

Wigan and Leigh College

Inspection report

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Type of provider: General Further Education College
Wigan and Leigh College
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Information about the provider

1. Wigan and Leigh College is a large general further and higher education college with 4,030 full-time and 14,500 part-time learners, and an annual income of over £36.3 million. The college operates from six sites across the borough of Wigan. Parson's Walk and Pagefield are located in Wigan, close to the town centre. The Railway Road building, the Image Centre and Leigh Sixth Form are close to the town centre of Leigh, several miles away. The college also provides community courses in over 50 venues.
2. The borough of Wigan consists of 14 towns and villages, spread across 77 square miles, of which 75% is open countryside. Some 55% of wards in Wigan fall within the 20% most deprived wards in England and 16% of wards are amongst the 105 most deprived. Unemployment in Wigan is lower than the Greater Manchester average but higher than the national average. Approximately 98.7% of Wigan residents are white, which is higher than the Greater Manchester average. The area has low levels of ethnic diversity, with 97.6% of residents in the white British group, compared with 87.9% for Greater Manchester, 92.2% for the North West and 87.5% for England and Wales. The next largest ethnic groups are white Irish (0.6%) and white other (0.5%). These data do not, however, capture more recent diversification of the local population resulting from asylum seekers and refugees settling in the area.
3. In 2009/10, the college recruited 3,446 full-time learners aged 16 to 18 and 309 full-time adult learners. There were on average 622 work-based learners, mainly in engineering and construction, funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), 55 Entry to Employment and 3,426 Train to Gain learners. The college enrolls learners in all of the LSC areas of learning but very few learners take courses in land-based subjects. Courses are available from entry level to degree level.
4. The following providers provide training for the college:
 - Alchemist Training Ltd (provision in health, public services and care, engineering and manufacturing technologies and in Skills for Life)
 - Alma 4 Training (provision in health, public services and care)
 - Competence Matters (provision in construction planning and the built environment)
 - SB Training (provision in construction, planning and the built environment)
 - Specialist Training & Development (provision in business, administration and law)
 - The Prince's Trust (provision in preparation for life and work)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	98 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	3,494 full-time learners 396 part-time learners
Foundation learning	746 full-time learners 140 part-time learners
Entry to Employment	96 learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	844 full-time learners 3,378 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain	3,446 learners
Apprenticeships	675 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	
Early years and playwork	3
Construction, planning and the built environment	3
Information and communication technology	2
Arts, media and publishing	2
Preparation for life and work	2
Business, administration and law	3

Overall effectiveness

- The college's overall effectiveness is good. The college has shown that it has good capacity to improve outcomes for learners and the quality of provision. It is making good progress towards meeting the governors' demanding targets to improve success rates and the quality of teaching and learning. Procedures for ensuring that learners are safe are good. The college's promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college has maintained the strengths and has dealt with most of the key areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Success rates on AS courses are now high and attendance is now at least satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Accommodation has been improved for most learners. Provision in each of the subject areas

inspected is at least satisfactory. The completion of apprenticeship frameworks has increased but remains low.

6. Arrangements for self-assessment are good. The self-assessment process is consultative and leads to clear targets for quality improvement. Action plans are comprehensive and well written. They are well monitored through a database management system that is highly effective in ensuring that actions required are completed within the agreed timescale. Managers make good use of questionnaires to gather feedback from learners and employers. The college summary self-assessment report is accurate and self-critical. However, a minority of subject area reports are overly descriptive and do not present sufficient supporting evidence.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 have increased each year at all levels and are now comparable with national rates for similar colleges. Success rates for adults at intermediate and advanced levels have improved and are comparable with national rates for similar colleges. However, in 2008/09, fewer adults completed their programmes successfully at foundation level than in previous years.
- Success rates on GCE AS, A2 and A-level courses for learners aged 16 to 18 are now high. For the small number of adult learners following AS or A-level qualifications the success rate is high but the success rate for the small number of adults on A2 qualifications is low. Value added across the college is generally low.
- Achievement of qualifications by learners on Train to Gain programmes is satisfactory but overall and timely success rates on apprenticeship programmes, although improving, remain well below national rates.
- Learners make steady progress and develop good skills required for work and further study. Learners who have declared a disability generally make good progress and achieve inline with learners who have not declared a disability.
- Learners feel safe and the college's arrangements to safeguard learners at the college and at work are good.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners enjoy lessons and develop good vocational skills. In the better lessons, student-centred learning interests and motivates learners. Weaker teaching lacks pace and does not use students' identified needs to plan teaching. In some classes, there is insufficient checking of learning and understanding. In business, administration and law, teachers do not sufficiently integrate the development of learners' numeracy skills within vocational lessons and in preparation for life and work tutors fail to plan for differentiated activity.
- The college's arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning are satisfactory. The system has recently been revised and focuses on learning. There is a lack of clarity about the purpose of the developmental observations.

