression rates to further learning are good. Attendance is satisfactory but punctuality is a concern on a minority of courses.

### Quality of provision

54. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good on all courses and particularly effective on the passport programmes for students aged 16-18. Since the last inspection, key skills provision has been reorganised and is now well integrated into mainstream programmes. Lesson planning is good and teachers make effective use of a wide range of resources. However, in a few lessons, planning for individual needs is insufficient. For example, able students who complete tasks early are provided with more of the same work, rather than activities that extend their learning. Students use information learning technologies (ILT) with confidence. Assessment is thorough.

55. The range of provision meets the needs of students very effectively. The curriculum offer enables the most disadvantaged students, such as those on the passport course, to return to study and to gain qualifications. Courses are timetabled at convenient times to attract students who might otherwise not return to formal education. Enrichment activities for students aged 16-18 and adults on full-time programmes are very good. For example, level 2 students enjoyed a visit to the Globe Theatre, whilst another group met the Prime Minister to campaign for the 'Quick Read' project.
56. Information, advice and guidance and support for students are good. Pre-course information is clear and students benefit from helpful individual interviews to assess their needs. Students receive good advice as they prepare to progress to further learning.
57. For students on mainstream programmes, literacy and numeracy support is well organised, provided promptly and highly effective in helping them to succeed. Tutors provide effective individual support for students within and outside their lessons. Tutors know their students well and negotiate relevant and specific targets with them. However, in a significant minority of progress reviews, the targets are not sufficiently precise.

#### Leadership and management

58. Leadership and management are good. The head of school provides clear direction and a strong focus on raising standards. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Self-assessment and development planning to improve provision are rigorous. Arrangements to promote equality of opportunity are good. The school provides an inclusive environment for all students. Students demonstrate high levels of respect for their peers and their tutors.

## English for speakers of other languages

Outstanding: Grade 1

## Context

59. The college offers an extensive range of ESOL programmes, from pre-entry to level 2, across all main sites. A number of courses are offered as part of a franchise agreement in the community. The provision includes ESOL courses for discrete groups; vocational courses with ESOL linked to hairdressing, childcare, construction, health and social care, and information technology; business English and academic English; and ESOL support for students following courses across the college. At the time of the inspection there were 2,221 students on ESOL programmes. Around 90% of these are aged 19 or over.

## Strengths

- outstanding success rates on long and short courses
- very good progression
- outstanding teaching and learning
- highly effective assessment
- extremely broad range of enrichment activities
- excellent additional learning support
- outstanding leadership and management.

## Areas for improvement

None were identified.

## Achievement and standards

60. Success rates for long and short courses at all levels have improved and are outstanding. Progression on to higher education and employment is very good. Students successfully improve their language skills, enrol on vocational and academic courses and gain appropriate qualifications.
61. The standard of students' work is very good. The extent to which students develop their speaking and listening skills is considerably improved since the last inspection. Students are highly motivated. They develop a good range of skills that enable them to contribute to their community and to enhance their capacity for social and economic well-being.

## Quality of provision

62. The quality of provision and of teaching and learning is outstanding. Students benefit from well-planned lessons based around everyday life and work, as well as issues such as healthy and safe lifestyles and contemporary political debates. The use of technology has improved since the last inspection and students use technology confidently to improve their language learning. Teachers use excellent questioning techniques to enable students to further develop their speaking and listening skills.

63. Assessment is highly effective. Initial and diagnostic assessments are thorough and this ensures that students are placed on the most appropriate courses. The results of these assessments are used well to inform individual learning plans and these are regularly reviewed.
64. The needs and interests of students are met outstandingly. The range of programmes on offer is outstanding. Links with community groups are strong and new courses are offered in response to students' needs. For example, an ESOL class was arranged specifically for people with visual impairment. Enrichment activities are excellent.
65. Guidance and support are outstanding. Excellent additional learning support includes workshops and in-class support covering a wide range of identified needs, such as vocational specific language and adapted technology support.

#### Leadership and management

66. Leadership and management are outstanding. ESOL is delivered through two programme areas, both of which are managed very effectively. The college has successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Self-assessment is rigorous and inclusive. There is an extensive programme of continuous staff development which includes training for staff within the franchise provision. The promotion of equality and diversity is successfully embedded in all aspects of ESOL provision. Accommodation is good.

## Business, administration and law

Good: Grade 2

## Context

67. The college offers progression opportunities in business from level 1 through to level 7 courses run in conjunction with Kingston University. Specialist provision includes accounting, legal executive and access to higher education courses. In 2008/09 around 440 students enrolled on long courses. Just over half of these are adult learners. Nearly 1,200 students had enrolled on short courses to May 2008/09, including 927 on trade union courses. Courses are provided by one school concentrating on provision for 16-18-year-old students and another delivering adult and specialist courses. Trade union short courses are delivered on and off-site by a separate department.

