



Herefordshire College of Technology



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

Published
July 2006

Provider reference
130710

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Basic information about the college

Name of college: Herefordshire College of Technology

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Ian Peake

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Chair of governors: Val Thomasson

Unique reference number: 130710

Name of lead inspector: Paul Joyce, HMI

Dates of inspection: 15-19 May 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Herefordshire College of Technology is the only general further education (GFE) college in the county. It serves a population of over 177,000, which is widely dispersed over a rural area. The college shares a campus in Hereford with the sixth form college and the college of Art and Design. Courses for blacksmiths and farriers are provided at a specialist rural crafts centre away from the main campus in nearby Holme Lacy. The college has a work-based learning provision and also delivers adult and community courses and courses for employers in venues across the county.
2. Courses are offered in 14 of the 15 Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) sector subject areas on a full-time and part-time basis. Provision is offered from entry level to level 3 in many curriculum areas with some provision at level 4 and above. The majority of learners are enrolled on programmes in health, public services and care, preparation for life and work, and on business administration courses.
3. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,128 full-time and 7,016 part-time learners enrolled. Of these, 817 of the full-time and 338 of the part-time learners were 16-18 year olds. The majority of learners were adults. A further 270 learners were on work-based learning courses. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds was 1.1% which was higher than the proportion in the local population. The gender balance was 45% male and 55% female. The unemployment rate in Herefordshire was 1.7%, which was below the average for England.
4. The college's mission is 'success for our students' and it seeks to give learners the best possible education, training and personal support to enable them to realise their full potential.

Scope of the inspection

5. 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, social care and child care; rural crafts; engineering; preparation for life and work; and business administration.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievements and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2

Curriculum areas

Health, social care and child care	Good: grade 2
Rural crafts	Good: grade 2
Engineering	Good: grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: grade 3
Business administration	Satisfactory: grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

6. This is a good and improving college. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates for adults at all levels are above national averages. Success rates at level 2 for both adults and for 16-18 year olds are especially high. Success rates for 16-18 year olds at levels 1 and 3 are improving but are below average. The achievement rates for work-based learners are significantly above national rates. Learners attend well and enjoy life at college.
7. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teaching is more effective in practical lessons than it is in classroom theory lessons. Learners develop good work related and vocational skills. There is some good teaching which motivates and challenges learners but too few lessons address the full learning needs of each individual.
8. The curriculum offer is broad and the range of courses provided is good at meeting the needs and interests of learners. There are effective links with employers, schools and the local community. Work experience is a particularly positive feature. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good.
9. Learners receive good guidance and support. Initial advice and guidance provide a good basis to enable informed choice. Initial assessment is comprehensive and those learners who require support receive it. Support arrangements are very effective in assisting learners to achieve their learning goals. The Skills for Life strategy is underdeveloped and is not embedded throughout the college.
10. Leadership and management are good. The principal provides strong leadership and sets a clear strategic direction for the college. Governors are very effective in monitoring college performance. The financial position has much improved. Self-assessment is broadly accurate in identifying the main strengths and areas for improvement at college level. There are inconsistencies in quality assurance and self-assessment at course level. The college is not fully compliant with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Value for money is good.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

11. The college demonstrates good capacity to improve its provision. Leadership and management are good and provide clear strategic direction. Plans to redevelop the main college site are well advanced. Communication is good and morale amongst staff is high. Measures taken to improve areas of unsatisfactory provision have been effective. New self-assessment and quality assurance arrangements provide a useful basis for monitoring and improving

performance, although the college has yet to capitalise fully on their potential. The self-assessment report for 2004/05 was broadly accurate in its overall judgements, although in some curriculum areas the judgements on areas for improvement were insufficiently robust. Managers receive reliable data on which to base decisions. Financial management and performance are strong.