- The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners and employers is outstanding. The college offers courses in all 15 subject areas and from entry level to higher education, with clear progression routes to higher level study and employment. The college works well with employers to plan its provision.
- The college has established outstanding partnerships with employers and other agencies which make a valuable contribution to community and social cohesion and present extensive opportunities for learners of all ages. The college has recently centralised its employer engagement work and staff energetically promote partnership working throughout the borough.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good and students feel well cared for. Information, advice and guidance are successful in ensuring that students are placed on appropriate courses and levels. Learners receive good support to develop their literacy and numeracy and many learners make good progress. Initial and diagnostic assessment is thorough and timely. The inclusive learning team works well to meet the needs of learners with a wide range of physical, mental and other disabilities.
- Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers provide a clear direction to improve the college and achieve the identified priorities. The strategic planning process is good and inclusive. Clear strategic objectives form the basis of the college's operations. Demanding targets are set and generally met at all levels. The management and use of data are good. Financial management is good.
- Curriculum management is generally, but not consistently, good. The management of work-based learning has been particularly poor up to 2008/09 when significant changes were made. These changes are recent and not yet sufficiently established for their impact on outcomes to be evaluated.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Policies and procedures for equality and diversity are satisfactory. The college successfully promotes respect and tolerance. The promotion of equality and diversity in teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory. Staff and learners have an adequate understanding of equality and diversity issues. The college has identified that better promotion of these issues is required in work-based learning.

What does Wigan and Leigh College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on apprenticeship programmes by increasing the effectiveness of reviews of learners' progress in driving attainment. Provide learners with the individual support and guidance they need to help them complete their programmes.
- Improve success rates for adults at level 1 and continue the trend in improvement on learner responsive provision through introducing thorough systems to set learners clear, challenging and realistic targets which are well monitored so that all learners have the opportunity to achieve their potential.

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning through better arrangements for lesson observations including greater clarity about the purpose of the developmental observations.
- Improve the quality and use of individual learning plans by making better use of the outcomes of initial assessment and using students' identified needs to plan teaching.
- Improve teachers' understanding and promotion of equality and diversity in learning and review sessions through focused staff development and qualitative monitoring of the content of reviews.
- Improve curriculum management in weaker performing curriculum areas by ensuring that college systems are consistently applied.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the highly enjoyable time at college
- good teaching
- being treated with respect in an adult atmosphere
- the use of the virtual learning environment
- access to sports facilities
- feeling safe in the college
- being part of an inclusive community
- good levels of support throughout the programme
- good qualitative feedback on performance with clear indications on how grades can be improved
- the location of the college
- highly responsive staff.

What learners would like to see improved:

- better availability of healthy eating options, and lower prices for healthy eating options where available
- better availability of reference books in some areas
- car parking problems
- more access to computers in the learning resource centre.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- flexible arrangements for assessment and reviews
- excellent working relationships with the college's highly efficient staff
- good communications

- the college's understanding of the sector in which employers work
- good levels of support available for employers and individuals.

What employers would like to see improved:

- some communication problems in work-based learning.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement Grade 2

7. The college's capacity to make and sustain improvements is good. The college is making good progress in improving outcomes for learners and the quality of its provision since the last inspection, and in meeting the demanding targets set by governors. It has successfully met its LSC targets, an area for improvement identified at the last inspection. It has maintained the strengths and dealt with most of the key areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.
8. The use of data, performance management and action planning and monitoring are all good. Financial management is good. The college is in a strong position financially to continue to invest in the estate and in other resources to benefit the learners. Self-assessment is accurate, self-critical and produces good action plans that are carefully monitored. Course reviews are good and the validation of self-assessment is very thorough. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes and the consistency of curriculum management remain as areas for improvement.

Outcomes for learners Grade 3

9. Learners' attainment of qualifications and learning goals is satisfactory. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels and for adult learners at intermediate and advanced levels are all satisfactory and comparable with national rates for similar colleges. Success rates for adult learners on foundation courses are low. On these courses, the rate has declined in 2008/09 and is now 6% below the national rate for similar colleges.
10. The GCE AS, A2 and A-level success rate is high for learners aged 16 to 18. For the small number of adult learners following AS or A-level qualifications the success rate is high but the success rate for the small number of adults on A2 qualifications is low. Value added across the college is generally low.
11. Success rates on Train to Gain NVQ programmes are slightly higher than national rates whilst timely success rates are comparable with national rates.
12. On apprenticeship programmes success rates have improved slightly but remain well below national rates. Timely success rates have again increased but also remain well below national rates.
13. Success rates for female learners are slightly higher than those for male learners. The proportions of learners from minority ethnic groups are small and the differences in success rates from the college average are not statistically significant. However, the college has taken steps to investigate the reasons why a small number of adult learners from black African origins have relatively low success rates at level one and yet are significantly above national rates at level 3.