## Strengths

- high overall success rates in 2007/08
- good outcomes on access courses
- good retention and progress in 2008/09
- much good learning
- innovative development of programmes
- particularly good pastoral and individual learning support
- good management and effective quality improvement
- good involvement of students in improving learning.

## Areas for improvement

- some poor retention rates in 2006 and 2007 for national certificate and diploma courses
- inconsistent use of targets to aid student learning.

## Achievement and standards

68. Achievement and standards are good. Overall success rates improved from an unsatisfactory level in 2005/06 to 86% in 2007/08. Outcomes for access courses, including standards of work, success rates and entry into prestigious universities, are good. Many professional courses, including accountancy and trade union courses, have high success rates. However, the retention rates for the national diploma course in 2006/07 and the certificate course in 2007/08 were unsatisfactory.
69. The retention rates and progress of current students are good; initial learner achievement is matching or exceeding the previous year. Overall progression is satisfactory and very good in areas such as accounting and business courses for young students. Standards of work and assessment are satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

70. Quality of provision and teaching and learning are good. Enthusiastic, supportive and well-organised teachers have infected their students with a desire to succeed. Good teaching is typified by well-structured lessons with a variety of resources and methods. Motivated students productively work independently, or supporting each other. Standards of teaching on trade union and professional courses are generally better than other areas, with good resources and imaginative exercises. Technology is used effectively by staff and students. Several systems of using targets to help students recognise and record their learning goals are used inconsistently and this confuses some students.
71. The needs and interests of students are met well. Programmes meet their needs well. Trade union courses have been well tailored to meet the requirements of a growing number of unions. Competently organised work experience is a positive aspect of several courses and good use is made of specialist employability modules, entrepreneurial competitions and relevant visiting speakers.
72. Guidance and support are good. Full-time students have regular, helpful individual tutorials, with very good involvement of parents and guardians where appropriate. College support services, and supportive tutors, are widely used and appreciated by students. Additional learning support is satisfactory and in some cases good.

## Leadership and management

73. Leadership and management are good. Staff have very clear and accepted responsibilities for improving learning. The self-assessment report accurately evaluates the provision, although too much weight is given to improvements that have just taken place. Staff development is good and teachers have a sound understanding of safeguarding principles. A student course representative system is very effective in improving provision leading to changes; for example, in the timetabling of assignments. Resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is good. Students' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory.



## 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        | 977                | 64           | 69            | -5   | 3340               | 68           | 65            | 3    |
|                    | 06/07        | 879                | 72           | 74            | -2   | 2976               | 76           | 70            | 6    |
|                    | 07/08*       | 788                | 77           | N/A           |      | 2006               | 90           | N/A           |      |
| GNVQs/ AVCEs       | 05/06        | 63                 | 52           | 73            | -21  | 8                  | 75           | ...           | ...  |
|                    | 06/07        | ...                | ...          | ...           | ...  | ...                | ...          | ...           | ...  |
|                    | 07/08*       | ...                | ...          | N/A           | ...  | ...                | ...          | N/A           | ...  |
| NVQs               | 05/06        | 66                 | 53           | 72            | -19  | 8                  | 63           | 74            | -11  |
|                    | 06/07        | 48                 | 79           | 75            | 4    | 46                 | 72           | 75            | -3   |
|                    | 07/08*       | 108                | 78           | N/A           |      | 26                 | 77           | N/A           |      |
| Other              | 05/06        | 848                | 66           | 69            | -3   | 3324               | 68           | 65            | 3    |
|                    | 06/07        | 831                | 72           | 74            | -2   | 2930               | 76           | 70            | 6    |
|                    | 07/08*       | 680                | 77           | N/A           |      | 1980               | 90           | N/A           |      |

\* 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        | 663                | 62           | 66            | -4   | 1344               | 67           | 66            | 1    |
|                    | 06/07        | 740                | 68           | 70            | -2   | 1510               | 61           | 69            | -8   |
|                    | 07/08*       | 458                | 71           | N/A           |      | 1128               | 71           | N/A           |      |
| GCSEs              | 05/06        | 43                 | 60           | 68            | -8   | 75                 | 65           | 67            | -2   |
|                    | 06/07        | 35                 | 40           | 71            | -31  | 76                 | 58           | 70            | -12  |
|                    | 07/08*       | 23                 | 83           | N/A           |      | 49                 | 80           | N/A           |      |
| GNVQs/ AVCEs       | 05/06        | 69                 | 58           | 69            | -11  | 4                  | 50           | 68            | -18  |
|                    | 06/07        | ...                | ...          | ...           | ...  | ...                | ...          | ...           | ...  |
|                    | 07/08*       | ...                | ...          | N/A           | ...  | ...                | ...          | N/A           | ...  |
| NVQs               | 05/06        | 77                 | 57           | 65            | -8   | 159                | 64           | 68            | -4   |
|                    | 06/07        | 54                 | 54           | 68            | -14  | 229                | 74           | 69            | 5    |
|                    | 07/08*       | 62                 | 69           | N/A           |      | 412                | 74           | N/A           |      |
| Other              | 05/06        | 474                | 63           | 66            | -3   | 1106               | 68           | 65            | 3    |
|                    | 06/07        | 651                | 71           | 70            | 1    | 1205               | 59           | 69            | -10  |
|                    | 07/08*       | 371                | 70           | N/A           |      | 666                | 68           | N/A           |      |