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

12. The college has made good progress in successfully addressing most of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Overall success rates and the quality of teaching for learners aged 16-18 have improved. The college's weak financial position has been rectified. Plans to redevelop the college's main campus are intended to address the persistent accommodation issues. Student guidance and curriculum planning have improved. Although self-assessment procedures have improved, their implementation is inconsistent. The three curriculum areas which were judged to be unsatisfactory at the inspection in 2002 had all improved to satisfactory on re-inspection.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- high success rates for adults
- high and improving success rates at level 2
- strong leadership providing clear strategic direction
- broad curriculum offer meeting the needs of learners and the community
- good development of learners' workplace and vocational skills
- effective links with employers, schools and the local community.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- the development and embedding of the Skills for Life strategy
- planning to ensure the needs of all learners are met in all lessons
- the rigour of self-assessment and quality assurance at course level.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

13. The proportion of learners who complete their courses and achieve their qualifications has improved. Success rates at level 2, which represent 28% of college provision, have risen significantly and these rates are now well above national averages. Success rates for the large number of adult learners across the college are higher than those for 16-18 year olds. Adult success rates at all levels are above national averages. Success rates for 16-18 year olds on courses at levels 1 and 3 have improved but remain below average.
14. Pass rates overall have risen and at most levels are above national rates. Significant improvements have been made to the pass rates on key skill qualifications. The proportion of learners who drop out of their courses before completing them has reduced, improving overall retention rates. Completion rates for work-based learners are high. For apprentices in construction and advanced apprentices in engineering, completion rates are significantly above national rates. There are no significant variations in achievement between male and female learners or learners from different ethnic groups.
15. The standard of practical work produced by learners is good in many areas. In construction, engineering and on blacksmithing and farriery courses within the rural crafts curriculum, good practical and work related skills are developed and applied. Learners on foundation programmes also develop good work skills during work experience placements. Success rates on General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced level courses are low. The college has recognised this in its self-assessment and appropriate action is planned to address this underperformance. Overall, the self-assessment report provides a sound evaluation of learners' achievements.
16. Most learners are set appropriately challenging targets and most enjoy their college experience. Learners generally make satisfactory progress. Attendance levels overall are good and have improved. The attendance rate for full-time learners at the time of the inspection was 89% and for part-time learners was 90%. Attendance at lessons was good, and most learners arrived punctually.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning for 16-18 year olds has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The teaching of practical lessons is better than the teaching of classroom based theory lessons. Many teachers make effective use of specialist learning resources and use learning materials that are vocationally relevant and enhance learning. In the best lessons, teaching is innovative and inspiring with effectively differentiated learning activities used well to promote individual learning. However, too few lessons cater sufficiently well for the learning needs of each individual within the group. These lessons, whilst satisfactory,

- do not fully engage or challenge all learners to enable them to progress to their full potential.
18. The college has improved its monitoring of teaching and learning and this has started to have a positive impact. There are now fewer unsatisfactory lessons. There is an increasing use of e-learning in some areas. However, the use of ICT overall is underdeveloped and there is not a consistent approach to lesson planning. The internal observation system, whilst improved, is still not sufficiently robust in identifying the qualities necessary to transform satisfactory teaching into teaching that is good or better. The self-assessment report, whilst accurately identifying many of the strengths and areas for improvement, overestimated the overall quality of teaching.
 19. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All 16-18 year olds, and any adult who requests it, receive a systematic diagnostic assessment of need. Referral arrangements are satisfactory and learners who require support receive it. Assessment practices are satisfactory and the monitoring of learners' progress is effective. Individual learning plans are updated during termly progress reviews which monitor progress against targets. Some targets lack clarity and are not sufficiently detailed. Work-based learners receive comprehensive 12-weekly progress reviews.
 20. The teaching of key skills has been integrated into learners' main programmes and is satisfactory. There has been substantial improvement in performance. Learners receive satisfactory feedback on how they are performing and what they need to do to improve further. However, the quality of feedback is inconsistent across different subject areas. There are effective arrangements to inform parents and carers of the progress of learners aged 16-18.
 21. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. The curriculum is broad and includes an established work-based provision. The college works well with employers, schools and the community to promote inclusion and attract young people into post-16 vocational learning. This includes the successful use of a mobile classroom which serves many rural areas. The college successfully recruits learners from non-traditional groups onto programmes in rural crafts and some part-time childcare programmes. However, managers do not sufficiently analyse data on the achievement of different groups of learners.
 22. The range of programmes and courses is good at meeting the needs and interests of learners. The college's self-assessment underestimated the effectiveness of its work in this area. There are good links with employers. Many learners participate in a varied programme of enrichment activities through which they are able to make a positive contribution. Arrangements for work placements are good on most programmes, and are particularly effective on land-based programmes and on programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Progression routes available are satisfactory. The

provision for learners aged 14-16 has increased and is very effective in introducing young people to vocational training.

