



Newbury College of Further Education



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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130602

Contents

Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	6
Curriculum areas	6
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Overall judgement	7
Main findings	9
Curriculum area inspections	13

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Newbury College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Dr Anne Murdoch
Address of college:	Monks Lane, Newbury, RG14 7TD
Telephone number:	01635 845000
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Chair of governors:	Tony Allen
Unique reference number:	130602
Name of lead inspector:	Bob Cowdrey ALI
Dates of inspection:	13-17 March 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Newbury College is a general further education (FE) College. It is located on the south side of Newbury, having relocated to a 40 acre green field site, as a private finance initiative pathfinder, in September 2002. The College's mission is to be a centre of excellence for learning, business and vocational skills. It serves Newbury and the growing town of Thatcham. Its catchment is predominantly rural, including West Berkshire and the nearer parts of Reading and North Hampshire. Newbury College is the only FE College in West Berkshire and is contracted by West Berkshire Council to deliver 90% of adult and community learning in the area through 52 outreach centres. The ACL contract generated 50% of the College's 22,023 enrolments in 2004/05. The college provision ranges from pre-entry to level 4. COVE (Centre for Vocational Excellence) status for management and finance was reinstated on an interim basis in January 2006.
2. Unemployment rates for West Berkshire (1.1%) are the lowest in the south east. Staying on rates for 16 year olds are below the Berkshire average and progression to FE is low at 16%. West Berkshire (population 144,500) is the largest of the unitary authorities and the most sparsely populated. The College operates a business development unit in Newbury town centre. It enjoys numerous and diverse links with the local community and with major local employers including Vodafone, Bayer, Kerridge and the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston.
3. In 2003/04, CPR data show that the college enrolled a total of 12,151 learners of whom 10,702 (88%) were aged 19 and over. There were 1,449 full-time learners, 595 (41%) aged 16-18. There are far more female learners than male learners. Around 7% of learners are from minority ethnic groups.

Scope of the inspection

4. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management
 - specialist provision in: health, public services and care; engineering and manufacturing technologies; information and communication technology;

visual, performing arts and media; English and modern foreign languages;
preparation for life and work programmes; business administration.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Achievements and standards	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Quality of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Leadership and management	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.

Curriculum areas

Health, public services and care	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Visual, performing arts and media	Satisfactory: grade 3
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English and modern foreign languages	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Preparation for life and work	Good: grade 2
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Business, customer services and retail	Satisfactory: grade 3
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

5. This is a satisfactory college. Retention and achievement rates show a trend of steady, continuous improvement at levels 2 and 3 for long courses for all ages. However, the figures for level 1 show a significant decline to below national averages. Overall success rates for long courses declined while those for short courses improved marginally from 2002/03. The standards of learners' work are generally satisfactory. Learners on preparation for life and work programmes produce work of good quality.
6. Much teaching is satisfactory and a smaller proportion is good or better. The college has identified the need to improve the proportion of good and better teaching but the teaching observation process has yet to be fully implemented. Assessment procedures are used effectively but the assessment of course work in English is unsatisfactory.
7. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is good. The range of provision is satisfactory and meets the needs of most learners. Employer engagement is particularly effective and links with schools and higher education establishments are well developed. The college has a wide range of enrichment activities but participation rates are low.
8. The college provides good guidance and support for learners. The tutorial system is well organised and learners receive good individual support. Links with Connexions and Job Centre Plus services are particularly effective. Attendance is closely monitored. Class sizes have risen over the last three years but still remain slightly below the national average for similar colleges.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal and governors set a clear direction for the college. The performance of some curriculum areas has improved since the last inspection but there has been insufficient progress in raising the standards of teaching and learning and the rigour of course reviews. Self-assessment is thorough and generally accurate. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: grade 3

10. The college has demonstrated that its capacity to improve is satisfactory. Governors are committed to the mission of the college and the senior management team has introduced a range of strategies and processes to improve the provision. Courses which were underperforming have been evaluated and in some cases replaced with others. The overall quality of teaching and learning remains mostly satisfactory. A teaching and learning

manager has been recently appointed to focus on supporting and developing teaching staff.

