

Tameside College

Inspection report

Provider reference 130516

Published date July 2009

Audience	Post-sixteen
Published date	July 2009
Provider reference	130516

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

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

The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

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

Scope of the inspection

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

Description of the provider

1. Tameside College is a large general further education (GFE) college, formed in 1998 as a result of a merger between Tameside College of Technology and Hyde Clarendon Sixth Form College. It is situated eight miles east of Manchester City Centre in the borough of Tameside. The borough of Tameside has a population of around 213,000 and consists of nine towns. Unemployment in Tameside is higher than the national average. Tameside residents have some of the lowest rates of pay in the Greater Manchester sub-region. Achievement of five or more grades A* to C, including English and mathematics is 41.8%, lower than the national average of 47.6%.
2. The college offers programmes from entry level to degree level. It also offers work-based learning apprenticeship programmes, Train to Gain (T2G) provision and provision for students aged 14 to 16. The college's mission is to 'improve employability and economic prosperity'. In 2008/09, 3,220 full-time students and 4,473 part-time students enrolled at the college. Apprenticeship programmes had 591 enrolments and T2G programmes had 1,744 enrolments. Of these, 3,173 were aged 16 to 18 and 6,835 were aged 19 and over. Over 900 Years 10 and 11 pupils from 18 local schools attend the college for various vocational courses and additional placements. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups, at 12%, is higher than the local population.

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>Outstanding: grade 1</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

3. Tameside College is a good and improving college with outstanding features. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on long courses at all levels and for all ages have increased consistently for the last three years and are high. Success rates for students aged 14 to 16 and for learners on apprenticeships and T2G programmes are high. Key skills success rates have improved considerably since the last inspection to well above the low national average and are now good. Progression between levels of provision is good. Retention of students aged 16 to 18 on courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 and for adults on courses at level 3 have been below the national rate for the last three years.
4. The college has successfully focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning which are good. Observations of teaching and learning are rigorous and accurate. Links between the outcomes of observations of teaching and learning, appraisal and continuing professional development are good. The college has identified the need to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, especially at level 3. The management and embedding of key skills and Skills for Life across the curriculum are outstanding. Students are set challenging targets and their progress is effectively monitored.
5. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. Students previously disengaged from learning succeed at the college. A high proportion of learners are from minority ethnic groups or are classed as disadvantaged. Support for learners is outstanding. A wide range of effective support initiatives helps learners progress and improves their confidence and independence. The promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding through all aspects of college life, particularly in the classroom. An outstanding range of programmes meets the needs and interests of learners very well and provides good opportunities for progression. Governors and a wide range of staff from across the college have developed excellent links with the community and industry. Pathways for students with learning difficulties and disabilities are outstanding. Students aged 14 to 16 are offered an outstanding range of provision.
6. Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers set a clear strategic direction for the college. Governance is excellent. Governors have diverse backgrounds and a broad range of appropriate skills to support the college. Financial management is strong and value for money is good.
7. Information learning technology (ILT) is managed exceptionally well and benefits staff and students. Quality assurance and improvement systems are clearly defined and are effectively improving standards. However, some reporting at senior management level is insufficiently detailed and accurate. Self-assessment is insufficiently self-critical, particularly at curriculum level.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

8. The college's capacity to improve is good. It sets itself challenging targets which it generally meets. Success rates have improved steadily since the last inspection and remain high. Significant improvements in the quality of provision have been made. Quality improvement arrangements are generally effective. Staff development and performance management are good. Management data are accurate and reliable.
9. Retention rates have been below the national rates since the last inspection, although there is a four year improving trend. While there have been improvements these have been slow and given insufficient strategic importance by senior managers. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently critical.

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

10. Good progress has been made in dealing with areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Most of the strengths have been maintained or improved. Some areas for improvement are now strengths. For example, the management of key skills and Skills for Life and the use of ILT in the curriculum. However, retention remains an area for improvement.

