

Trafford College

Inspection report

Provider reference 130519
Published date June 2009

Audience Post-sixteen
Published date June 2009
Provider reference 130519

Contents

Background information	3
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement	6
Key strengths and areas for improvement	7
Main findings	8

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. Trafford College was established in September 2007 by the merger of the former North and South Trafford Colleges. It is a medium-sized general further education (GFE) college located over three main sites, one at Altrincham and two in Stretford. The college has an additional site in Manchester's city centre that offers music technology courses. About 90% of Trafford is White British with the next significant minority ethnic groups being Asian/Asian British and Black/Black British. Although Trafford as a whole is relatively prosperous, there are areas of deprivation. The proportion of Trafford's 16 year-olds who achieve five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the national average. However, the rate for the high schools from which the college draws most of its students is 44%. Trafford has a selective educational system with approximately 40% of 11 year-olds joining one of the local grammar schools and the majority of these being retained in the sixth form. The proportion of school leavers who stay on in full-time education or take up employment with a training option is significantly higher than the rest of Greater Manchester. However, there is a persistent number of young people not in employment, education and training (NEET); the proportion was 7.2% in June 2008.
2. In the 2008/09 academic year the college has 3,542 full-time students and 4,925 part-time students on further education (FE) courses. The majority of full-time students are aged 16 to 18 and the majority of part-time students are adults. In addition the college runs adult and community learning courses for 2,000 learners; the majority of this provision was subcontracted to the college from Trafford Council in 2008. There are 215 trainees on apprenticeship programmes and 1,200 on Train to Gain provision. Over 200 Year 10 and 11 pupils attend the college to pursue vocational options. The total enrolment count is split almost evenly by gender and 20% of students are from minority ethnic groups. The college offers a wide portfolio of courses from entry level to higher education (HE) and professional courses across a broad range of curriculum areas. Its vision is 'inspiring minds and connecting people'.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

3. Overall effectiveness is outstanding. The merged college is building successfully on the strengths of the two former institutions and taking effective action to address areas for improvement. Students' achievement is good overall. Long course success rates are high for students aged 16 to 18 on level 1 courses and for adults on courses at levels 2 and 3. Other success rates were in line with the national average in 2007/08 and many of these courses show further improvement in retention in 2008/09. The success rate on Train to Gain provision is high. For the small apprentice provision, success rates have been low, although there is evidence of improvement this year.
4. The quality of provision is outstanding overall; it is good in Train to Gain and adult and community learning provision and satisfactory in courses for apprentices. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students and its approach to social and educational inclusion are outstanding. Excellent links have been established with a wide range of organisations enabling the college to engage hard-to-reach groups. There is an extensive range of courses and progression routes and training is highly responsive to the needs of employers. Teaching and learning and support for students are outstanding. In the majority of lessons teachers plan very effectively to meet the needs of different students. There is a strong theme running through lessons of helping students to develop skills for employability. Teaching and learning are good within work-based learning programmes and satisfactory in adult and community learning. Students receive very effective support from teachers and the wider support services. There is prompt identification of additional support needs and excellent provision is put in place quickly on the majority of programmes. Literacy and numeracy support is underdeveloped in Train to Gain provision.
5. Leadership and management are outstanding. The management of change resulting from the merger was carried out very skilfully. Strategic direction is strong, performance management is exceptionally rigorous and quality improvement processes demonstrate impact. The overwhelming majority of students are very positive about the college. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The management of work-based learning has been reorganised this year and there is evidence this is beginning to have a beneficial impact.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

6. The college has an outstanding approach to securing improvements. Governors scrutinise thoroughly the performance of the college and provide rigorous challenge to senior managers. An excellent training programme supports managers to accept responsibility and make decisions. Staff at all levels are encouraged to make continuous improvements. Self-assessment is well

embedded and effective at setting action plans that lead to improvements. The self-assessment report and development plan is accurate and reflects a self-critical, realistic, yet ambitious college; inspectors agreed with the majority of its judgements. The college's quality assurance processes include highly effective observations of teaching and learning. Students have continued to achieve well during a period of significant change brought about by the merger. Strategies for developing the curriculum and the estate are realistic and well researched. Plans are in place to improve aspects of the management of work-based learning and adult and community learning provision.

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

7. The effectiveness of steps taken by the college to secure improvements is outstanding. This is the first inspection of the newly formed college. The 2007/08 self-assessment report provided the college with a clear set of objectives and an action plan to secure improvements, which have been implemented very successfully. Strengths identified at previous inspections have been maintained and in some areas developed further; for example, performance management is now excellent. Success rates continue to improve despite extensive changes to the college curriculum and structures. The majority of weaknesses identified in the inspections of the two constituent colleges have been addressed successfully. Success rates on the small work-based learning provision have not made sufficient improvement.