11. Leadership and management have improved and are now satisfactory. Governors and senior managers set a clear strategic direction for the college. College plans and targets are closely linked to strategic objectives. Financial planning and management are effective. Communications are effective. New management structures are firmly in place. The management of work-based learning is good. Management structures are unclear in some curriculum areas. Some managers are new in post and it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness. Quality assurance processes are in place. The self-assessment process is thorough and generally accurate. Course reviews lack rigour in some areas.

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

12. The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement is satisfactory. The college has made significant improvements in the management of work-based learning and key skills. Four curriculum areas have improved and all areas are at least satisfactory. While there has been improvement in retention and achievement at levels 2 and 3, standards have not risen consistently across the college. Management information is accurate and robust but some quality assurance activities are underdeveloped.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- strong, supportive governance
- very effective communications across the college
- very strong support for students
- high standards of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation
- well developed links with partners and employers
- high standards of preparation for life and work provision
- much improved work-based learning provision

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates at level 1 for all age groups
- increasing the amount of good and outstanding teaching
- the lack of rigour in some course reviews
- weaknesses in action planning for improvement
- improving the impact of quality systems
- improving participation in enrichment activities

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

13. In 2004/05 success rates for all ages on long courses at levels 2 and 3 improved and were at or slightly above national averages. In 2003/04, success rates for all ages at level 1 were above national averages and declined to below the averages in 2004/05. In 2005 achievements of very short and short courses were above national averages with the exception of short courses for 16-18 year old learners, which was significantly below the national average. In 2005 generally retention rates improved for all ages at level 2 and 3 and were at or just above national averages. In the period 2003 to 2005, retention for all ages at level 1 declined to a figure in 2005 six percentage points below average for 16-18 year old learners and nine percentage points below for 19+ learners. In 2005, retention rates on long courses for 19+ learners were 18 percentage points above national averages. Achievement rates for all ages on long courses declined at level 1 to just below the national average, while at level 2 and level 3 rates are at or above national averages for all ages. Achievement rates for all learners on short courses are generally at or above national averages, with the exception of 16-18 year old learners where rates are significantly below national averages. Key skills achievements rose from 3% in 2002/03 to 45% in 2004/05.
14. In 2005, work-based learning success rates for NVQ only courses at 85% were significantly higher than the national average. Overall framework achievement for both apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships improved to just above the national average. Significant improvements were made in most curriculum areas. The management of work-based learning is much improved with close monitoring of progress and achievement and effective links with the college departments responsible for the delivery of the programmes.
15. Value added data shows that learners generally perform as well at their final assessments as their qualifications on entry predict. Some curriculum areas are stronger than others. The college has clear policies and procedures for attendance and punctuality. Effective links exist between tutors, advisers and the attendance officer but in some areas, attendance is considerably below the college's minimum target. Class sizes have improved steadily over the last three years but there are still some small classes. The standards of learners' work are generally satisfactory and good in preparation for life and work programmes.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

16. Most teaching and learning is at least satisfactory. In the good lessons, teachers provide interesting materials for learners, use Information and Learning Technology (ILT) effectively and have a depth of knowledge and understanding of their subject area. Learners recognise and respond well to