Key strengths

- high success rates on long courses
- outstanding governance
- excellent arrangements to promote equality and diversity
- excellent management and embedding of key skills and Skills for Life
- outstanding social and educational inclusion
- outstanding support
- outstanding partnerships with employers and the community.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the organisational focus on improving retention rates
- improving the proportion of good or better teaching particularly on level 3 courses
- insufficiently robust and critical self-assessment.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

11. Achievement and standards are good, which agrees with the college's self-assessment. Success rates on long courses have improved consistently at all levels and are high. For students aged 16 to 18 the rates have improved at all levels from at or below the national rate, in the previous three years, to above the predicted national rate in 2007/08. On courses for adults, success rates at all levels are above the 2007/08 projected national rate. For learners aged 14 to 16 success rates and progression to further study are high. Overall success rates on apprenticeship and T2G programmes are also high. Key skills success rates have improved to well above the low national average.
12. Retention has not improved sufficiently. The overall retention rate for long courses, although increasing, has been below the national rate for the last two years. For students aged 16 to 18, rates at all levels were below the national rate in 2005/06 and 2006/07 and although improved in 2007/08, are only in line with the previous year's national rate. For adults on programmes at levels 1 and 2 retention is just above the national average. However, at level 3 the rate continues to be below the national rate.
13. Pass rates are high and at General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level approximately half of all students achieve at a higher level than predicated by their GCSE results.
14. There are no discernable differences in success and retention rates between males and females, learners from black and minority ethnic groups and their white counterparts, or learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
15. Attendance rates have improved consistently over the last three years and are now good. Standards of learners' work are good. Students demonstrate excellence in competitions and exhibitions, particularly bakery and paint spray.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade2

16. The quality of the provision is good. This did not concur with the college's self-assessment of outstanding. Inspectors agree with the college that teaching and learning are good. A comprehensive and robust lesson observation scheme is carried out by a team of trained observers. Links between the outcomes of lesson observations and individual performance management are effective in improving quality. Good practice is shared through peer observations and by subject learning coaches. Learners' views are canvassed routinely and acted upon; most indicate high levels of satisfaction with teaching.
17. Teachers plan most lessons well to meet individual learners' needs. They use a good range of learning resources and activities, including ILT and excellent resources on the virtual learning environment (VLE), to keep learners interested and involved. Teachers use questioning skilfully to check learners'

- understanding. In the satisfactory lessons, especially at level 3, teaching is insufficiently challenging and learners do not always have the opportunity to progress at a faster rate.
18. The management of key skills is outstanding. Key skills are integrated into curriculum areas, planned well and taught very effectively.
 19. Target setting and monitoring of learners' progress is good. Learners aged 16 to 18 are set challenging targets at the beginning of their courses which are recorded in an electronic individual learning plan. Progress towards meeting their targets is reviewed frequently through effective one-to-one meetings.
 20. Inspectors agree with self-assessment that the range of programmes and activities to meet the needs of learners is outstanding. The college offers a wide variety of programmes from pre-entry to higher level. A good proportion of students progress internally. Excellent partnerships and collaboration with employers provide sponsorship, placement opportunities and very successful initiatives that lead to previously workless local people achieving jobs. Innovative projects engage those not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those at risk of joining this group. The range of provision for students aged 14 to 16 is also outstanding. An extensive enrichment programme raises learners' aspirations. A good enterprise initiative is developing staff and learners' entrepreneurial skills.
 21. Inspectors agree with the college's self-assessment that guidance and support are outstanding. Information, advice and guidance are very effective in supporting learners at key points. Extensive initial assessment identifies their learning support needs and the most appropriate programme to enable them to succeed. Induction prepares students well for their programmes.
 22. Additional learning support is outstanding. A wide range of effective initiatives, including individual support in classroom sessions, helps learners achieve their learning goals and improves their confidence and independence. Retention rates of learners receiving support are high. Learners value the support they receive. Support for learners with moderate to severe learning difficulties is outstanding. Very effective links with partner schools, parents and external agencies support effective transition planning.
 23. The tutorial programme is particularly well planned and promotes learners' management and ownership of their own learning. For example, they are able to use the VLE to monitor their progress against their learning targets and attendance. Every Child Matters themes are particularly well embedded in tutorial provision. Learners feel safe in the college. Health and well-being are particularly well promoted.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: grade 1

