



# Thanet College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

Better  
education  
and care

## Inspection report

Audience  
Post-sixteen

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130728

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## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Thanet College
Type of college:	General further education
Principal:	Sue Buss
Address of college:	Ramsgate Road, Broadstairs, CT10 1PN
Telephone number:	01843 605040
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Chair of governors:	Paul Trumble
Unique reference number:	130728
Name of lead inspector:	Alan Hinchliffe, HMI
Dates of inspection:	30 October – 3 November 2006

## Background of the organisation

1. Thanet College is a general further education college situated in the north-east of Kent, in an area characterised by high levels of social and economic deprivation. The unemployment rate is higher than the national average and the area receives significant funding to assist in its regeneration. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups is low. The college's mission is: "we aim to be the College of choice for the local community and employers".
2. The college is based on a main site near to Broadstairs town centre, with additional courses offered in a variety of premises in the locality. There are no other colleges within easy access of Thanet. The college operates within a selective system of secondary education. Most schools have sixth forms, although four local schools are for pupils aged 11-16.
3. In 2004/05, there were over 9,000 learners enrolled at the college on some 21,000 part-time and full-time courses. This corresponds to over 3,300 full-time equivalent learners, of whom over half were adults. The number of learners has grown significantly over the last year. Two thirds of adult learners are female. Most enrolments for both age groups are at levels 1 and 2. The proportion of enrolments at level 3 has declined, whilst those at level 1 have risen significantly. The three sector subject areas with the highest proportion of learners are health, public services and care; retail and commercial enterprise; and preparation for life and work. The college has been awarded Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status in hospitality and catering. There is work-based learning (WBL) in several vocational areas, with around 150 apprentices in total. The college has an extensive programme for school pupils aged 14-16.

## 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](http://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; hairdressing and beauty therapy; hospitality and catering; literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; and business, administration and law.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: grade 3
Achievements and standards	Satisfactory: grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: grade 3

*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
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory: grade 3
Hospitality and catering	Good: grade 2
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Good: grade 2
Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Satisfactory: grade 3
Business, administration and law	Satisfactory: grade 3

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

5. Thanet College provides a satisfactory standard of education and training. Success rates have significantly improved since 2003/04 and are now satisfactory overall. Pass rates are high on many courses, although too many learners fail to complete their studies. Success rates on basic and key skills courses are good. However, pass rates on advanced subsidiary (AS) courses are unsatisfactory.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The college has made progress in reducing the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, although it recognises that more needs to be done to improve the proportion of lessons that are good or better. The best lessons are characterised by careful planning, activities that interest and engage learners, and careful attention to individual needs. The weaker lessons lack these attributes.
7. The college's record on social and educational inclusion is good. Much emphasis is placed on meeting the needs of the community in and around Thanet, and the college's responsiveness to the needs of schools, employers and individuals through its provision of a wide range of courses is good. Particular strengths include extensive provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for students aged 14-16 from local schools.
8. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory overall, with more strengths in guidance than in support. Learners receive effective guidance before joining courses, and the range of advice and welfare services is good. The rigour with which learners' progress is monitored is inconsistent across the college.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal, governors and senior leaders have a clear view of the role that the college should play in the community, and pursue this view vigorously. Leaders have further work to do to ensure that the college's quality of provision, and the outcomes achieved by learners, match the college's ambitions to be at the heart of education and training in Thanet.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: grade 3

10. The college demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. Learners' achievements are now in line with the average for similar colleges. The accuracy and availability of management information has improved, although data are not yet always used effectively to develop sharply focussed improvement strategies for areas of under-performance. The quality of teaching has not improved significantly since the last inspection and remains satisfactory.

Whilst the self-assessment process is comprehensive and largely accurate, inspectors found some weaknesses that had not been identified.

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

11. The college has made satisfactory progress in addressing weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Provision in work-based learning has improved and is now satisfactory. Literacy, numeracy and key skills have been more effectively integrated into vocational areas. Pass rates on long level 2 courses have improved. However, the college has not made sufficient progress in improving retention rates. The college acknowledges that more needs to be done to effectively measure learners' progress.

Key strengths of the college

*Strengths*

- high pass rates on many courses
- the college's responsiveness to the diversity of learners' needs in the community
- good development of learners' practical skills in several vocational areas
- good progress in embedding literacy and numeracy into the curriculum
- good initial advice and guidance
- the range and quality of provision for school students aged 14-16
- learners' results in key and basic skills
- good links with employers and the local community.

Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- low retention rates, and the action taken to improve them
- the low proportion of good or better teaching
- the urgency with which quality improvement strategies are implemented
- unsatisfactory pass rates on AS level courses
- the development of measures to assess the progress that learners make
- the consistent and rigorous use of data to identify and address weaknesses in provision.

## Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

*Contributory grades:*

*Learners aged 14-16*

*Good: grade 2*

12. Learners' achievements are satisfactory, as the college acknowledges. Overall success rates on long courses in 2005/06 are broadly in line with the national average, having significantly improved since 2003/04. Pass rates are high on many courses, with most learners who complete their studies being successful. However, too many learners fail to complete their courses. Retention rates are low, particularly on level 2 programmes. Learners of all ages do well on level 1 courses, where success rates are well above the national average. Adult learners achieve well on level 3 courses. However, success rates on level 2 courses, and on level 3 courses for learners aged 16-18, are low. Success rates on short courses are in line with the national average.
13. There is considerable variation in learners' achievements. In most curriculum areas, learners achieve well on some courses, but less well on others. The college's strong focus on literacy and numeracy has led to good achievements on skills for life and key skills qualifications. Overall success rates in construction have been poor for the last two years. Pass rates on AS level courses declined in 2005/06 and were unsatisfactory. Achievements in work-based learning have improved and are now satisfactory. The substantial number of school students on college-based courses achieve well. Female learners are more likely to be successful on level 2 and level 3 courses than male learners, although success rates for males are higher than for females in key skills. There are no significant variations in the achievements of learners from different minority ethnic groups.
14. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. In several curriculum areas, for example, hospitality and catering, beauty therapy, and vocational business courses, learners develop good practical skills that equip them well for future work. However, learners' theoretical work is less secure. Most learners enjoy their work, and there is an appropriate emphasis on health and safety. The college has been slow to develop mechanisms for judging the progress that learners make in comparison with their starting points. Attendance at lessons is satisfactory, although information on attendance rates, particularly for part-time learners, is not readily available.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

*Contributory grades:*

*Learners aged 14-16*

*Good: grade 2*

15. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The best teaching is in hospitality and catering, beauty therapy, on vocational business courses and for adult learners in health and social care. However, too much teaching is no better than satisfactory, and there is some inadequate teaching. Teaching and training for work-based learners are satisfactory.
16. Through regular curriculum reviews, a programme of lesson observations and staff development, the college is working to improve the quality of teaching. The amount of teaching which is inadequate has been reduced since the last inspection, but actions are yet to significantly increase the proportion of good or better teaching. The college's own assessment of the quality of teaching and learning is broadly accurate.
17. In the most productive lessons, teachers plan clear objectives and specific learning outcomes for all learners. Planning is particularly effective in lessons in hospitality and catering, health and social care, and business. In better lessons, teachers provide a good variety of activities to motivate learners, often using their own and learners' life and work experiences to make lessons more interesting and challenging. Practical teaching in hospitality and catering and in beauty care is good. Resources to support learning are largely satisfactory, although they are particularly good in hospitality and catering.
18. Less successful lessons are characterised by ineffective planning, teachers spending too much time talking, and too little attention being paid to the differing needs of learners.
19. The use of information learning technologies (ILT) to support teaching and learning is well promoted through the college's virtual learning environment, the 'learning curve'. More successful lessons build upon learners' independent work using this facility, but in some areas, for example, in health and care, there is less use of ILT to promote learning.
20. The college-wide approach to the teaching of key skills is effective. The early and comprehensive assessment of learners' skills informs well planned teaching, where course teachers work in partnership with specialist teachers of key skills. Key skills 'champions' provide staff development and mentor other teachers. Assessment and verification are satisfactory.
21. A good range of programmes is offered in most curriculum areas to meet the needs of learners, the local community and employers. Progression opportunities from entry level to higher level provision are good.

22. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good, and the college makes a significant contribution to widening participation and improving the staying-on rates in education and training of young people in the region. Provision is offered in community venues and this attracts learners who are under-represented in education. Much good progress has been made in embedding literacy and numeracy into vocational courses. The college has a series of effective strategies to ensure that the curriculum offer meets present and future needs.
23. The college is very responsive to local and employer needs and works very well with partners and employers to identify and respond to education and training needs. The college has a good reputation with employers for its responsiveness, flexibility, and value for money. The CoVE in hospitality and catering is supported by several 'industrial professors' who bring industrial best practice to college activities. A range of enrichment programmes is offered, but student participation in such activities is low.
24. At the time of the inspection, around 400 school students aged 14-16 were participating in a wide range of college programmes in several vocational areas. Young people enjoy their time at college, and make good progress both in their personal development and in acquiring vocational skills and good attitudes towards work. Throughout the college, healthy lifestyles are strongly promoted, and health and safety have a high priority.
25. Support and guidance for learners are satisfactory. Learners with challenging personal or domestic problems are particularly well supported by qualified counsellors and other support staff.
26. Initial advice and guidance are good. The college prospectus and course guides are clear and informative. Links with local schools are good, and contacts within the community are used to good effect in attracting learners who may not otherwise consider further education. All full-time learners are assessed for their level of literacy and numeracy at the start of their course. Students with additional learning support needs receive good individual support. However, only around a half of those learners identified as needing extra support takes advantage of the specialist help offered. The college's provision of language support for ESOL and English as a foreign language (EFL) learners requires further development.
27. The quality of tutorials is satisfactory overall, although the support given to learners has not yet been effective in improving retention rates. Individual support needs are identified well by most personal tutors, and many learners benefit from sound advice. However, the extent to which tutors take responsibility for ensuring that each learner's progress, attendance and welfare are closely monitored is inconsistent across the college. Some tutorials are enhanced by good use of the college's virtual learning environment. Careers advice is good.

## Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

28. Leadership and management are satisfactory, a judgement in line with the college's own self-assessment. The principal, senior managers and governors set a clear strategic direction for the college, with a particularly strong focus on meeting the needs of the local community.
29. Quality assurance processes are comprehensive. Course review and self-assessment report formats now use data more extensively to support judgements. The college's own judgements on the quality of teaching and learning are broadly accurate, although grades are sometimes over-generous. The self-assessment report is largely accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement, although inspectors found some weaknesses that had not been identified. Curriculum management is satisfactory overall and good in some areas, but managers have not been quick enough to identify and resolve inconsistencies in course performance.
30. Significant improvements in management information systems have led to much improved data, which are now both accurate and more comprehensive. Managers acknowledge that there is still much to do to ensure that data is understood and used effectively to focus sharply and urgently on developing improvement strategies where under-performance is identified.
31. Communications between managers and staff are good. Frequent meetings between senior and middle managers provide regular opportunities for reviewing progress. Almost all teachers either have a teaching qualification or are undertaking teacher training. The college offers a wide range of effective staff development activities.
32. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. There has been a very significant investment in specialist facilities for hospitality and catering to support its CoVE status. Improvements have also been made in hairdressing salons and in off-site facilities for building trades courses and business services. The college continues to invest in upgrading ILT facilities to support learning.
33. The college is responding well to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2002, and is undertaking further works to improve access for learners with restricted mobility. The requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 are met. The race equality plan is monitored regularly and outcomes and further action plans are reported to governors. Policies and procedures for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults are fully in place and staff and governors have received appropriate training. The college provides a safe and secure environment for learners.
34. Governors have appropriate skills and expertise, and are effective in monitoring performance. They have a good knowledge of the key strengths and areas for improvement across the college and in curriculum areas. Financial management

and control are good and resources are deployed effectively. In the context of satisfactory learner achievements, value for money is satisfactory.

## Curriculum area inspections

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: grade 3

### Context

35. The college offers a good range of full-time and part-time courses in health and social care, childcare and public services. Around 200 learners are on full-time courses, and 400 on part-time courses. Most full-time students are aged 16-18, and most part-time learners are adults. The range of courses includes national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in care and childcare, diplomas in public services, counselling, and access to higher education.

### *STRENGTHS*

- high success rates on many courses
- good teaching and learning on courses for adults
- good development of vocational skills through enrichment and work placements
- effective and frequent progress reviews for learners.

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- low retention rates on a significant minority of courses
- declining learner numbers on level 3 full-time courses in childcare
- little use of ILT to promote learning in full-time courses in care and early years.

### Achievements and standards

36. Learners' achievements are satisfactory. In 2005/06, success rates were well above the national average on the levels 2 and 3 public services courses, the first diploma in care, and the NVQ in early years childhood and education. However, retention rates on a significant minority of courses are low, and overall retention rates were significantly lower in 2005/06 than in the previous year. Learners achieve well on additional qualifications, such as first aid. Attendance at lessons is satisfactory. Learners develop good practical and vocational skills, and the standard of their work is satisfactory overall.