- this expertise by working hard. In many lessons, teachers challenge learners well and they respond enthusiastically. They are motivated and enjoy their learning. In weaker lessons, poor planning, unimaginative teaching methods and ineffective checks on learning result in learners making slow progress. The quality of teaching and learning of key skills is good.
17. Assessment is satisfactory overall. In most areas teachers provide regular assessment that is returned within agreed deadlines and contains supportive feedback. Regular progress meetings allow learners the opportunity to comment on their performance and to identify and agree future targets. Arrangements to keep parents and carers informed are satisfactory. Individual learning plans in health, care and public services are used effectively and provide specific and detailed targets. In some other curriculum areas, targets for improvement are not clear or are not used to inform learners of how to improve.
 18. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The college has increased the range and breadth of its courses and introduced new areas of learning and is generally satisfactory in meeting the needs and interests of learners. Progression routes are good in most curriculum areas and progression rates to employment, further training or higher education are high. The college works very closely with local secondary schools to provide a good range of vocational courses for about 100 pupils aged 14-16, many of whom progress to courses at the college.
 19. The range of courses for adults is wide, with many professional, leisure and distance learning opportunities at the college and at centres across West Berkshire. The college responds particularly well to employers and provides courses specifically designed to meet their training needs including courses in literacy and numeracy to improve the basic skills of employees.
 20. Arrangements for guidance and support are good. Induction arrangements enable learners to settle into their studies quickly. Systems to track learners' applications and record their support requirements work well. A good range of services including advice and guidance, welfare and counselling is readily accessible to learners. Counselling provision is sufficient for the current number of learners. The college has good links with external agencies providing wider support services and careers advice. There is a wide range of weekly cross-college enrichment activities such as a film and drama club and sports activities, although the uptake of most of these is low.
 21. Arrangements for tutorial support have been strengthened. Academic tutors manage the overall tutorial system well and ensure a consistent approach to target setting, attendance monitoring, behaviour and pastoral arrangements. Tutorials are now observed as part of the college's lesson observation scheme.
 22. Learners' additional learning needs are identified effectively. Their needs are largely met. This provision is well managed. Almost half of all full-time learners

receive additional learning support. Retention and pass rates have improved for those who receive this support but the college does not analyse the impact of learning support on higher grade attainment.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

23. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors and senior managers set a clear strategic direction for the college. College plans and targets are closely linked to strategic objectives and derived in consultation with governors and staff. Financial planning and management are effective. Communications are good.
24. Managers monitor the progress of action plans closely and take corrective action as necessary. However, a few action plans lack sufficient detail to bring about improvement. As a result progress in some areas is slow. There is a perceived lack of clear direction and structure to the management of a few curriculum areas. Curriculum reviews are generally good, but there are a few weaker reviews.
25. Governors are well informed about the performance of the college and are strongly committed to its mission. Corporation meetings are well focused and the monitoring of college performance, including financial matters, is good. Some governors link effectively to functional or curriculum areas through the 'Adopt a Governor' scheme.
26. Since the last inspection the college has strengthened the quality assurance system and its management. Policies and procedures are now well developed and self-assessment processes are thorough. Self-assessment reports are stringently evaluated by panels including governors and external participants. However, although reports are graded accurately, a few remain insufficiently evaluative or self-critical.
27. The lesson observation process is thorough and feedback to teachers is comprehensive and developmental. Staff speak highly of this. However, opportunities to share the good practice identified are not exploited sufficiently to help raise standards in weaker areas. The monitoring of teaching and learning targets within curriculum area plans is weak. Staff appraisal and training are closely linked to strategic priorities.
28. The college management information system provides a good range of accurate and accessible reports to curriculum managers to help them to monitor and evaluate course performance effectively.
29. Training in diversity and race relations has been completed successfully for all staff. Appropriate equal opportunity policies are in place and governors and staff have been trained in their legal responsibilities with regard to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002. Child protection procedures and those for vulnerable adults

are fully in place and well managed to ensure that learners are safe and encouraged to achieve their potential. The college has a well managed approach to addressing aspects of Every Child Matters (ECM) and a clear and comprehensive strategy to improving the well being and safety of young people. The college effectively promotes healthy living through posters, visiting speakers and well developed links with external support agencies. Participation by black and minority ethnic groups is 7% compared with a target population of 3.5%. The achievements of learners from minority ethnic groups are monitored but there is no strategy to support the college's target of further increasing the recruitment of black and minority ethnic learners. Staff are well qualified and learning resources are good.

Curriculum area inspections

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

31. The college offers a range of full-time courses in early years and public services at levels 2 and 3 and in health care at levels 1 to 3. An entry level certificate in childcare is offered as part of the 14-16 cross college provision. NVQs and apprenticeships are available in care and early years, and short courses meet the needs of specific employers. Counselling courses are offered at level 2. There are 112 learners enrolled on full-time courses, most aged 16-18. There are 984 part time enrolments including 481 who study by distance learning.

Strengths

- high pass rates on level 2 courses in childcare
- high success rates on NVO programmes in Care and Early Years
- well managed and delivered key skill programmes

Areas for improvement

- limited courses for learners to progress in health, care and public services
- weak management of some aspects of the provision

Achievements and standards

32. Learners' achievements are generally satisfactory. Level 2 courses in child care have high pass rates. NVQ programmes in care and early years have high success rates. The management and integration of key skills is good and pass rates are high. There is good progress towards the achievement of apprenticeship frameworks. Attendance is satisfactory. Learners are punctual and well behaved in lessons. The standard of learners' work is good and they are well motivated. However, progression in health, care and public services is limited. In health and public services, level 3 courses commenced in 2005/06 and low recruitment has resulted in no level 2 courses.

Quality of provision

33. Teaching is satisfactory. In the better lessons a range of methods are used to motivate and engage learners. The integration of theory and practice is good and work experience is used effectively to develop practical skills such as communication and craft skills. Planning is thorough and objectives are clearly linked to course requirements. In the less effective lessons the pace of learning is slow and there is insufficient challenge.

34. Assessment is good. Individual learning needs are identified early and appropriate support is provided. Course assessment is thorough and detailed including the correction of grammar. Feedback is constructive with clear guidance on how to improve.
35. Support for learners is very good. Individual target setting is effective and learner progress is regularly monitored through the tutorial programme. Learners speak highly of and value the support from tutors and learning support advisers.
36. Resources are satisfactory. Staff have relevant vocational qualifications. There are good sports facilities and ICT resources but some of these are underused. Some teaching rooms are dull and uninspiring and have poor acoustics.
37. Links with employers are satisfactory and a good range of placements support the curriculum.

Leadership and management

38. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Management at course level has improved and is now satisfactory. However, there has been a slow response by the college to some issues raised at the last inspection and there remains insufficient focus on the management of the curriculum area. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Communication is good and staff feel well supported. Course reviews and the self-assessment lack rigour. Data is not always used effectively to improve quality and inform planning.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

39. The college offers a range of courses in motor vehicle engineering with a small amount of part-time day engineering provision at level 3. At the time of inspection there were 99 learners aged 16-18 and 87 adult learners. Some 88% of the full-time learners on motor vehicle engineering programmes are 16-18 year olds. The college also provides courses for local school pupils aged 14-16 and work-based learning apprenticeships.

Strengths

- high success rates in motor vehicle work-based learning programmes in 2004/05
- high pass rate on national certificate programmes
- well managed and delivered national certificate programmes
- well developed and effective links with employers

Areas for improvement

- declining retention on 16-18 level 1 motor vehicle engineering courses
- poor health and safety practice in some workshop classes
- little sharing of good practice across engineering specialisms

Achievement and standards

40. Success rates for work-based programmes in 2004/05 for vehicle engineering are high. Pass rates on the national certificate programmes are high at over 90% over the last three years. Most learners attend regularly, are punctual and enjoy their course. They progressively develop a range of skills in preparation for work. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory overall and high for the national certificate programme. Many apprentices take extra units such as progression awards in addition to their mandatory core units. Most portfolio evidence for work-based learners is of a high standard. The retention rate on level 1 motor vehicle programmes is declining and has been below national averages for all levels over the last three years.