Key strengths

- high success rates at level 1 for students aged 16 to 18 and at levels 2 and 3 for adults
- very good provision and outcomes for students aged 14 to 16
- successful development of students' employability skills
- outstanding teaching and learning
- excellent response to employer needs
- outstanding social and educational inclusion
- excellent student support
- outstanding strategic leadership and management of change
- strong external partnerships
- excellent performance management
- outstanding governance.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates in work-based learning
- insufficient progress made by General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level students
- underdeveloped strategic and operational management of adult and community learning.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

*Learners aged 14 to 16
Work-based learning*

*Outstanding: grade 1
Satisfactory: grade 3*

8. Achievement and standards are good. In the three years to 2008 the long course success rate has risen in line with increases in the national average. Overall adult success rates are above the national average and the rate for students aged 16 to 18 is at the average, though it is particularly strong at level 1. Overall success rates improved in 2007/08 and in-year retention for 2008/09 demonstrates further improvement.
9. The success rates on courses at level 1 for students aged 16 to 18 and at levels 2 and 3 for adults were well above average in 2007/08. This represents a marked improvement on the previous year for these level 1 and level 2 courses. Success rates at levels 2 and 3 for students aged 16 to 18 and at level 1 for adults were similar to the national averages in 2007/08. Success rates are at or above the national average in most sector subject areas.
10. Success rates for male and female students were similar in 2007/08 as were those for white and most non-white students. The success rate for Afro-Caribbean students was lower than that for the college as a whole. The retention rate for these students is much improved in 2008/09 and is in line with the college average.
11. Success rates for national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and on national certificate courses were high in 2007/08. The success rate for GCE A level learners aged 16 to 18 is high but the grades they achieve are lower, on average, than estimations based on their incoming attainment.
12. Short course success rates are good. The success rate on the Train to Gain provision is high. Success rates for the small number of apprentices in the college are low, although there are signs of improvement in the current year. The success rate on the provision for Key Stage 4 school pupils is high. Attendance on these courses is very good, as is progression into employment or FE.
13. Attendance, behaviour of students and the standard of their work are good. Key skills success rates are above average at level 2 and satisfactory at level 1. Students develop very good vocational and employability skills. Adult and community learners gain self-confidence and self-esteem. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop good employability and independent living skills. Students taking part in skills competitions are very successful. They produce work of a high standard and often gain external

awards for their achievements; for example, the City & Guilds medal for excellence was awarded recently to a student on a beauty therapy course.

14. The college, in its self-assessment report, judged student achievement to be outstanding based on a comparison of its success rates for 2008 with the national rates for 2006/07. However, discussion during the inspection showed the college does have a good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement within students' achievement.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

15. Inspectors agree with the college self-assessment that the quality of provision is outstanding overall. It is good in adult and community learning and on Train to Gain programmes and satisfactory on the relatively small apprenticeship programme.
16. Teaching and learning are outstanding in the majority of the college's provision. Lessons are extremely well planned to meet the needs of students. Teachers are skilled at choosing resources and teaching strategies that help students to understand the work and enjoy their lessons. This includes imaginative use of information technology (IT) to promote learning. Work is well linked to assessment and examination criteria. There is a strong emphasis on involving students in their own learning, helping them to think for themselves and develop their confidence. Students respond well to the high expectations staff set in relation to behaviour and attitudes to learning. There is an excellent focus on the development of work-related skills in lessons and high quality specialist resources support teaching and learning in vocational areas and on work-based learning programmes. A minority of lessons are less well planned and students make limited progress. Teaching and learning are good within work-based learning and on Train to Gain programmes and satisfactory within adult and community learning.
17. The college system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is highly effective. There was a very close match between judgements inspectors made about lessons and the college's own evaluation. In the few curriculum areas where teaching and learning have not been at a sufficiently high standard, the strategies in place to address this are effective. The college has a good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement within the community learning contract it acquired this year. There is excellent training and support to update staff skills and particularly good support for new teachers to help them develop their teaching and learning strategies.
18. Additional learning support is very good on the majority of programmes. Systems to identify students who need help with literacy or numeracy are very effective and good quality support is put in place early in a student's programme. Take up of support is high and students receiving additional support make very good progress. The numbers of students aged 16 to 18 requiring language support are increasing and plans are in place to extend this support. Literacy and numeracy support are underdeveloped in Train to Gain provision.