24. Leadership and management are good. Self-assessment identified this area as outstanding. The college has responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. However, retention rates at level 3, identified as a key area for improvement at the last inspection, remains a key area for improvement.
25. Governance is excellent. Governors, leaders and managers set a clear strategic direction for the college that is communicated effectively to staff. Governors and staff throughout the college have established excellent links with the community and industry. Governors have diverse backgrounds and a broad range of appropriate skills to address the challenges facing the college. They demonstrate considerable commitment to the college. They are well trained and carefully scrutinise all aspects of the college's performance. Capable independent clerking arrangements support the board very well. Financial management is strong and value for money is good.
26. Quality assurance and improvement systems are clearly defined and understood by staff and effectively promote improvement. Systems, such as for observation of teaching and learning, are regularly reviewed and continuously improving. Performance management is comprehensive. Innovative use of computer technology and software development enhances the arrangements. Students, staff and managers benefit from useful links between management information and learning technology. Management data are generally accurate and accessible.
27. Self-assessment is insufficiently self-critical, particularly at curriculum level. In many areas the report does not present sufficient evidence for the grades awarded. Too much emphasis is placed on improvements as strengths. For example, many curriculum managers judge achievement and standards to be outstanding without evidence of sustained high success rates. The slow pace of improvement in retention is not identified as an area for improvement and strategies to address this issue are not clearly articulated.
28. Some reporting at senior management level lacks detail and is inaccurate. Errors and omissions in some reports have resulted in a lack of clarity in briefings for governors and the strategic management group.
29. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet the requirements of the Children Act 2004 but risk assessment and monitoring of support staff awaiting the outcomes of vetting checks are insufficiently thorough.
30. Equality of opportunity is outstanding, as self-assessment identified. The equal opportunities steering group is appropriately constituted, meets regularly and has had significant influence on ensuring that college strategies and procedures meet the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. External links with the community are used very effectively to benefit learners. The college makes a valuable contribution in its work with mental health organisations, minority and other community groups ably supported by governors who specialise in the field. Promotion of equality

and diversity is excellent in all aspects of college life, particularly in the classroom where teachers make effective use of a database of good practice and resources for equal opportunities.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	05/06	1637	68	69	-1	1359	63	65	-2
	06/07	1916	71	74	-3	1416	74	70	4
	07/08*	2022	81	N/A		1268	79	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	39	64	73	-9	1	100		
	06/07								
	07/08*			N/A				N/A	
NVQs	05/06	140	81	72	9	63	67	74	-7
	06/07	157	77	75	2	83	72	75	-3
	07/08*	179	83	N/A		88	83	N/A	
Other	05/06	1458	67	69	-2	1295	63	65	-2
	06/07	1759	71	74	-3	1333	74	70	4
	07/08*	1840	81	N/A		1180	79	N/A	

* college data

Table 2

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	05/06	1269	66	66	0	1768	67	66	1
	06/07	1357	68	70	-2	1566	73	69	4
	07/08*	1282	76	N/A		1370	78	N/A	
GCSEs	05/06	224	63	68	-5	92	66	67	-1
	06/07	222	73	71	2	105	72	70	2
	07/08*	236	73	N/A		96	75	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	40	70	69	1	3	33	68	-35
	06/07	8	88	73	15				
	07/08*	12	100	N/A		4	75	N/A	
NVQs	05/06	210	78	65	13	622	68	68	0
	06/07	208	65	68	-3	460	75	69	6
	07/08*	199	76	N/A		430	77	N/A	
Other	05/06	795	64	66	-2	1051	67	65	2
	06/07	919	67	70	-3	1001	72	69	3
	07/08*	835	76	N/A		841	79	N/A	

* college data

Table 3

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	05/06	1478	68	71	-3	1241	62	64	-2
	06/07	1197	74	73	-1	1028	69	68	1
	07/08*	1050	78	N/A		980	72	N/A	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	304	90	87	3	26	65	72	-7
	06/07	297	90	87	3	22	95	76	19
	07/08*	204	95	N/A		23	83	N/A	
AS Levels	05/06	700	66	67	-1	17	65	55	10
	06/07	461	71	69	2	22	59	59	0
	07/08*	312	81	N/A		7	43	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	110	48	66	18	8	75	57	18
	06/07								
	07/08*			N/A				N/A	
NVQs	05/06	64	73	71	2	306	66	63	3
	06/07	46	72	74	-2	255	73	69	4
	07/08*	46	72	N/A		278	71	N/A	
Other	05/06	300	58	65	-7	884	61	64	-3
	06/07	393	64	70	-6	729	68	69	-1
	07/08*	487	69	N/A		672	72	N/A	

* college data