14. Success rates for all learners who have declared a learning difficulty and/or disability are slightly lower than for those who have not. The reverse is true when only considering learners aged 16 to 18 who have declared a learning difficulty and/or disability.
15. Success rates for key skills qualifications declined at all three levels in both age groups in 2008/09 and are below national rates. They are very low at level 3.
16. Most learners make at least satisfactory progress in lessons and many do better than that. Most learners are now aware of their minimum expected grades and progress towards them is well monitored.
17. Learners report that they feel safe. The tutorial system ensures that learners have an informed choice on healthy living and includes awareness-raising sessions on drug and alcohol abuse and coping with stress. Healthy food options and drinking water are available on all college sites. The college has been very active in promoting sexual health including arrangements for on-site nurses to dispense contraceptive injections where necessary and making available Chlamydia screening tests and pregnancy tests.
18. Learners make satisfactory progress in achieving economic and social well-being. Many learners who complete their programmes progress to further courses within the college, employment or higher education. The college tutorial programme includes sessions on financial and time management, and on preparing learners for work placements or for higher education.
19. The enrichment programme provides learners with satisfactory opportunities to contribute to the local community and to charitable events. Few learners are active members of the student association, although many take part in voluntary and charitable work such as Children in Need. Student governors play an active part in college governance. Many learners contribute to the running of the college through focus groups or becoming course team representatives.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

20. Teaching and learning are good. Students enjoy their studies. In the better lessons, teachers carefully plan activities that interest and motivate learners. In good lessons, teachers focus on student-centred learning and use questions well to extend and develop learners' understanding. Art and design teachers have high expectations of learners. These learners often develop very good independent learning skills. However, weaker teaching does not sufficiently focus on meeting individual needs, there is limited checking of understanding and the pace is too slow.
21. Staff regularly review learners' achievement and progress. Learners receive good feedback to help them set priorities and to achieve their goals. In AS and A2 provision, target setting based on learners' previous attainment is used well to calculate value added and to monitor student progress.

22. Assessment procedures are robust and well managed. Assessment practice for Train to Gain learners and work-based learning is satisfactory. However, some reviews, for example in construction, include targets that are insufficiently clear.
23. Learners receive good support in a variety of ways to develop their literacy and numeracy. Initial and diagnostic assessment is thorough and timely. However, teachers do not always use this information in students' individual learning plans (ILPs) to set clear targets for improvement or plan lessons. In some subject areas, for example, business and management, teachers do not sufficiently integrate key skills into the main programme.
24. The use of information learning technology (ILT) to support learning is very good in hair and beauty and limited in early years and play work. The college has invested considerable resources to develop its virtual learning environment (VLE). In some areas, for example, A-level provision, Skills for Life, and art and design, learners value highly the VLE and use it extensively. E-leaders in subject areas support the development of staff expertise and web-based materials.
25. The promotion of equality through learning, teaching, training and assessment is satisfactory. Many teachers plan lessons effectively to challenge and support students of all abilities. However, teachers do not always include clearly the promotion of equality and diversity in schemes of work, lesson plans or teaching.
26. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. A revised system has been introduced which is learner-focused and evidence-based. The observation team ensures that there are close links between action plans arising from observations and the college's continuing professional development activities. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements and grades given during joint observations. It is too soon to judge the overall effectiveness of the revised system. However, a lack of clarity about the role of developmental observations masks underperformance.
27. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners and employers is outstanding. The college offers courses in all 15 subject areas and from entry level to higher education, with clear progression routes to higher level study and employment. The range of provision in most curriculum areas is good and outstanding in arts, media and publishing and preparation for life and work. The relatively small provision for school pupils aged 14 to 16 provides a good range of vocational options for these learners, many of whom are disengaged from learning. The college has a lively enrichment programme that links well to curriculum areas and the Every Child Matters themes. The college works very closely with partners to ensure that provision meets national and local priorities and targets provision for personal and community development learning at learners in areas of relative deprivation, many of whom are European migrants or asylum seekers. The college has considerably expanded its Train to Gain work, offering NVQ training in 10 subject areas, and provides bespoke courses for local employers at full cost.

28. The college's outstanding partnerships make a valuable contribution to community and social cohesion by providing extensive opportunities for learners. Staff promote partnership working energetically throughout the borough. The college runs an employability programme, with learners referred from Jobcentre Plus to be provided with training and for their employability to be increased. The college was exceptionally proactive in working with two large local employers to supply job search training for several hundred staff facing redundancy. The college has established very good links with a range of schools to provide opportunities for vocational training for pupils.
29. Care, guidance and support for students are good and students feel well cared for. Information, advice and guidance are successful in ensuring that students are placed on appropriate courses. The inclusive learning team works well to meet the needs of learners with a wide range of physical, mental and other disabilities. Teachers make good use of the expertise of inclusive learning officers during learning sessions to provide support for learners with disabilities. Students identified as needing extra help with literacy or numeracy receive good quality discrete and in-class support from the college's study support team. Student liaison officers work well with tutors and managers to identify and support learners at risk of leaving their programme early. Many of the college's learners are in receipt of an educational maintenance allowance.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