Quality of provision

41. Most teaching and learning is at least satisfactory and many lessons are good. The national certificate programme is well managed and has comprehensive systems in place to support and monitor the quality of provision. Staff from one employer regularly visit the college to observe teaching and help mark assignments. Teachers use a wide variety of techniques to progressively develop learning topics. In the best lessons learners are engaged in a range of activities which stimulate their interest and allow them to take charge of their own learning. Learners are set challenging targets and are supported well to achieve. Learners make good progress and 68% of national certificate learners go on to higher education.
42. The range of provision is satisfactory. The area has well developed links with over 80 companies. The college is one of a few establishments offering courses in Radiation Safety. Staff are appropriately qualified and accommodation is generally satisfactory. Most classrooms are well equipped and have interactive whiteboards, which are effectively used to support learning.
43. Health and safety practice in some workshop lessons is poor. Unsafe practices observed during the inspection included drilling without eye protection and using hand tools inappropriately. The vehicle engineering workshop is untidy and cluttered. Assessment practice is rigorous. Additional work-based assessment visits in vehicle engineering have helped to raise success rates.

Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management are satisfactory and there has been some good progress made in work-based learning since the last inspection. Communication within the sections is good. Internal verification is effective. All external quality reports are at least satisfactory or good.
45. The self-assessment report accurately reflects the provision. Staff development is satisfactory, but the good practice developed in the delivery of the national certificate engineering programme could be more widely shared in the section.

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

46. About 1,000 adult learners take part-time IT application courses from a selection that includes the information technology certificate at level 1 and the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) at level 2. The majority of these adults study at one of three outreach centres. Provision on the main site for learners aged 16-18 includes the full time BTEC national diploma at level 3 and the part-time certificate in digital applications that may be combined with other courses. At the time of inspection there were 94 learners on these courses. About 150 learners study the key skill in IT in addition to their main college course.

Strengths

- high pass rates on adult part-time courses
- good range of courses
- effective partnerships to support outreach provision
- good learning resources

Areas for improvement

- low retention rates on national diploma and GCSE IT courses
- insufficient links with employers
- insufficient engagement of staff with curriculum development

Achievements and standards

47. Pass rates on part-time courses for adults are high. The pass rate for the Start IT course has been 100% for the last two years. The pass rate for the ECDL is also well above national averages. Both the national diploma for IT practitioners and the GCSE in information technology were significantly below national averages for 2004 and 2005. Most learners have good practical skills. The standard of their assignment work is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

48. Most teaching is satisfactory. The best lessons are carefully planned and effective use is made of the high standard of teaching resources. In one lesson the teacher effectively used a camera connected to an interactive board to project the workings of a hard drive in detail to the whole class. In some less successful lessons teachers fail to regularly check the progress of learners working on assignments. Most learners' work relies on simulations and lacks real application to local industry or business. Learners have access to very good resources.
49. There is a good range of provision with progression routes from entry level through to higher education. The college has productive partnership arrangements with another college, a private company and a supermarket chain, enabling it to offer an effective ICT course in both the town centre and within a supermarket. Some adult learners working in the town centre location are unaware of progression routes at the nearby college centre. There are not enough opportunities to prepare learners for employment through work experience or links with employers.
50. All learners receive good advice and guidance before they start their course. Learners appreciate being able to access career interviews at the adult centres. Assessment and recording of learners' progress is thorough and effective.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The quality of the ICT rooms and equipment is high. The department has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. However, progress to address some of the weaknesses from the previous inspection has been slow and there are no clear plans within the team to develop the curriculum or to ensure staff keep their skills up to date. Opportunities to share good practice across all staff are not fully developed.

Visual, performing arts and media

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

52. The college offers full-time courses in art and design, media and performing arts. Courses include an introductory diploma in performing arts, BTEC first diplomas, national certificates and awards in art and design, media and performing arts, and AS-level and GCE A-level courses in media, film and photography. At the time of the inspection, there were 472 learners enrolled of which 38% are adults. There are two adult part-time courses in photography.

Strengths

- high success rates for level 3 courses
- successful introduction of new courses
- effective support for learners
- good accommodation and resources

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on some courses
- insufficiently challenging teaching for some learners

Achievement and standards

53. Pass rates have improved on all level 3 courses and are now at or above national averages. Success rates in AS video production courses are high at 80% and in AVCE media courses (70%). Retention rates are high on A2 media studies courses (96%). Success rates in GCSE art, AVCE media and national diploma in performing arts are low. Overall standards of work are satisfactory. Learners' work is good in performing arts courses. In a recycling project, art learners produce some imaginative sculptures, and in a recent production of Shakespeare's "Much Ado about Nothing", performing arts learners display a good understanding of language and style. Attendance is low in some lessons.

Quality of provision

54. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, ILT is used well and learners develop independent research skills. Opportunities for key skills evidence are regularly signposted in assignment briefs. Teachers are enthusiastic and learners respond well. In the less effective lessons learners are not sufficiently challenged. Lesson plans are not routinely monitored. Second year performing arts students are taught about production in a theoretical way rather than through a practical process, for example by running a production company themselves. Assessment is satisfactory.
55. Many new courses were offered at the beginning of the year and learners enjoy the flexibility and variety offered by combining academic and vocational qualifications. Retention on new courses is good. Good support is available for learners with identified additional learning needs. Tutorials are used effectively to help learners to research assignments and develop analytical and critical thinking skills. Learners value tutorials and the accessibility of their teachers.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A regular cycle of meetings ensures good communication, and improved teamwork allows for more collaborative projects to enhance learners' experience. The range of accommodation and resources is good and media learners are able to

undertake commercial work as a result. The self-assessment process is robust and largely accurate but understates areas for development in teaching and learning. Internal verification procedures are thorough but a few course reviews are weak.

English and modern foreign languages

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

57. The college offers courses in English and modern foreign languages from level 1 to level 3. Day time provision includes GCSE, GCE AS-level and GCE A-level English language and GCE A-level English literature. GCSE, GCE AS-level and A-level English language and literature are offered in the evening, along with a range of modern foreign language courses at levels 1 and 2. At the time of the inspection there were 38 learners aged 16-18 and 186 adult learners. Modern foreign language courses are mainly attended by adult learners.

Strengths

- high pass rates on most GCE AS-level, GCE A-level courses and level 1 modern foreign language courses
- good development of learners' oral skills in modern foreign languages
- effective assessment on level 1 modern foreign language courses
- good resources to promote learning in modern foreign languages

Areas for improvement

- declining pass rates on level 2 courses
- consistently low retention on GCE AS-level courses
- unsatisfactory assessment of coursework in English
- insufficiently rigorous course reviews in English

Achievements and standards

58. Pass rates are high on GCE AS-level and A-level English language, AS-level Italian and level 1 modern foreign language courses. Success rates in GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature improved in 2004/05 and are now above national averages. Retention and success rates have been consistently below the national average on GCE AS-level courses. Pass rates declined on level 2 courses. Those students who complete their level 3 courses achieve in line with expectation. Modern foreign language students are developing good communication skills and enjoying their language lessons. Most students are developing satisfactory language skills in English but skills of critical analysis are weak.

Quality of provision

59. Teaching is generally satisfactory with some good teaching in modern foreign languages. In modern foreign languages, teachers use a variety of methods, use the target language effectively and have high expectations of their learners. In English, there is insufficient planning to meet individual learning needs and the most able are not sufficiently stretched.
60. Assessment and monitoring of progress in modern foreign languages are efficient and effective. In English, assessment records show that there has been considerable over-marking, misinterpretation of coursework requirements and errors in allocating marks.
61. Resources are good and effectively support and enhance learning in modern foreign languages. Handouts are of good quality in English but there is insufficient use of audio, visual and ICT resources to cater for the full range of learning styles. Wall displays serve to enliven the environment and promote equality and diversity issues.
62. Guidance and support for learners are good. Specific learning needs are identified and addressed speedily. Advisers have helped improve student attendance and behaviour.

Leadership and management

63. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers are committed to improving standards of teaching and learning. The self-assessment report identifies a number of issues in recruitment and retention of learners. Managers are making some progress in addressing these through initial assessment, on-course support and restructuring the provision. Schemes of work in English do not sufficiently detail methodology and assessment procedures. Course reviews in English are not sufficiently rigorous and insufficient use is made of data for course planning and target setting. Staff have benefited from equality and diversity training.

Preparation for life and work

Good: grade 2

Context

64. The college offers full- and part-time literacy and numeracy courses from pre-entry to level 2 on the main college site, in the community, and in the workplace. Discrete courses are offered for those learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and there are arrangements for learners to engage in work experience in the community. The number of learners enrolled at the time of inspection was 1,421 of which 117 were aged 16-18. The majority of courses lead to a qualification.

Strengths

- high success rates in key skills at level 1
- good progress by learners in lessons
- good teaching and learning
- good use of ICT in courses for students with learning difficulties and disabilities
- good management of the provision
- effective relationships with external agencies to support learning in the workplace

Areas for improvement

- declining success rates for national tests in literacy
- insufficient ICT to support learning in literacy, numeracy and language

Achievement and standards

65. Success rates in key skills at level 1 are high, well above the national average. Success rates on ESOL short programmes are also above national averages. Success rates in key skills at level 2 have improved to around national averages. Success rates for national tests in literacy are declining but some remain above national averages. Learners make good progress across the programme area. They are set relevant personal and learning objectives. Recording of learner progress in key skills is thorough. All learners have the opportunity to achieve relevant qualifications. Close attention is paid to health and safety requirements including detailed risk assessments.

Quality of provision

66. Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all learners in the group. In a numeracy lesson a good range of practical maths activity on the theme of 'shape' was used and tailored to the needs of individual learners from entry level 2 to level 1. Key skills work is vocationally relevant. Teachers are skilful, and use a range of approaches which interest and engage learners. Discussions are well managed; in language lessons good attention is paid to correct pronunciation and the accuracy of learners' grammar.
67. Good additional support is given in workshops for literacy, numeracy and second language speakers. All teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards. Teachers make good use of specialist ICT equipment when teaching learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. In literacy, numeracy and language classes there is limited ICT equipment in base rooms.

Leadership and management

68. The provision is well led and managed. Communications are very effective. Arrangements for additional support and key skills have improved since the

last inspection. Programmes have improved overall and progression routes have been developed for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. The self-assessment reports reflect the area and clearly identify areas for improvement. Staff hold relevant qualifications. Effective relationships have developed with external agencies to support learning in the workplace. Partnerships have resulted in good work experience for many learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Language and literacy lessons are provided for a number of employers on their premises.

Business, customer services and retail

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

69. Courses are offered in business, administration and law to 50 full-time and 363 part-time learners. Professional programmes offered include management, marketing and accounting. There are 66 learners aged 16-18, mainly full-time. There are five apprentices and two advanced apprentices in accounting or administration. The college was reinstated as an interim Centre of Vocational Excellence (COVE) status for Management and Finance in January 2006.

Strengths

- high pass rates on accounting NVQ level 2 programmes
- effective use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning
- effective support for learners
- good teaching on full-time business courses

Areas for improvement

- low retention on many distance learning courses
- lack of rigour in course reviews
- narrow range of provision

Achievements and standards

70. Pass rates are high on the NVQ 2 accounting course. Marketing course success rates are above national averages. The small number of learners on accounting and administration work-based learning programmes progress well and demonstrate good accounting skills. Pass rates on the NVQ level 4 in accounting are low. Learners generally enjoy their studies and participate enthusiastically in group work, developing a range of business related skills. There is low retention on distance learning courses. The college has introduced a more robust interview and induction process for these learners.