19. Assessment of students' work is good. Students speak positively about the feedback they receive to help them improve their work. Internal verification systems are strong and working very effectively in vocational areas. The college recognises the need to strengthen this further in the GCE A level provision.
20. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students is outstanding. It offers a very wide and responsive range of provision. All departments have provision at entry and level 1 and comprehensive progression opportunities at levels 2 and 3. There is a growing range of foundation degrees, providing progression routes for students completing level 3 courses. The college has a satisfactory range of apprenticeships and a very wide range of employer responsive programmes including Train to Gain. Training is highly responsive to the needs of employers and is often bespoke to company needs. Work with employers has grown exponentially; the college works with a good number of 'blue chip' companies and a wide range of small to medium enterprises. Students appreciate the opportunities this brings; for example, in hospitality and hairdressing they benefit from master classes with celebrity personalities. A number of industrial sponsors have donated industry standard resources.
21. Curriculum enrichment is very good. An excellent range of relevant options enhances and adds variety and enjoyment to students' learning. There have been improvements to the cross-college enrichment programme but the impact of this is not monitored sufficiently.
22. The college makes an excellent contribution to the area's 14 to 19 provision. An increasing number of Key Stage 4 pupils take a wide range of vocational qualifications. Retention, success and progression rates are high. Very good joint development work has enabled the college to deliver two of the new diplomas and a further five will start next year.
23. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. Excellent links have been established with a wide range of organisations enabling the college to engage hard-to-reach groups. These include a successful programme to re-engage disaffected school pupils and work with teenage mothers to help them back into learning. There is good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Innovative approaches to community learning effectively engage those who are socially excluded. Non-traditional learners on Train to Gain effectively access training and qualifications. The college makes an excellent contribution to local regeneration and social cohesion.
24. Support for students is outstanding. Information, advice and guidance are extremely effective and enable prospective students to make informed choices. Excellent liaison with schools and Connexions ensure the college has an accurate picture of students' likely support needs prior to starting college. The numbers of early leavers and transfers have declined, confirming the effectiveness of these processes. Students benefit from very good careers education and guidance and support with progression options throughout their time at college.

25. Students appreciate the high level of support they receive during their course. Staff identify quickly those at risk of leaving early or not completing work. They provide intensive support to help these students stay in learning and achieve. A wide range of resources and adaptive technology enable students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to overcome barriers to learning. There is excellent promotion of the wide range of support services available. This includes practical help such as financial support and childcare facilities within college and in the community.
26. One-to-one tutorials are good and provide very effective support for students. There is a clear tutorial entitlement for full-time and part-time students. Progress reviews are generally thorough, although targets in a few review records are insufficiently specific and measurable. Schemes of work for group tutorials are common across the college but there is insufficient monitoring of the quality of delivery in group tutorials.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: grade 1

27. Inspectors agree with the college self-assessment that leadership and management are outstanding. The merger of two colleges in September 2007 has been highly successful. Overall student success rates have continued to improve and are above the national average. Staff value the meetings and events held prior to the merger which proved very effective in forming an identity for the new college and ensuring a positive view from stakeholders. The governors, principal and senior managers provide outstanding strategic leadership which takes account of national and regional priorities. Senior management attention to curriculum and quality improvement is a key driver in the college's success. Outstanding partnerships with key strategic partners and employers are well established and effective.
28. The promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding. The college is highly inclusive in terms of recruitment and the range of provision it offers. Its response to equality of opportunity legislation is good. Diversity, gender, disability and race responsibilities are well understood by staff and governors. The college has appointed an equality and diversity adviser to ensure a clear focus on these areas. Monitoring of the performance of different groups of learners is excellent and effective action is taken where necessary. Vulnerable students aged 14 to 19 on foundation level programmes make very good progress. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is more than twice the borough population. The governing body has successfully taken actions to increase the number of governors from minority ethnic heritage. Equality and diversity are well promoted in the curriculum. The college has put in place effective steps to encourage women into engineering and other non-traditional vocational areas. Child protection procedures and those for vulnerable adults are well documented and all staff and governors receive appropriate training.

29. Quality improvement arrangements are highly effective at raising standards. Systems are well embedded and understood by staff. The lesson observation scheme is extensive and is used well in judging the quality of curriculum areas. It has been used effectively to raise the standards of teaching and learning. The performance management of curriculum areas is outstanding. Regular reviews are conducted by the principal and senior staff. Appraisal arrangements are thorough. The self-assessment process is inclusive and thorough. Judgements are accurate and appropriately self-critical.
30. Management of most curriculum areas is good or better. Aspects of managing the relatively new Train to Gain and adult and community learning contracts are not so well embedded, including the need to use management information more effectively for these programmes. A new business unit has been introduced this year to manage Train to Gain and apprentice work and this is beginning to have a positive impact.
31. Governance arrangements are outstanding. Governors understand their roles clearly and are instrumental in setting the educational character of the college. Governors have a breadth of specialist knowledge and experience that is used well to benefit the college. Governor links with curriculum or support areas enable them to monitor rigorously the effectiveness of provision. Governor training is very good. The board is well informed about college developments, including health and safety and equality and diversity issues. It receives regular updates on all aspects of provision but in a few cases these are not summarised in annual reports.
32. Resources are well managed. Budgets are delegated and effective actions have been taken to secure efficiencies in purchasing and expenditure. Finances are managed well. Value for money is good. Students benefit from good access to high quality IT and specialist resources.

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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	05/06	1175	72	69	3	1777	69	65	4
	06/07	1463	76	74	2	1432	74	70	4
	07/08	1607	83	N/A		1602	74	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	26	92	73	19	2	50	68	-18
	06/07	23	78	72	6	2	100	75	25
	07/08	0		N/A		0		N/A	
NVQs	05/06	102	79	72	7	50	72	74	-2
	06/07	137	77	75	2	42	81	75	6
	07/08	105	83	N/A		79	80	N/A	
Other	05/06	1047	71	69	2	1724	69	65	4
	06/07	1304	76	74	2	1391	74	70	4
	07/08	1502	83	N/A		1523	73	N/A	

Note: College rates for each of three years from 05/06 to 07/08 based on college data for merged college produced using proprietary software

Table 2

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	05/06	1343	70	66	4	2806	67	66	1
	06/07	1279	68	70	-2	1534	70	69	1
	07/08	1483	73	N/A		2072	78	N/A	
GCSEs	05/06	151	54	68	-14	218	62	67	-5
	06/07	326	67	71	-4	203	69	70	-1
	07/08	149	80	N/A		140	81	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	24	67	69	-2	0			
	06/07	32	59	73	-14	4	100	71	29
	07/08	13	69	N/A		1	100	N/A	
NVQs	05/06	285	70	65	5	493	72	68	4
	06/07	264	66	68	-2	571	73	69	4
	07/08	313	73	N/A		811	75	N/A	
Other	05/06	883	73	66	7	2091	67	65	2
	06/07	837	69	70	-1	813	67	69	-2
	07/08	1008	73	N/A		1121	79	N/A	

Note: College rates for each of three years from 05/06 to 07/08 based on college data for merged college produced using proprietary software

Table 3

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

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	05/06	1894	67	71	-4	1705	69	64	5
	06/07	1835	73	73		1632	76	68	8
	07/08*	2278	75	N/A		1734	75	N/A	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	277	77	87	-10	54	80	72	8
	06/07	237	89	87	2	54	83	76	7
	07/08*	214	92	N/A		44	89	N/A	
AS Levels	05/06	598	62	67	-5	151	51	55	-4
	06/07	479	67	69	-2	79	68	59	9
	07/08*	640	70	N/A		64	53	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	05/06	60	80	66	14	3	67	57	10
	06/07	0				0			
	07/08*	0		N/A		0		N/A	
NVQs	05/06	125	70	71	-1	447	70	63	7
	06/07	94	61	74	-13	409	80	69	11
	07/08*	134	74	N/A		586	76	N/A	
Other	05/06	834	66	65	1	1048	70	64	6
	06/07	1025	73	70	3	1090	74	69	5
	07/08*	1290	75	N/A		1043	76	N/A	

Note: College rates for each of three years from 05/06 to 07/08 based on college data for merged college produced using proprietary software

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**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	10	30	52	20	43
		timely	10	20	34	10	27
	06/07	overall	5	60	63	40	56
		timely	5	60	43	40	38
	07/08#	overall	15	67	68	47	63
		timely	15	60	48	47	44
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	52	52	57	38	51
		timely	54	48	37	35	33
	06/07	overall	38	74	64	66	60
		timely	36	72	47	64	45
	07/08#	overall	40	78	67	55	64
		timely	42	69	53	52	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)

When available and validated by the LSC

Table 5a

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

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	906	74
		timely	1018	60
	2007/08	overall	1055	79
		timely	1028	60
	2008/09 (8 months)	overall	687	84
		timely	1241	37

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

Table 5b

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain skills for life programmes managed by the college 2007 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider skills for life rate**
Train to Gain (skills for life)	2006/07	overall	1	100
		timely	1	33
	2007/08	overall	0	0
		timely	0	0
	2008/09 (8 months)	overall	2	0
		timely	0	0

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

** Skills for life qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.