30. The principal, governors and senior managers provide clear strategic leadership and direction. The strategic planning process is inclusive, comprehensive and includes challenging and realistic targets. The clear vision and mission are supported by detailed and appropriate strategic objectives that form the basis of the college's operations. Staff understand the strategy and are familiar with the targets through the very good communications from the senior management team. The management and use of data are good.
31. Governance is good. Governors bring a broad range of skills and experience. They scrutinise college performance carefully and challenge senior managers appropriately. The committees of the corporation are highly effective. Governors make a very good contribution to the development of the strategic plan and provide the college with particularly good guidance on meeting the needs of the community. They have set demanding corporate targets for development and attainment as well as challenging personal targets for the principal and senior post holders.
32. The promotion of safeguarding is good. The college meets its legislative requirements for safeguarding learners. Safeguarding has been prioritised within the college. Robust policies and procedures are in place and are reviewed annually. Policies are readily available on the college's intranet along with disclosure procedures which detail the steps staff must take when reporting abuse and the management of allegations. The designated child and vulnerable adults safeguarding officer liaises regularly with the local

safeguarding board. All staff have received appropriate and effective training in safeguarding. Four selected staff members and all curriculum managers have received further training to local safeguarding children board (LSCB) standards. The level of staff knowledge and understanding of safeguarding is good. The college carries out suitable criminal records bureau (CRB) checks and maintains a single register. The reporting of safeguarding incidents is good. The college works closely with other agencies to ensure that information is shared and vulnerable learners are protected. The college's safeguarding action group meets twice each term. The college also has representation on the adult safeguarding board and the children and young people service's 'Change for Children' steering group.

33. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college serves the community well, providing opportunities for all, irrespective of age, gender and background. Policies and procedures for equality and diversity are satisfactory. Staff and students celebrate diversity together through competitions, acknowledgement of religious and cultural festivals and through successful promotion of respect and tolerance. The proportion of learners recruited from minority ethnic heritages is higher than that in the local population. The college equality committee monitors the success and performance of different groups of learners. It is active and well managed but not all members are able to commit to full attendance. The use of data on equality and diversity is good and, where the college has identified gaps in achievement, appropriate targets are set, action plans are produced and the college works to close the gaps. The promotion of equality and diversity in teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory. Learners generally have a satisfactory understanding of the issues. They are aware of their rights and responsibilities and are protected from bullying and harassment. Complaints are recorded and followed up effectively by the college. The college has identified that better promotion of equality and diversity is required in work-based learning.
34. Quality improvement arrangements and self-assessment are good. Clear targets for quality improvement are set. Action plans are comprehensive, well written and effectively monitored. Arrangements for assuring and improving the quality of most of the college's activities are effective. The system for observing teaching and learning includes a large element of informal observations which have skewed the grade profile in some areas. The college summary self-assessment report is accurate and self-critical. However, a minority of subject area reports are overly descriptive and do not present sufficient supporting evidence.
35. The college's implementation of its learner involvement strategy is satisfactory. All learners and employers are given the opportunity to share their views which are analysed and acted upon. However, there is insufficient central monitoring of activities to elicit learners' views. The college recognises that response rates for student surveys are currently below the targets it has set.
36. Performance management is good at all levels throughout the college. The performance of faculties and subject areas is carefully monitored by senior

managers using the highly effective business reviews process. The arrangements for reviewing individual staff are equally good. The reviews are supportive and are highly effective in assessing staff performance and identifying development needs. Improved use of accurate and timely data on all aspects of performance has given the college the confidence to tackle underperformance. Staff development is well managed and organised.

37. Financial management is good. The college has achieved operating surpluses over the past six years. The college property strategy plans to use funds from the surpluses to continue to develop the estate. Budget management is good. Budgets are allocated on a fair and equitable basis and the budgeting process is transparent.
38. The college's approach to sustainability is good. There is an established and effective sustainability policy that has led to good recycling management and is beginning to address energy efficiency. Links between curriculum areas and facilities departments are good, with learners benefiting from the expertise of environmental services staff who make a valuable contribution to the teaching of sustainability on some courses.
39. Curriculum management is generally, but not consistently, good. The management of work-based learning has been particularly poor up to 2008/09 when significant changes were made. These changes are recent and not yet sufficiently established for their impact on outcomes to be evaluated.

Subject areas

Early years and playwork

Grade 3

Context

40. The college offers full-time CACHE programmes from level 1 to level 3 and an Edexcel national diploma in Early Years at level 3, to 253 mostly female 16 to 18 year old learners at the Wigan and Leigh campuses. Nineteen learners follow apprenticeship programmes, mostly at level 2. A part-time foundation degree in Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services and a full-time foundation degree in Early Years and Young People Integrated Services offer progression to level 4.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners on the level 1 programme are significantly above the national average. Retention on levels 2 and 3 provision is poor. Success rates on the level 3 diploma in childcare and education was low in 2008/09. In-year retention has significantly improved to above the national average on all programmes. Achievement of key skills is unsatisfactory at all levels.
- A significant number of foundation and intermediate learners gain high grades. Value-added data for the national diploma level 3 learners are significant. Progression to further study and relevant employment is very good. Forty-eight per cent of Edexcel learners and 17% of CACHE level 3 learners progress to higher education, becoming teachers or registered sick children's nurses.
- Learners gain self-confidence and develop a range of vocationally relevant skills, particularly practical skills, communication and working with others. The standard of some wall displays is below that expected in early years settings. Learners have a good understanding of Every Child Matters. They readily apply their knowledge of equality and diversity in their work with children.
- Opportunities for learners to gain confidence and competence in using smart boards to meet current practice are limited. Learners readily and appropriately use the internet for research, recording the full web address but not the date of access. They over-rely on course text books and show limited evidence of wider reading, particularly at level 3.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most teaching is good or better. Lessons are well planned, drawing on learning in other units and experiences in the workplace. In less effective lessons, the pace is slow and some learners lose focus. There is a lack of challenge to encourage more able learners. Assessment is rigorous and timely, with clear guidance for improvement.
- Support for learners is very good. Learners value the pre-course advice and guidance that enable them to make an informed choice of programme. Learners are aware of their minimum expected grades and are encouraged to aim high. The college is inclusive in providing appropriate support for those with

additional needs, ensuring that they are realistic about their career goals and are able to attain them.