23. Learners receive good support and guidance. Initial advice and guidance prior to starting courses is impartial and realistic. The process includes particularly informative presentations to schools with follow-up 'taster' sessions. Open days and other promotional events are interesting and informative. The college's student services department is now centrally managed and provides a well co-ordinated range of personal support services including advice on finance, housing and health related matters.
24. Most learners receive good individual support. This is especially the case for learners on programmes at or below level 1 and for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 2004/05, some 80% of the 721 learners who received additional learning support successfully achieved their main learning goal. This strength was correctly identified in the college's self-assessment report which accurately judged support for students as good.
25. Tutorials have improved since the previous inspection and are satisfactory overall. Most provide effective guidance and support to aid learners' progress. Induction arrangements are good and allow learners to quickly settle into college life. Careers advice and guidance, including support in arranging work experience, are very effective. Work experience contributes effectively to developing learners' economic wellbeing.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

26. Leadership and management are good. The principal provides strong and effective leadership which sets a clear direction for the college. Communication has improved and is now good. Teachers are committed to improving achievement and standards.
27. Curriculum management is satisfactory overall but good in health, social care and child care, and in engineering. The college has improved its quality assurance and self-assessment procedures since the last inspection but the rigour of their implementation at course team level is inconsistent. Self-assessment gives a generally accurate picture of the overall quality of provision. The new lesson observation system provides a more accurate reflection of the quality of teaching and learning but its results have yet to be incorporated into self-assessment or the college's staff development plan. Managers make good use of accurate management information to set realistic targets for course performance. Course review procedures are comprehensive. Procedures for obtaining the views of learners are good. Subsequent analysis shows that learners are increasingly satisfied with their experiences at the college.

28. The college does not fulfil its statutory requirements under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. It analyses information on different groups of students at enrolment but does not monitor their subsequent progress. The college's response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 is satisfactory. Reasonable measures have been taken to ensure physical access for all. Young learners and vulnerable adults are appropriately protected. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.
29. Governance is good. Governors have monitored the progress of the accommodation strategy and the college's improving financial position well whilst ensuring that this has not diverted their attention from providing sufficient challenge on matters relating to learner performance. They have made positive and forceful interventions where necessary.
30. Staff are very well qualified. The appraisal system now provides a much clearer link between teaching performance and training needs. However, some managers have too many appraisals to conduct. Although much of the college's accommodation is in structurally poor condition, it is maintained well. Resources are satisfactory.
31. Financial management is good. Financial monitoring and control procedures are robust. The college has moved from a substantial deficit in 2002 to producing a small operating surplus in 2006. Value for money is good because operating costs have been reduced while achievements and standards have improved. Memoranda of agreement are in place with the two neighbouring colleges which reflect the college's commitment to collaboration in the development of the new Herefordshire Learning Village.

Curriculum area inspections

Health, social care and child care

Good: grade 2

Context

32. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses from level 1 to level 4. At the time of the inspection, there were 97 full-time 16-18 year old learners and 278 part-time adult learners enrolled on courses. Most adult learners follow courses in counselling and on national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses in care and early years. The department provides courses for 46 pupils from local schools aged 14-16.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates on many courses
- good development of work related practice and vocational skills
- much good teaching
- good curriculum management.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficient attention to individual learners' needs
- insufficiently detailed feedback to aid learner progress.

Achievements and standards

33. Achievement and standards are good. There are high success rates on many courses. Success rates at levels 2 and 3 on NVQ early years care and education courses are significantly above average. Success rates are high and continue to improve at level 3. The diploma in childcare and education and the intermediate certificate in counselling skills show year on year improvement in success rates which have been above average for the last three years. Retention on NVQ level 2 care is declining. Attendance rates and the behaviour of learners are very good. Learners work with self-discipline and demonstrate effective team working. The standard of learners' written work in portfolios is at least satisfactory and some is good. Learners show good skills in research and problem solving.