\* 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        | 236                | 59           | 71            | -12  | 611                | 77           | 64            | 13   |
|                    | 06/07        | 398                | 59           | 73            | -14  | 711                | 73           | 68            | 5    |
|                    | 07/08        | 344                | 70           | N/A           |      | 687                | 77           | N/A           |      |
| A/A2 Levels        | 05/06        | 12                 | 83           | 87            | -4   | 24                 | 83           | 72            | 11   |
|                    | 06/07        | 6                  | 83           | 87            | -4   | 21                 | 90           | 76            | 14   |
|                    | 07/08        | 2                  | 100          | N/A           |      | 1                  | 100          | N/A           |      |
| AS Levels          | 05/06        | 4                  | 50           | 67            | -17  | 31                 | 81           | 55            | 26   |
|                    | 06/07        | 6                  | 83           | 69            | 14   | 18                 | 94           | 59            | 35   |
|                    | 07/08        | ...                | ...          | N/A           |      | ...                | ...          | N/A           |      |
| GNVQs/ AVCEs       | 05/06        | 70                 | 60           | 66            | -6   | 41                 | 85           | 57            | 28   |
|                    | 06/07        | ...                | ...          | ...           | ...  | ...                | ...          | ...           | ...  |
|                    | 07/08        | ...                | ...          | N/A           | ...  | ...                | ...          | N/A           | ...  |
| NVQs               | 05/06        | 2                  | 100          | 71            | 29   | 77                 | 58           | 63            | -5   |
|                    | 06/07        | 14                 | 50           | 74            | -24  | 153                | 79           | 69            | 10   |
|                    | 07/08        | 19                 | 84           | N/A           |      | 196                | 87           | N/A           |      |
| Other              | 05/06        | 148                | 56           | 65            | -9   | 438                | 79           | 64            | 15   |
|                    | 06/07        | 372                | 59           | 70            | -11  | 519                | 70           | 69            | 1    |
|                    | 07/08        | 323                | 69           | N/A           |      | 490                | 72           | N/A           |      |

\* college data

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the provider/college, 2006 to 2008

| Programme                | End Year | Success rate | No. of learners* | Provider/college NVQ rate** | National NVQ rate** | Provider/college framework rate** | National framework rate** |
|--------------------------|----------|--------------|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Advanced Apprenticeships | 05/06    | overall      | 11               | 27                          | 52                  | 0                                 | 43                        |
|                          |          | Timely       | 12               | 25                          | 34                  | 0                                 | 27                        |
|                          | 06/07    | overall      | 5                | 40                          | 63                  | 67                                | 56                        |
|                          |          | timely       | 4                | 25                          | 43                  | 33                                | 38                        |
|                          | 07/08    | overall      | 25               | 44                          | 68                  | 67                                | 63                        |
|                          |          | timely       | 25               | 20                          | 48                  | 15                                | 44                        |
| Apprenticeships          | 05/06    | overall      | 26               | 35                          | 57                  | 47                                | 51                        |
|                          |          | timely       | 26               | 19                          | 37                  | 15                                | 33                        |
|                          | 06/07    | overall      | 32               | 31                          | 64                  | 39                                | 60                        |
|                          |          | timely       | 31               | 29                          | 47                  | 25                                | 44                        |
|                          | 07/08    | Overall      | 21               | 24                          | 67                  | 50                                | 64                        |
|                          |          | timely       | 21               | 24                          | 52                  | 22                                | 50                        |

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record (ILR)

Table 5

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider/college, 2007 to 2009.

| Programme         | End Year      | Success rate | No. of learners* | college/provider NVQ rate** |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Train to Gain NVQ | 2006/07       | overall      | ...              | ...                         |
|                   |               | timely       | ...              | ...                         |
|                   | 2007/08       | overall      | 57               | 58                          |
|                   |               | timely       | n/a              | n/a                         |
|                   | 2008/09 (W09) | overall      | 443              | 70                          |
|                   |               | timely       | 661              | 30                          |

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

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection