

New College Telford

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: William Baidoe-Ansah HMI

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

Address: King Street
Wellington
Telford
Shropshire
TF1 1NY

Telephone number: 01952 278286

Information about the provider

New College is a sixth form college based on a single site in Wellington. Students attend the college mainly from the Telford and Wrekin council area. They also travel from Wolverhampton and the more rural areas of Shropshire and East Staffordshire. The college is funded by the Shropshire Learning and Skills Council. Within Telford and Wrekin, there are several areas of significant social and economic disadvantage. A little under half of students aged 16 to 18 receive an Educational Maintenance Allowance. In 2008 the proportion of school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics was 44.6% in Telford and Wrekin compared to the national average of 47.6%. In 2008/09, the college recruited 1,273 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and approximately 78 adults, most of whom join daytime classes. Most students study at advanced level. Three-quarters of adult students are female, as are about half of those aged 16 to 18. About 10% of the college's full-time students aged 16 to 18 are from minority ethnic backgrounds compared with about 6% in the local population.

The college has A- and AS-level provision in over 40 subjects as well as a range of vocational courses at intermediate and advanced levels. It also offers GCSE courses and adult literacy and numeracy courses at foundation level. It was last inspected in September 2006, when its overall effectiveness and capacity to improve were judged to be satisfactory. The college mission is "to provide equality of access to the best possible educational opportunities for those aged over 16 whether they are from Telford or further afield".

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2007/08
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	37 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	1,273 full-time learners 103 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	48 full-time learners 30 part-time learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	Grade
Science and mathematics	2
Arts, media and publishing	3

Overall effectiveness

The college's overall effectiveness is satisfactory as is its capacity to improve. It has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in improving weaknesses. Students achieve satisfactory outcomes and enjoy their learning. Results for AS-level courses are slightly below those of similar colleges whereas results for A-level courses are in line with them. Students generally make the progress expected of them. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, a minority of lessons fail to engage students fully and insufficient attention is paid to their individual learning needs. The college offers a good range of courses and students progress well both within and from the college. Strong partnerships exist with other local institutions. The college provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for students. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders, managers and staff share a strong commitment to an open access college that provides opportunities for all in a caring community. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college provides a safe learning environment.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates on long courses for students aged 16 to 18 rose steadily until 2007/08, but dipped slightly in 2008/09, to below the national average. AS-level success rates are below average and A-level success rates are in line with the average. Retention rates tend to be weaker than pass rates.
- Value-added data suggest that in the majority of the college's provision, most students achieve in line with expectations given their prior attainment. The proportion of students achieving high grades at both AS level and A level is very substantially below the sector average. There are no significant differences in the achievement of any group of students from the range of educational or ethnic backgrounds attending the college.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The college's observation of teaching and learning system is well established but it overstates the proportion of good or better teaching. The link between observation results and both staff appraisal and staff development are not sufficiently formalised. Initial assessment is comprehensive but does not sufficiently inform lesson planning. Learning resources are satisfactory.
- The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. The range of courses is wide. The college has established strong and productive partnerships with schools, universities and community groups. However, direct links with employers are insufficiently developed.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Students' needs are assessed early and support arranged promptly. Tutorial arrangements are inconsistent. The college has implemented several new systems but it is too early to evaluate their impact on student success.
- The principal, governors and staff are committed to the college's mission and ethos of providing an open access, inclusive college offering opportunities to all young people to continue their education. Curriculum management is good and the new organisational structure has strengthened curriculum line management but some issues of senior staff workload remain.
- Governors demonstrate a broad range of skills, a strong commitment to the college and a satisfactory oversight of the standards achieved by students. Not all governors have received up-to-date training in safeguarding and equality and diversity.
- Self-assessment is mostly accurate and linked well to improvement plans. Quality improvement intervention has been effective in most areas, including learning support, but does not secure consistent and sustainable improvements across the college.
- The promotion of safeguarding and equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college provides a safe and welcoming environment. However, the college has made slow progress introducing a single equality scheme and establishing the impact of various equality and diversity initiatives.

- Arrangements to listen to and respond to students are satisfactory. Nevertheless, students are not routinely involved in self-assessment and course review procedures.

What does New College, Telford need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of high grades achieved at A and AS level by providing greater challenge to more able students in lessons and assignments.
- Continue to improve the consistency and the quality of teaching and learning through a rigorously moderated teaching observation scheme, which links effectively to targeted staff development.
- Develop a more structured approach to group tutorials, ensuring consistent implementation across the college to reduce the variability of the students' tutorial experience.
- Improve the consistency of tutorials including the tutors' use of the detailed information on students' support needs to provide a more personalised approach to promoting achievement.
- Establish systematic, college-wide monitoring and evaluation procedures to secure consistent and sustainable improvements across the curriculum.
- Ensure that all governors receive appropriate training and updating in safeguarding and equality and diversity.
- Review critically the college's organisational structure in order to ensure that all aspects of provision are well-managed and increase the capacity of senior management.
- Ensure the further involvement of students and their representatives in review and self-assessment procedures so that their views are considered fully in all areas of the college's work.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the approachable and supportive staff
- the good location - calm, peaceful environment
- that the college values and listens to students
- feeling safe – staff take swift action on any instance of bullying
- the very good support for university applications
- the good academic and personal support
- that students are treated like adults
- the wide range of provision
- the helpful assessment and feedback
- the good resources and specialist equipment in music technology.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the group tutorials where there is a lack of focus and structure
- the poor quality and expensive food.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

The college has satisfactory capacity to improve. The college has made satisfactory progress in rectifying areas for improvement identified at the last inspection although issues remain with accommodation and ensuring students, particularly the most able, have sufficient challenge. Target setting is well established at course and college level but the decline in success rates in 2008/09 widened the gap between college and that for similar colleges. Whilst the quality of teaching and learning is graded over generously, self-assessment is mostly accurate and self-critical. The college has identified and improved key areas such as learning support but has not secured fully consistent and sustainable improvements across all provision.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

Success rates on long courses for students aged 16 to 18 rose steadily until 2007/08, but declined slightly in 2008/09 to slightly below the national average. AS-level success rates declined in 2008/09 and are now below the average. However, A-level success rates increased slightly in 2008/09 and are now in line with the average. Success rates for national awards, certificates and diplomas are substantially below average. Retention rates tend to be weaker than pass rates.

The proportion of students achieving high grades at both AS level and A level is very substantially below the sector average. However, high grades in vocational courses are in line with or better than the average. Overall, value-added data suggests that for the majority of the college's provision, most students achieve in line with expectations given their prior attainment.

GCSE success rates at A* to C rose consistently in the three years to 2007/08, and were well above the national average. However, in 2008/09 they declined significantly to below the average.

Attendance has remained unchanged in four years and is slightly below those generally expected in similar colleges and the college's own target. Students' progression within the college and to higher education or employment is good and improving. Students develop useful employability skills.

Students report that the college is a safe and welcoming environment and that the rare instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly by the college. Students demonstrate safe working practices in areas such as laboratories and in dance and related classes. They are able to make informed choices about their health and well-being and the majority are engaged in a range of activities which make a positive contribution to the community.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The college has a well-established observation of teaching and learning system. However, although observation grades have risen substantially in the last two years, they have not had a commensurate impact on success rates. The link between appraisal, staff development and observation outcomes is not sufficiently formalised. The sharing of good practice by the very best teachers and teams is underutilised. The outcome of inspectors' observations suggests that the very high proportion of good and better teaching identified by the college is overstated.

Nevertheless, the college has correctly identified that good lessons are characterised by good staff and student relationships, students supporting each other well in group activities and students managing their own learning well. The college is also aware that in the less effective lessons, there is little evidence of students being enthused or stimulated, little attention to the specific needs of individual students, and that they often lack pace and variety.

All students undergo appropriate initial assessment. Teachers are informed of student scores, which are given a red, amber or green rating. However, teachers do not use this information sufficiently in lesson planning and the college does not monitor the performance of students gaining amber or red sufficiently.

The assessment of student work is mostly good. Feedback by teachers on students' work often gives a clear indication of how they can improve their work. However, comments on more able students' work do not always indicate precisely how they can improve their grades.

The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. Most programmes are available at advanced level with a wide choice of subjects. The number of vocational programmes is increasing, together with intermediate provision. New 14-19 qualifications developed in partnership with schools and colleges across the area have extended the curriculum further, especially in creative and media studies. Significant progress has been made towards offering the International Baccalaureate.

All programmes are available within a very flexible timetable that allows students to create a personal schedule of learning. The college has a strong commitment to social and educational inclusion, and works productively across the community to attract students who have not been particularly successful at school.

The range of enrichment activities on offer is good but attendance and participation are erratic. Some monitoring of the programme takes place but it is not detailed or systematic.

The college has a wide range of strong partnerships and often takes the lead in driving developments. Productive links with schools and a neighbouring general further education college have given rise to close collaborative working. Links

with local and regional universities are good. Direct links with employers are insufficiently developed.

Care, support and guidance are satisfactory. Students receive accurate and timely information, which allows them to make sound decisions about their choice of programme at the college. Progression into higher education is good but information and guidance on employment options is underdeveloped.

Tutorial arrangements are inconsistent in quality. The mix of group and individual tutorials is appropriate but a minority of group sessions lack focus and structure. Tutors and guidance staff have not uniformly implemented recently introduced individual learning plans. They are not fully effective at monitoring students' progress, achievement and progression.

The provision of additional learning support is good. The assessment of the needs of students is accurate and specialist support is provided promptly. Support is well organised, systematically recorded and regularly reviewed for impact. Students with multiple and complex support needs are well supported in a caring environment.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal, governors and senior staff share a commitment to providing an inclusive college within a caring community. The open access ethos of the college is well supported by teaching and support staff. The new draft strategic plan seeks to build on this vision appropriately and to take account of changing circumstances and environment. Target setting is well-established at both college and course level. Most college-wide success rate targets have been achieved for the past three years. However, in 2008/09, the decline in success rates meant they were not and the gap with similar colleges widened. The revised organisational structure introduced recently has succeeded in strengthening direct curriculum management. However, the college has not recruited an additional senior manager resulting in an uneven workload and management responsibility. Curriculum management is mostly good. Staff have confidence in their curriculum managers who they see as supportive and responsive.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors demonstrate a wide range of appropriate skills including a strong commitment to the college and good local knowledge. Governors receive adequate data and information to provide a satisfactory oversight of the standards achieved by students and challenge managers appropriately. Not all governors have received up-to-date training in safeguarding and equality and diversity. Governors recognise that the corporation does not represent fully the diverse college community and are seeking to redress this concern.

Self-assessment is generally accurate and linked well to improvement plans. Self-assessment reports are routinely moderated with grades examined closely, taking due account of students' outcomes. Under-performing areas have

improvement plans. In a minority of areas, including learning support and mathematics, these have improved outcomes for students. However, managers do not identify all areas for improvement promptly and monitor them with sufficient rigour. Good practice in aspects such as quality improvement and responding to students' comments exists within the college but varies in its impact and effectiveness. The consistency and sustainability of improvements is hampered by insufficiently systematic college-wide monitoring and evaluation of actions.

The promotion of safeguarding of students is satisfactory. The college has introduced a new safeguarding policy covering the specific needs of young students and vulnerable adults and staff have undergone very recent training. The college has appropriate links with the local safeguarding board and maintains a single register of criminal record checks on staff employed directly by the college.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Students from minority ethnic heritages achieve in line with or above college averages. The gap between male and female achievement has reduced and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve broadly in line with all other students. The promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum is satisfactory and good in a few areas such as visual and performing arts. However, the college has made slow progress in introducing the proposed single equality scheme and impact assessments are at a very early stage. The equality and diversity committee does not have a student representative and the staffing profile does not reflect the diverse college community.

The college makes satisfactory arrangements to listen to and respond to the views of students. The revised Student Council is playing an increasing role in representing students' concerns. Self-assessment reports make use of annual survey reports in varying degrees. In the best examples, students' views are used widely to plan improvements and respond to comments. In other examples, students' views are mentioned only briefly. Students are not routinely and formally involved in self-assessment or course review procedures.

The quality of college buildings and resources varies considerably between curriculum areas with poorer accommodation for subjects such as physical education and some overcrowded classrooms in mathematics. Plans for new accommodation are at an early stage and form an integral part of the proposed strategic plan. The college has made considerable investment in improving students' access to information and learning technology (ILT) and inspectors judged that in lessons observed it was generally used well. A few curriculum areas are less well served with ILT resources. Financial management is good. Based on outcomes for learners, the quality of provision and attendance, value for money is satisfactory.

Subject areas

Science and mathematics

Grade 2

Context

As part of full-time programmes, the college offers courses in GCSE mathematics, GCSE science and BTEC first diploma in applied science. Advanced courses include A- and AS-levels in biology, chemistry, environmental studies, geology, human biology, mathematics, further mathematics, use of mathematics and physics and BTEC national diploma in applied science. The large majority of students are aged 16 to 18 with 1,322 enrolments, and 90 enrolments by adult students.

Key findings

- Students' progress relative to their prior attainment is very good in A-level chemistry and further mathematics, and AS-level chemistry, physics and mathematics. Progress in the national diploma in applied science is good. It is at least satisfactory in all other A-level and AS subjects.
- Success rates in A-level and AS-level physics and mathematics are above national averages, but they are below in biology. The success rates for AS environmental science and GCSE mathematics in 2008/09 were low.
- Retention rates fell in 2008/09 in A-level, AS and GCSE subjects except in AS physics and mathematics.
- Students' written and practical work is mostly good and they have effective skills in analysis, application, observation and evaluation. Students demonstrate good safety practices in the laboratories.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, a variety of approaches motivates students. Teachers use good learning methods including ILT. Assessment of progress in these lessons is good with effective questioning to check individual understanding. A minority of lessons, however, lack variety and do not challenge the more able students sufficiently.
- Teachers make effective use of the satisfactory science and mathematics resources. Technical support in laboratories is good. Mathematics is taught in dedicated base rooms. All classrooms have ILT facilities. The chemistry preparation area and a few mathematics rooms are too small.
- The range of courses at intermediate and advanced level, including diplomas in applied science, is good and provides appropriate progression opportunities.
- Links with local high schools are strong. Staff and students contribute to open days, taster weeks and support for the school curriculum at Key Stage 4.
- Monitoring of students' progress is good but subject reviews and individual learning plans are often too vague and do not give short-term aims for improvement, particularly for the less able students.

- Academic support for students including in the classroom, in subject workshops and through informal individual support, is good. However, attendance rates of students with extra academic support needs are low at a minority of workshops.
- Self-assessment reports are generally accurate and set realistic and challenging targets for improvement against national averages. Lesson observations are also accurate but do not always focus sufficiently on students' attainment.
- The management of science and mathematics is good and staff are clear about their responsibilities.

What does New College, Telford need to do to improve further?

- Help students achieve their potential by ensuring that teachers use a range of learning activities which motivates and challenges all students, including the more able.
- Monitor the attendance in workshops of students identified as needing further academic support to enable them to increase their knowledge and understanding to progress effectively on the course.
- Improve students' progress in the development of skills and knowledge through the setting of focussed targets in their subject reviews and individual learning plans.

Arts, media and publishing

Grade 3

Context

Intermediate courses are available in GCSE dance, BTEC first diploma performing arts and certificate for media users. Advanced courses include AS and A level in art and design, communication and culture, film studies, media studies, music, drama and theatre studies. BTEC national awards are offered in performing arts, music and music technology, production arts and national diplomas in art and design, music and performing arts. Some 1,087 enrolments are aged between 16 to 18 and 48 enrolments are adult learners.

Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are satisfactory overall though retention rates and poor punctuality to lessons are an increasing cause for concern for a minority of vocational music programmes.
- Success rates are high in A-level fine arts, theatre studies and music, but in the majority of subjects they are at or below average. With the exception of film studies at AS level, the percentage of students achieving high grades is substantially below average in the majority of subjects; only occasionally do students exceed their predicted grades.
- Students contribute positively to the local community through an exciting and challenging programme of resident and touring public performances and exhibitions. Students make expected progress and the standard of their work is mainly good.
- Performing arts students progress well, within a particularly competitive environment, to prestigious specialist HE institutions.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory with aspects that are good. Staff and students enjoy good and productive working relationships and most classes have an effective balance between practical and theoretical activities. Students are able to work collaboratively and are expected to both manage and be responsible for their own learning.
- Assessment is informative and thorough. However, in a few instances, teachers do not challenge the more able students and in a minority of lessons, they do not sufficiently emphasise appropriate behaviour and professional practice.
- The range of provision to meet the needs and interests of students is good. Students have access to a wide range of vocational and academic programmes at intermediate and advanced level and where appropriate are able to design individual programmes. Enrichment activities are good and are often effectively integrated into the students' main programmes.
- Care, guidance and support for students are good and students speak highly of the efforts made on their behalf. Students' support needs are assessed promptly and they are referred to the learning support team when necessary.

Information, advice and guidance are mainly thorough and valued by students. However, not all students are enrolled on the appropriate level of course.

- Leadership and management are good. The self-assessment report is mostly accurate although the quality of teaching and learning is occasionally exaggerated. Accommodation and specialist resources are good though a few classrooms are too small for the number of students. Equality and diversity issues are thoroughly recognised in planning and teaching. Continuing professional development initiatives are good and key recent appointments have improved provision. Teachers are well-qualified with many having significant professional experience.

What does New College, Telford need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, particularly the proportion of students who achieve high grades, by developing teaching and learning strategies that challenge all students, including the more able.
- Increase good practice in teaching and learning by ensuring those teachers providing high quality learning experiences share their strategies with those that do not.
- Improve enrolment procedures through involving subject specialist staff to ensure students are on the appropriate level, course and subject.
- Ensure that all students are aware of and maintain high standards of professional practice and behaviour through teacher reinforcement in lessons.

Information about the inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's vice principal as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.

Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires students and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

New College, Telford

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners				
Full-time learners	1,321	0	1,273	48
Part-time learners	170	37	103	30
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3			
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3			
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3			
How well do learners progress?	3			
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2			
How safe do learners feel?	2			
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2			
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2			
Quality of provision	3	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3			
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2			
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2			
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3			
Leadership and management	3	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3			
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	3			
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3			
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3			
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3			
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3			
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3			

*where applicable to the type of provision

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 0300 1231231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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