Quality of provision

34. Teaching and learning are good. Much good teaching enables learners to effectively develop their work related and vocational skills. Learners are able to demonstrate their ability to relate theory to the workplace through very appropriate and realistic exercises during lessons. For example, learners on the increased flexibility programme successfully applied health and safety practices to a range of different work related settings. Not all teaching is this effective

and some lessons fail to meet the needs of all learners. Lessons do not always sufficiently challenge more able learners and often do not take account of identified individual learning styles and needs. In a significant minority of lessons, a narrow range of teaching methods are used.

35. There is a good range of programmes and activities that effectively meet the needs and interests of learners. An imaginative enrichment programme effectively incorporates many key skill activities. Learners are involved in fund raising activities for local charities. There are good progression, work placement and employment opportunities. The range of resources available to support learning is good and enables learners to use current industry equipment.
36. Support for learners is good. Initial assessment is effective and learners who are identified as requiring support receive it. Induction is well planned and informative. Tutorial arrangements are satisfactory and good personal support is provided. Feedback to learners is insufficiently detailed to aid their progress by showing them how they could improve their work. The usefulness and quality of feedback varies within teams. Careers advice and guidance, and support with finding work placements, are good.

Leadership and management

37. Leadership and management are good. Curriculum management is effective and is starting to further improve provision. There are productive links with employers and teaching staff deliver training in the workplace. Communication has improved and is now good. Teams work well together and have a strong sense of purpose. Quality assurance systems are satisfactory, however, there is insufficient focus on teaching and learning. The self-assessment report, whilst generally accurate, is not sufficiently self-critical. The department is aware of and complies with the requirements for the safeguarding of children.

Rural Crafts

Good: grade 2

Context

38. The college offers a range of full- and part-time courses. At the time of inspection, 243 learners, which is the majority, were on level 3 courses in farriery, blacksmithing, metalworking and welding. Ten learners are on agricultural engineering courses. 125 learners are on work-based programmes leading to advanced apprenticeships and 42 learners are on non-accredited courses. The majority of 16-18 year olds are full-time learners and they account for 43% of the provision; 57% of learners are adults. Eight pupils aged 14-16 from local schools attend courses. 90% of students are male.

STRENGTHS

- high completion rates on the advanced apprenticeship programme
- good development of workplace and vocational skills
- highly effective use of specialist resources to support learning
- close and productive industry and employer links.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low success rates on first diploma horse care
- insufficient attention to individual learner needs in theory lessons
- few courses to enable access to blacksmithing and farriery qualifications
- unsatisfactory classroom accommodation to promote learning.

Achievement and standards

39. Achievement and standards are good. Completion rates on advanced apprenticeship courses are high. In 2005, 86% of work-based learners completed their apprenticeship framework. This is significantly more than the sector average. Learners develop good workplace and vocational skills in blacksmithing, metalwork and farriery. The standard of work produced is of high quality and the skills developed are valued by learners and employers. Good progress is made in practical classes where learners ably demonstrate high practical ability and good awareness of health and safety. The success rate on first diploma horse care is low. Success rates have been below national averages for the last three years. Key skills pass rates are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

40. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Practical teaching is more effective than theory. In practical sessions, there is highly effective use of specialist resources to support learning. Forges, lathes and the farriery workshop are well designed and equipped with modern industry standard equipment. Small practical group sizes maximize the value of workshop time. In theory sessions, there is insufficient attention to individual learners' needs. Teachers spend too

much time on whole group activities. There is an insufficient range of activities to enable all learners to progress at their own pace.

41. Programmes and activities satisfactorily meet the needs and interest of learners. There are close and productive industry and employer links. Good work placements provide valuable learning experiences and enable many learners to progress into employment. However, there are too few courses enabling access to blacksmithing and farriery qualifications. Entry pathways are not clear and very few opportunities exist to access these courses below level 3. Too few enrichment opportunities are offered.
42. Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners' progress is effectively monitored and termly reviews of progress are used to set targets. However, many targets are not specific enough to aid learners' progress. Diagnostic initial assessment is comprehensive, although results are not used effectively to inform lesson planning and to address the full support needs of individuals. Feedback on assessed work is often too brief to guide the learner on how to improve. Careers advice and guidance and personal support for learners are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and informs a helpful quality improvement plan. Traditional stereotypes of a male dominated industry are challenged and equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory and involve a cycle of teaching observations. However, some course quality logs lack rigour. There are too few opportunities for teachers to share best practice. Classroom accommodation is poor. Many classrooms do not contain displays of relevant learning material and some are adversely affected by noise from close by workshop equipment.

Engineering

Good: grade 2

Context

44. The college offers a range of full- and part-time courses from level 1 to level 4. Engineering courses account for 4% of the total college provision. At the time of the inspection, there were 147 full-time and 331 part-time learners with a further 59 learners on work-based programmes. The vast majority of learners on full-time courses, some 90%, are 16-18 year olds, whilst on part-time courses, 62% of learners are adults. The department also provides taster courses for 32 school pupils aged 14-16 in engineering manufacture.

STRENGTHS

- outstanding success rates on level 1 motor vehicle, sound engineering and national certificate courses
- high completion rates on apprenticeship programmes
- innovative teaching in theory and practical lessons
- wide and responsive range of provision to meet local needs
- effective learner support to aid progress.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low success rates on national diploma course
- poor in-year retention rates on sound engineering and performing engineering operation courses.

Achievement and standards

45. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on level 1 motor vehicle, level 2 sound engineering and on national certificate programmes, are outstanding. Many of these courses have 100% pass rates with excellent retention rates. The standard of work produced by learners is good. Framework completion rates for work-based learners are high. Achievement rates on the advanced apprenticeship in motor vehicle engineering continue to improve and are now significantly above national rates. The timely achievement rate for apprenticeships is low. There are poor success rates on the national diploma course. In-year retention rates on sound engineering and on performing engineering operation (PEO) courses are low.

Quality of provision

46. Teaching and learning are good. There is innovative teaching in theory and practical lessons with effective tracking of progress. Learners are often encouraged to work in groups to support each other. Tutors give very effective individual help and support where necessary and make regular checks on learning. However, lesson planning is inconsistent with insufficient reference to differentiation. Attendance in lessons is good. Learners work with due regard

for health and safety and develop good work related and vocational skills. Learners have the opportunity to complete additional qualifications which enhance their employability skills.

47. There is a good range of courses available which effectively meet learner needs and respond to local circumstances. The college has maintained some specialist engineering courses despite low learner numbers and courses have been designed in response to employer demand. The practical training workshops and equipment are generally well matched to learners' needs with a selection of old but suitable machine tools and vehicles. Some frequent changes in staffing have resulted in some learners missing substantial course time.
48. Support for learners is good overall. All learners receive a comprehensive induction at the start of their training programme. The tutorial system for full-time learners is robust. Individual progress reviews monitor performance, review targets and update individual learning plans. Termly progress reports are sent to parents and employers and scheduled open evenings operate throughout the year. Work-based learners receive frequent progress reviews and are effectively supported in the workplace.

Leadership and management

49. Leadership and management are good. Recent positive changes have improved communication and lines of accountability are now clear. There are regular team meetings to discuss and monitor curriculum issues, although these are not recorded in sufficient detail. Staff are appropriately qualified and resources overall are satisfactory. Employers do not fully understand the content of apprenticeship frameworks. Employer events organised by the college have been poorly attended. The self-assessment report accurately identifies the main strengths and areas for improvement.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

50. At the time of the inspection, there were 135 part-time learners on literacy and numeracy courses from pre-entry level to level 2. 110 part-time learners were on English courses for speakers of other languages (ESOL). 238 adult learners with learning difficulties were studying part-time on the Towards Independence course. 65 learners with acquired brain injuries were studying on specialist part-time courses and a further 20 learners with mental health needs were on part-time courses. A total of 90 full-time learners were enrolled, 19 on a general foundation course, 19 on a foundation construction course and 52 on full-time courses for learners with learning difficulties. Courses take place on the main site and in a variety of community venues.

STRENGTHS

- good development of learners' social and life skills
- effective use of work experience to develop learners' skills
- good progression on full-time courses
- broad range of courses to meet learners' needs
- very good support for learners
- good links with schools and community organisations.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficient planning to meet individual learners' needs
- insufficient use of ILT to support learning
- poor progression for adult learners with learning difficulties
- unsatisfactory ESOL provision.

Achievement and standards

51. Achievement and standards are good. The development of learners' social and life skills are good. Increased confidence and self-esteem enables learners to progress onto further learning. Attendance rates are good. The quality of portfolio work for external accreditation is good. Creative writing in literacy classes is of a high standard. Success rates on courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Progression on full-time courses is good. However, some adult learners with learning difficulties attend courses for several years without making significant progress.

Quality of provision

52. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In better lessons, teaching is lively and skilled teachers motivate learners who make good progress. However, in less successful lessons, there is insufficient focus on developing relevant skills and meeting the needs of individual learners. There is insufficient use of ILT to

support learning. Many staff have insufficient skills in the use of ILT and access to computers or interactive whiteboards in some classrooms is lacking. The quality of lesson plans and individual learning plans is variable. Many are generalised and do not consider individual learner needs or skills development. They do not consistently record achievements or plan progression for all learners.

53. There is a good range of courses. These are available at various levels and in venues throughout the county. The college operates a mobile bus which offers literacy and numeracy lessons for learners living in rural areas. There is effective use of work experience to develop skills for foundation learners and younger learners with learning difficulties.
54. Support for learners is very good. Pre-entry and initial assessment is effective in identifying additional support needs. There is a timely response to requests for additional support and a high number of teaching assistants support learners in lessons. Dyslexia assessments are carried out promptly and useful strategies are used to enable learners to overcome their difficulties. Some learners have gained a qualification for the first time in their lives.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent improvements are starting to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and achievements. There are good links with schools and community organisations. Day-to-day management of classes and support for teachers and staff are good. ESOL provision is unsatisfactory. The monitoring of quality is improving but is not yet consistent. There is insufficient sharing of good practice and the Skills for Life policy is not sufficiently developed. The self-assessment report, whilst broadly accurate overall, is insufficiently evaluative.

Business administration

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

56. The college offers a range of full- and part-time courses in business, accounting, administration and management studies. The majority of provision is at levels 2 and 3 in accountancy and administration. At the time of the inspection, there were 46 learners aged 16-18 on full-time courses and 25 on part-time courses. Twenty nine adult learners were on full-time courses, and 334 on part-time courses. There were 30 learners enrolled on work-based learning programmes.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates on most level 2 administration courses and level 4 diploma in management studies
- high completion rates on apprenticeship programmes
- very effective use of vocationally-relevant material
- broad range of courses offering flexibility and clear progression
- highly effective management of work-based learning programmes.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low success rates on level 2 text processing and AVCE business
- unimaginative teaching in some lessons
- insufficient use of ICT
- insufficient support to meet the needs of all learners
- too little focus on teaching and learning in quality assurance.

Achievement and standards

57. Achievement and standards are good. There are high success rates on most level 2 administration courses and on the level 4 diploma in management studies. Framework completion rates on work-based learning programmes are high. Learners demonstrate commitment and motivation, and make good progress towards completion of their course within the expected time period. Learners on college-based courses make good progress and produce a satisfactory standard of work. Achievements on the intermediate diploma in medical reception are strong with learners producing a high standard of work. There are low success rates on the level 2 certificate in text processing and on the AVCE course.

Quality of provision

58. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers make effective use of vocationally-relevant materials to enhance learning. In these lessons, learners are successfully encouraged to develop their critical thinking skills. Some teachers make effective use of computer-based activities to

promote independent learning. For example, learners in a diploma in medical reception lesson worked on an online test on first aid. The lesson was well directed, and learners worked purposefully. In less successful lessons, teaching is unimaginative, and fails to engage or challenge all learners. Insufficient use is made of ICT to enrich learning and develop learners' practical skills.

59. The broad range of courses is good at meeting the needs of learners. Courses provided are flexible. Many courses are available at different times allowing learners to choose the most suitable time to study. There are clear progression routes. Progression routes are available from level 1 through to level 5, and there is good progression onto higher level courses and employment. Full-time learners have work placements which, together with visits and visiting speakers, enable them to develop a better understanding of the business world.
60. Support for learners is satisfactory overall. There are appropriate arrangements for monitoring attendance, the provision of additional support needs, and tutorial support. However, there is insufficient support to meet the needs of all learners. For example, target setting at reviews lacks specific detail and individual learning plans do not take account of individual's differing ability. Arrangements for personal support and careers advice and guidance are effective.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers set a clear direction. A recent restructure has provided greater focus and improved the effectiveness of communications. Course teams meet regularly to discuss learner progress and other issues. The work-based programme is well managed. Effective support is given to employers and learners. Some quality assurance arrangements lack rigour, and do not contribute adequately to quality improvement. There is too little focus on teaching and learning in quality assurance. The promotion of equality of opportunity and external links are satisfactory. Teachers are well qualified and many have significant experience. Resources are satisfactory.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, 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	340	58	56	+2	1,404	77	55	+22
	03/04	580	52	60	-8	1,333	73	59	+14
	04/05	470	57	*		732	68	*	
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	0				11	27	47	-20
	03/04	0				0			
	04/05	0				0			
NVQs	02/03	62	56	56		12	67	57	+10
	03/04	59	73	61	+12	22	50	62	-8
	04/05	62	68	*		14	57	*	
Other	02/03	278	58	56	+2	1,381	78	55	+23
	03/04	521	50	60	-10	1,311	74	59	+15
	04/05	408	57	*		718	69	*	

* Data not available at time of publication

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, 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	400	39	52	-13	812	54	49	+5
	03/04	571	55	56	-1	837	55	53	+2
	04/05	641	73	*		730	70	*	
GCSEs	02/03	72	53	57	-4	104	74	55	+19
	03/04	55	53	61	-8	86	63	59	+4
	04/05	92	67	*		96	69	*	
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	49	45	59	-14	10	40	53	-13
	03/04	21	76	63	+13	1	100	57	+43
	04/05	17	76	*		0		*	
NVQs	02/03	113	27	42	-15	256	43	49	-6
	03/04	77	56	52	+4	195	51	53	-2
	04/05	84	69	*		178	68	*	
Other	02/03	166	40	50	-10	442	56	48	+8
	03/04	418	54	54		555	55	52	+3
	04/05	448	75	*		456	71	*	

* Data not available at time of publication

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, 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
3 Long	02/03	370	41	62	-21	958	58	51	+7
	03/04	301	44	64	-20	1,030	60	53	+7
	04/05	325	55	*		795	65	*	
A/A2 Levels	02/03	41	51	82	-31	75	60	63	-3
	03/04	30	70	84	-14	71	62	66	-4
	04/05	16	81	*		47	47	*	
AS Levels	02/03	80	46	61	-15	110	56	48	+8
	03/04	79	32	63	-31	110	51	50	+1
	04/05	45	40	*		92	40	*	
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	160	36	50	-14	68	37	45	-8
	03/04	68	46	52	-6	37	49	43	+6
	04/05	66	49	*		40	57	*	
NVQs	02/03	21	62	51	+11	176	59	45	+14
	03/04	18	50	54	-4	277	47	47	
	04/05	28	57	*		259	62	*	
Other	02/03	68	34	55	-21	529	61	54	+7
	03/04	106	44	56	-12	535	70	56	+14
	04/05	170	59	*		332	78	*	

* Data not available at time of publication

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2003 to 2005.

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	83	43	32	61	47
	Advanced	67	27	31	58	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	81	67	38	78	50
	Advanced	71	38	34	61	48

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	84	11	16	20	24
	Advanced	67	12	19	40	30
2004/05	Apprenticeship	72	22	21	42	31
	Advanced	79	29	21	33	29

* The number of learners who planned to complete their learning programme in the given year

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'