- The college has good and productive links with a wide range of employers. These include Wigan and Leigh Education and Adult Services, schools, nurseries, Sure Start and the local Primary Care Trust. Employers provide work placements that enrich learners' experience through visits; for example, to a hospice, or by providing speakers. Employers are instrumental in the planning of future part-time courses to meet local and national priorities.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory, with a strong drive towards improvement. Many teachers work across health and social care and childcare in both Leigh and Wigan. Teachers readily share resources and best practice. Teachers are well qualified and vocationally experienced. All have, or are working towards a teaching qualification. Career and professional development does not currently include industrial experience.
- The self-assessment report is a combined report with health and social care. It is evaluative and broadly accurate, although over-graded in two areas. The quality improvement plan is detailed and time bound, with appropriate milestones. However, targets are often insufficiently precise.

What does Wigan and Leigh College need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention by continually monitoring and amending current strategies to ensure that learners make an informed choice of course and level of study. Consolidate the on-course risk-assessment process, building on the good relationships with student liaison officers to monitor individuals closely. Further review the strategy to improve retention and motivation to complete key skills at an appropriate level within the year of study.
- Facilitate deeper learning by developing a wider range of formative assessment methods to challenge and extend all learners in class appropriately. Further encourage the use of a wider range of texts to enhance learning.
- Increase learner confidence and competence in the use of ILT; promote learning by reviewing and improving resources to engage learners creatively in embracing fully technologies that enhance and support learning.
- Better prepare learners to produce displays to professional standards by raising learner awareness of the importance of high quality displays in the promotion of children's learning.

Construction, planning and the built environment Employer responsive provision

Grade 3

Context

41. At the time of inspection, the college was providing training for 633 learners on work-based learning programmes in a wide range of construction trades. Some 168 learners were following an apprenticeship programme and 13 learners were on adult apprenticeship programmes. The college has a range of training providers who provide training on their behalf to 452 Train to Gain learners on programmes in plant operations. Assessors carry out reviews every six weeks for apprentices and every two weeks for Train to Gain learners.

Key findings

- Success rates on Train to Gain provision are satisfactory. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes have improved steadily over the last three years and they reached the national average in 2008/09. Provisional data for 2009/10 show further improvements in success rates.
- Success rates on apprenticeship programmes are low. Success rates for apprenticeship programmes have been consistently below national rates for the last three years. However, provisional data for 2009/10 show that overall and timely success rates have improved considerably and are now close to the national average.
- There is good development of learners' practical skills. Learners develop their trade skills to industry standard progressively. Employers speak positively about the high level of trade-specific skills that learners acquire and which they apply successfully in the workplace.
- Assessment and review processes are satisfactory. Assessors plan assessment activity to maximise opportunities for gathering evidence. Employers are present in reviews. Though staff check health and safety and equality and diversity by using a bank of pre-set questions, the development and promotion of equality and diversity and health and safety are insufficient. Some of the targets set at reviews are insufficiently clear.
- The college offers a wide range of provision. The college offers apprenticeships in wood and trowel trades, painting and decoration, plumbing, plastering and electrical installation. The wide range of provision enables learners to progress from entry level to higher education. The college also offers NVQs in plant operations. The college has recently developed a bridging course to help learners progress from craft-based programmes onto higher education courses.
- The development of partnerships is good. Learners benefit from the college's responsiveness to local employer needs. Many partnerships are in place with sector skill councils at national level and locally with regional agencies. Though the college has productive relationships with many companies, some employers have recently experienced poor communication with the college.

- Recent actions to improve provision have been effective. The college restructured its work-based learning provision two years ago. Internal communications have improved and training and assessment staff now work in the same staffroom. The same person now carries out assessment, training and progress reviews. Staff carry out monitoring of progress electronically. Staff identify and support learners at risk of leaving the programme early. Interim in-year targets are set for progress of the technical certificate, NVQ and key skills.
- Safeguarding is well promoted. The work-based learning department has recently designated a trained safeguarding officer who reports to the college's child protection officer. Work-based learning staff now receive regular and specific internal staff development training on safeguarding relevant to their learners.

What does Wigan and Leigh College need to do to improve further?

- Improve apprenticeship success rates and timely success rates by making better use of data to monitor progress on apprenticeship programmes so that more learners successfully complete their programme within the planned time.
- Improve employers' understanding of learners' programmes by ensuring that employers receive clear and detailed information about all the elements making up the apprenticeship framework.
- Further improve and strengthen the review process by more rigorous attention to action planning, equality and diversity, and health and safety.

Information and communication technology

Grade 2

Context

42. At the time of the inspection, there were 477 learners. Of these, 313 were 16 to 18-year-old full-time learners and 113 19+ learners (35 full-time and 78 part-time) on adult learner provision. For employer-based provision, there were three apprentices and 48 level 2 Train to Gain learners. Courses offered at level 3 include A and AS Information and Communication Technology (ICT), national award, national certificate and national diploma in IT Practitioners (Software Development or General). Other provision includes the entry level certificate in ICT, first diploma ITP, CLAIT and NVQ at levels 1, 2 and 3 for either area of information technology (IT) users (ITQ) or IT Practitioners.

Key findings

- Success rates on most long courses for 16 to 18 year olds at levels 1 and 2 are good. These NVQ courses have both high retention and high achievement, with several courses significantly above national average.
- Success rates on two-year provision are low. Retention on the two-year national diploma course decreased significantly in 2008/09 leading to low success rates; achievement on the two-year national certificate was also low. However, retention and achievement rates on the one-year A/AS courses are high.
- There is poor achievement on the 19+ level 2 ITQ programmes. Although overall success rates on this Train to Gain provision have increased recently from low figures last year, timely success rates remain poor and are still below the national average. There have been recent improvements due to more frequent and flexible learner review meetings which have yet to have a full impact.
- Students acquire a satisfactory range of IT skills. The skills satisfactorily meet the requirements of the ICT qualifications for which they are aiming and prepare them well for higher level study and employment. Students enjoy their learning, particularly the practical work and their placements.
- There is good attention to health and safety. Health and safety issues are included at induction and reinforced by many references in posters around the buildings. A good range of health-related support is available via the student liaison officer and in some tutorials. Most students have good access to sports facilities and students feel safe.
- Teaching and learning are good with a variety of activities in classes at all levels and a particular vocational relevance to the work. In the better sessions, good questioning techniques are consistently used by the teachers who direct them to include all learners and tease out reasons for answers, with hints and guidance given as appropriate for that specific student.
- The range of vocational courses offered is good. Provision ranges from entry level to final year degree, enabling progression opportunities and, as a Cisco/Microsoft regional academy, the college also enables level 3 students to

take the IT Essentials course. A good range of placements enables NVO students to apply their IT skills in a realistic learning environment.

- Support for learners is good. Following initial assessment during induction, support is in place from the first week. Inclusive learning officers provide effective support in classes at levels 1 and 2. Extra revision and drop-in sessions are available and students highlight the approachability of their teachers who provide prompt responses to email queries.
- Monitoring of student progress is good. Course team meetings review progress and the student liaison officer works closely with teachers to monitor attendance and punctuality. Students are aware of their minimum expected grades and what is required. Assessed work frequently contains constructive feedback. However, individual learning plans can be too vague, lack target dates and do not inform teaching.
- Leadership and management are good. There is effective cross-site staff management. Teachers in the faculty which provides the majority of the ICT provision ensure consistency of teaching, assessment and quality of their courses as a result of being timetabled to deliver across the different campuses. However, staff from the other faculties work independently and lack the benefits of links with these colleagues.
- Resources and accommodation are good. Many computer rooms are large and have now been well equipped with reliable computers. However, the layout of some rooms leaves insufficient space for students to complete other work, such as developing presentations and non-computer-based research.
- The self-assessment reports lack rigour and are too positive, with some planned actions being superficial, lacking measurable targets and insufficient to ensure quality improvement.

What does Wigan and Leigh College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that quality improvement plans which flow from the self-assessment report identify key actions more explicitly, so that it is clearly stated what needs to be done and when progress should be reviewed.
- Provide opportunities for IT teachers from the different faculties to share experiences and good practice.
- Enable students to develop measurable targets in their individual learning plans.
- Create 'break out' space in classrooms to allow students to work away from the computers.

Arts, media and publishing

Grade 2

Context

43. There are currently 1,357 learners enrolled, the majority of whom are aged between 16 and 18. Most of the provision is at the main site, with the performing arts provision moving there from Leigh for September 2010. Specialist subjects covering the whole of visual and performing arts and media are available from foundation to advanced levels and are available for study through a variety of modes.

Key findings

- Success rates are high on several programmes. Over the past three years success rates have improved from 70% to 80% for learners aged 16 to 18 who represent 85% of the student cohort. Retention is much improved and is currently at 90%.
- The standard of practical work is good. In most subjects, learners are able to demonstrate often sophisticated awareness and implementation of complex skills. There is evident preparation for vocational careers.
- Progression internally and to higher education is very good. Seventy-five per cent of learners on foundation and intermediate level courses are able to progress to advanced courses internally. Eighty-three per cent of advanced learners not only progress to higher education but many gain places, in both visual and performing arts, at highly competitive and internationally renowned specialist institutions.
- Learners feel safer within the college than they do outside it. They appreciate the care and support they receive from the college staff.
- Learners are able to make a positive contribution to their local community through exhibition and performance work. Additionally, partnerships with the local council, local businesses, schools and charities through live projects impact favourably both on learners and the immediate community.
- Teaching is consistently good, particularly in art and design. There is a unified approach, both in philosophy and delivery, to teaching and learning. Teachers have high expectations and have developed very effective strategies to enable learners to identify their requirements independently and to self-manage their own learning. Foundation learners are particularly well taught with much emphasis on acquiring fundamental skills and principles of art and design, enabling them to progress.
- The range of provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. There are 17 full-time courses covering virtually all subjects. Academic pathways are also offered. Effective use is made of short courses and teachers and managers are able to adapt full-time diplomas into national awards and certificates, ensuring that some students who may have to leave college temporarily can still partially achieve units from their main learning goals. Exciting enrichment activities underpin learning.

- In some classes, there is insufficient checking of learning and understanding, with few initiatives to ensure that learners are actively engaged and contributing through peer assessment. In a minority of classes, poor attendance and punctuality impact adversely on collaborative learning.
- Curriculum management is good. The discrete accommodation has been refurbished to a high specification and the department has created a vibrant, stimulating, exciting and well-respected area. Specialist equipment is excellent and very well maintained by industry standard technicians. There is excellent value for money with deliberate policies to ensure that vulnerable foundation learners are taught in small groups before they progress to higher level courses.
- Problems and issues are quickly identified and appropriate actions implemented. Managers are quite prepared to take difficult decisions. Equality and diversity are celebrated within the area of learning. Learners with specific and sometimes severe difficulties are successfully integrated onto mainstream programmes; female music students are able to eschew traditional stereotypical roles and expectations. Some learners confidently believe that they have no need to conceal their sexual orientation.
- Teachers feel valued and supported in industrial placements and continuous professional development.
- The college self-assessment report lacks some rigour. Some perceived strengths are really no more than expectations and there were surprising omissions concerning the quality of learners' work and the quality of teaching.

What does Wigan and Leigh College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching by ensuring that course leaders monitor adherence to the preferred departmental method for learning in all classes.
- Increase teachers' awareness and understanding of active learning and peer assessment through in-house initiatives and development.
- Improve learners' understanding of their responsibilities to peers in group-based assignments through real or simulated vocational practice.

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

Context

44. Provision includes Skills for Life (SfL), ESOL and foundation studies with 1,204, 654 and 182 learners on each programme respectively. Foundation learners are largely full time, 90% of ESOL learners are full time while SfL learners are all part time, though many of these attend SfL provision in addition to their main course. Courses are located in three college centres and in community locations, including libraries. The learning centre in the local shopping mall attracts those who lack confidence to enter college. SfL provision is also offered on site to employees in local businesses and agencies.

Key findings

- Many programmes have high success rates, well above national average. These include provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, entry level 3 numeracy and Skills for Working Life. Overall, however, success rates are below the national average at levels 1 and 2, though achievement for 16 to 18 level 1 is above. Over the last three years, however, there has been significant improvement, following targeted action by the college.
- Attendance has improved, although it is still well below the college target of 90% overall. Retention remains an issue on many courses, particularly for ESOL and provision for 16 to 18 disengaged learners. However, retention has shown improvement in the last year following the introduction of curriculum changes and closer monitoring and support.
- Learners are successful overall in developing economic and social well-being. Many gain qualifications enabling progression to higher levels, entry to vocational/professional training and into employment. In foundation studies, progression stands at 70%. Learners feel safe and tutors make frequent reference to safe practice and safety awareness, including information about safe use of the internet.
- Health and well-being are strongly featured throughout the college and in the subject and tutorial curriculum. In 16 to 18 provision, tutors provide a strong focus on the dangers of substance abuse. Healthy eating and living are well promoted through college facilities and classroom teaching materials.
- There is much good teaching, carefully planned to provide stimulating, varied and relevant learning activity, although in some areas there is insufficient opportunity for individual learning. Initial assessment is thorough. In good lessons, detailed individual learning plans and targets are rehearsed and reviewed effectively. However, many targets are insufficiently measurable and tutors fail to plan for differentiated activity. Many tutors provide challenge through good questioning.
- The range of provision is very good. Vocational courses at entry and foundation levels attract young learners; ESOL courses are attended by asylum seekers and economic migrants, while SfL learners include those on college courses, those

wishing to upgrade their skills, gain employment or access further training. Of particular note is the provision for those not in employment, education or training (NEET) who are successfully engaged by the college. Partnerships with local businesses, schools and community and disability support agencies help sustain this work well.

- Support for learners is good. Tutors are well aware of the needs of learners and negotiate sensitively to maximise confidence building and learning. Inclusive learning officers are skilled in providing appropriate support. Support plans and individual learning plans for those with additional support needs address individual needs precisely. Tutorials deal well with personal and social issues. Although ESOL learners are supported well informally, there is no structured tutorial time for them.
- Leadership and management are good overall. Increased focus on the collection, analysis and reporting of data has resulted in clear action planning at curriculum level, to effect improvement. Strategic planning, leading to changes in the structure, delivery and nature of accreditation, has had a favourable impact on retention and achievement. The college responds well to learners on courses resulting from government-led initiatives.
- Safeguarding is good. Vulnerable learners are well supported by staff. All learners are encouraged to be safe when using the internet. Staff are well aware of their obligations.
- Equality and diversity are well addressed in all areas. Learners from many different backgrounds are included within this area and have a clear presence within the college. The focus on hard-to-reach learners is good. Their views are listened to and action taken where appropriate.
- Self-assessment reports are detailed but overly descriptive. There is a lack of critical analysis of teaching and learning, with most areas for improvement linked to data monitoring.

What does Wigan and Leigh College need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve retention, particularly for ESOL and in provision for 16 to 18-year-old disengaged learners, through closer monitoring and more consistent support for learners.
- Improve the effectiveness of target setting through focused training and support for staff in developing more measurable learning targets.
- Improve the effectiveness of individualised teaching by increasing levels of differentiated activity in all classes.
- Improve formalised support for ESOL learners by developing more formal structures for support.

Business, administration and law

Grade 3

Context

45. Some 471 learners aged 16 to 18 and 1,092 adults study programmes in business, administration and law. Of the 1,041 learners following learner responsive programmes, 661 are on full-time courses and 400 are studying part time. Some 486 learners are on employer responsive programmes. Courses are offered across five centres in Wigan and Leigh. Apprenticeships are offered in administration and team leadership. The college offers management, customer service and administration programmes through Train to Gain.

Key findings

- Success rates are mostly satisfactory and good for GCE A level. Retention rates for 16 to 18-year-olds studying first diplomas and national certificates declined in 2007/08, though improved significantly in 2009. In-year retention is good. The college has identified appropriate strategies to improve achievements on the minority of part-time courses in accounting and management where success rates are low.
- Overall and timely success rates for Train to Gain learners following the NVQ in team leadership are high. However, they are below national rates in customer service and administration. Overall and timely success rates for apprentices are poor.
- Learners make satisfactory progress. They develop confidence and skills and enjoy learning. Most learners progress successfully to higher levels of study or employment. However, many full-time learners aged 16 to 18 do not make sufficient progress; nor do they achieve the grades expected of them, given their previous attainment.
- Learners feel safe at college and in the workplace. Attention to safety in lessons and in college business centres is very good. The safeguarding of learners has a very high profile and learners recognise potential risks and how to seek advice. Tutorials raise learners' awareness of healthy lifestyles and of a range of social, personal and career issues effectively. However, the promotion of equality and diversity in learning sessions is often insufficient.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teachers make productive use of case studies and topical issues to illustrate the application of theory. However, too much teaching is no better than satisfactory. Individual needs are often identified on lesson plans though they are not well considered during lessons. Teachers do not sufficiently integrate the development of learners' numeracy skills within vocational lessons.
- Assessment of learners' work is good. Verbal and written feedback from teachers and assessors is supportive and constructive. However, the standard of internal verification on customer services and administration programmes is sometimes poor.

- The outstanding range of courses available across the college's centres and in the workplace offers learners extensive choices. Progression routes are available from foundation level through to higher education. Flexible arrangements for adults to study part time include a choice of days and times to meet personal circumstances.
- The college is highly responsive to employers' needs. Successful promotion of opportunities for local companies has resulted in substantial growth in Train to Gain and apprenticeships since the last inspection. Employers recognise the benefits of the training provided for employees.
- Very good initiatives enrich learners' studies and meet their interests. Most full-time learners gain additional qualifications in finance and ICT. They enjoy group visits to local businesses and fund-raising for local charities. Learners in administration value opportunities to gain practical office experience in the college business centres. However, there are insufficient work experience opportunities in local companies for business and administration students.
- Learners are well supported. They appreciate the encouragement from teachers to do their best and they benefit significantly from the regular opportunities to discuss progress. Part-time learners have good access to teachers and assessors through email, telephone and on-line chats.
- There are good strategies to listen to learners' views through course representatives, focus groups and feedback forms. Not all learners are aware of representative forums or the existence of student governors.
- Curriculum managers promote improvement effectively. Course meetings include regular reviews of learners' performance against targets and national averages. Attendance and retention are given a high priority and are regularly monitored. The significant growth in the business provision over the last three years has been well managed, though strategies to promote best practice and review the business provision college wide are not well established.
- Staff have clear direction and their roles and responsibilities are well understood. They are well supported through professional development and are effectively involved in self-assessment processes. Judgements in the self-assessment report are broadly accurate, though several are not succinctly evidenced.

What does Wigan and Leigh College need to do to improve further?

- Develop the current initiatives to improve further retention and achievement on full-time and part-time learner responsive courses where they are below or around national averages.
- Continue to develop existing systems to monitor effectively the progress of apprentices and Train to Gain learners in customer service and administration.
- Promote and extend the sharing of best practice across the full range of business provision, to benefit learners.
- Make better use of opportunities to promote equality and diversity in lessons.

Information about the inspection

46. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice principal, curriculum, quality and student support, 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 learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
47. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for 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)
Wigan and Leigh College

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16 to 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 to 18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	4022	0	3208	814	0
Part-time learners	6005	77	556	2763	2609
Overall effectiveness	2		2	2	3
Capacity to improve	2				
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?	3				
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?*	3				
Quality of provision	2		2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	2		2	2	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	2				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
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?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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