Quality of provision

71. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and in some lessons they are good. In vocational business and professional lessons realistic work activities are used to develop the learners' business skills and confidence. Full time business learners work with local companies and charities. Information and learning technology is used effectively in many of the lessons increasing the motivation and skill levels of learners. Good use is made of practising professionals on part-time courses including marketing and facilities management.
72. More confident, able learners, on some higher level courses are not sufficiently challenged. Assessment and monitoring of students' work are satisfactory overall and on some courses are good. Learners value the detailed feedback and prompt return of marked work on vocational business courses. Initial assessment is used well to identify individual support needs.
73. There is good support for all learners. Comprehensive course handbooks are used effectively to help learners settle at induction and throughout their programmes. Learners value the individual support they receive from tutors and can identify how it has improved their studies. Learning support assistants work well with business tutors to ensure learners progress well.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The restructuring to form the Business and Professional section was effectively managed and has been well received by staff. Communication is good and meetings, including course team meetings, are held regularly in the Business and Professional section. Planning is now more effective, but does not always involve all managers. The range of provision is narrow and enrolment onto some courses is low. The college is trying to address this but progress has been slow. The course review process lacks rigour and is not consistently applied. There is limited use of target setting to challenge and improve performance.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	02/03	326	66	56	10	2,175	77	55	22
	03/04	462	70	60	10	1,413	62	59	3
	04/05	371	54	60	-6	1,381	49	59	-10
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	03/04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	04/05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NVQs	02/03	50	38	56	-18	6	83	57	26
	03/04	33	64	61	3	3	67	62	5
	04/05	13	69	61	8	1	100	62	38
Other	02/03	276	71	56	15	2,169	77	55	22
	03/04	429	70	60	10	1,410	62	59	3
	04/05	358	54	60	-6	1,380	49	59	-10

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	02/03	621	47	52	-5	1,880	48	49	-1
	03/04	558	43	56	-13	1,651	48	53	-5
	04/05	526	57	56	1	1,215	60	53	7
GCSEs	02/03	265	52	57	-5	191	54	55	-1
	03/04	201	47	61	-14	121	65	59	6
	04/05	239	54	61	-7	117	62	59	3
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	24	58	59	-1	2	50	53	-3
	03/04	1	100	63	37	13	92	57	35
	04/05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NVQs	02/03	125	45	42	3	99	55	49	6
	03/04	108	35	52	-17	72	53	53	0
	04/05	63	59	52	7	167	68	53	15
Other	02/03	207	40	50	-10	1,588	46	48	-2
	03/04	248	42	54	-12	1,445	45	52	-7
	04/05	224	60	54	6	931	58	52	6

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	02/03	547	55	62	-7	766	64	51	13
	03/04	567	52	64	-12	528	54	53	1
	04/05	422	59	64	-5	643	60	53	7
A/A2 Levels	02/03	69	68	82	-14	66	62	63	-1
	03/04	70	73	84	-11	34	71	66	5
	04/05	68	84	84	0	27	81	66	15
AS Levels	02/03	212	55	61	-6	120	58	48	10
	03/04	238	49	63	-14	65	48	50	-2
	04/05	148	55	63	-8	92	48	50	-2
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	177	54	50	4	44	66	45	21
	03/04	89	58	52	6	12	50	43	7
	04/05	59	47	52	-5	21	57	43	14
NVOs	02/03	12	50	51	-1	81	62	45	17
	03/04	25	60	54	6	69	48	47	1
	04/05	18	61	54	7	114	61	47	14
Other	02/03	77	43	55	-12	455	66	54	12
	03/04	145	41	56	-15	348	55	56	-1
	04/05	129	54	56	-2	389	61	56	5