### Quality of provision

37. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good on courses for adults. In the better lessons, there is good planning with clear objectives. Learners are fully engaged and make good progress. There are effective links between theory and practice. In the weaker lessons, there is a preponderance of whole class activity and lack of attention to meeting the different needs of learners.

There is little use of ILT in full-time care and early years courses, although it is used well in public services lessons.

38. Support for learners is good. Records of initial assessment outcomes and of aspects of learners' performance, such as attendance, effort, homework and assignment preparation, are used well to monitor learners' progress. Learners receive good feedback on their progress in frequent, well structured individual reviews.
39. There is a satisfactory range of courses to meet the needs of learners and local employers. Part-time courses are delivered flexibly and this is valued by employers. Although full-time courses at levels 1 and 2 recruit well, numbers on childcare courses at level 3 are declining. A good range of appropriate enrichment activities for public services learners develops their understanding and insight into the main uniformed services. Work placements for all full-time learners are customised to support their preferred career goals and are effectively used to develop vocational skills.

#### Leadership and management

40. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications and team work are good. Teachers have appropriate opportunities for training and development. The promotion of equal opportunities is an integral part of all courses. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate but not comprehensive. Teaching observation grades indicated a very high proportion of outstanding teaching and learning, which is not supported by inspection evidence.

## Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Satisfactory: grade 3

### Context

41. There are 291 learners on hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapy courses, at levels 1, 2 and 3. Around two thirds of learners are aged 16-18, attending full-time courses. There are 31 learners on hairdressing work-based learning courses.

### *STRENGTHS*

- high success rates on NVQ level 3 beauty therapy courses
- good teaching and learning on beauty therapy courses
- strong curriculum leadership and good management.

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- low retention rates on hairdressing courses
- insufficient clients to enable fully effective practical lessons
- insufficient employer involvement in training for work-based learners.

### Achievements and standards

42. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are particularly high on the level 3 NVQ course in beauty therapy. Most other courses at all levels have improving success rates. Retention rates are low on the NVQ level 2 hairdressing course, although they have significantly improved over the last year. Work-based learners' achievements have improved considerably over the last two years and are now at the national average. Learners' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.
43. Learners' written work is satisfactory. The best is well presented and researched. Learners' practical work is satisfactory. For example, learners on beauty courses work competently when completing wax depilation techniques. Most learners of hairdressing demonstrate satisfactory practical skills, although a minority only reach the minimum standards to complete units of the NVQ.

### Quality of provision

44. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and are good on beauty therapy courses. In the better lessons, teachers use games, quizzes and small group work to make learning enjoyable and suitably challenging. Good questioning techniques are used to check learning. Teaching and learning in hairdressing are satisfactory, but less successful. There is insufficient challenge for learners and there are underdeveloped strategies to enable learners to work independently.

45. The range of courses offered is satisfactory. However, there are insufficient clients to enable fully effective and realistic practical lessons. In particular, on the full-time, one-year NVQ level 2 hairdressing course, most learners have insufficient opportunities to complete the range of assessments required to complete the NVQ. Learners benefit from guest speakers and attendance at trade exhibitions. There are good opportunities for them to gain work experience.
46. Work-based training is satisfactory, but employers are insufficiently involved in training. They do not have training plans and are unaware of their contribution to training. Managers are acting to improve this situation.
47. Support for learners is satisfactory. Individual tutorials are well planned and effectively address learners' personal needs and curriculum issues. Additional learning support is provided either in scheduled lessons or in extra support lessons. Assessment, internal verification and progress review are satisfactory.

#### Leadership and management

48. Strong leadership and good management of the area have promoted improvement. In particular, new lesson preparation documentation has standardised and improved the approach to teaching. The outcomes of college observations of teaching and learning agree with those of inspectors. Target setting for improvement is satisfactory and communication with staff is good. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. There is a clear focus on addressing identified weaknesses. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.

## Hospitality and catering

Good: grade 2

### Context

49. There are 352 students of hospitality and catering, following full- and part-time cookery, pastry, food service, and short specialist cuisine courses, which include Italian and Indian cookery. Most full-time learners are aged 16-18 and most part-time learners are adults. The area also offers part-time courses for 116 school pupils aged 14-16.

### *STRENGTHS*

- high success rates on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- good development of craft skills
- very good practical learning facilities
- strong links with industry and the local community.

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- insufficient specialist teaching on food service courses
- inadequate changing facilities.

### Achievements and standards

50. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates are high on most courses, with pass rates at all levels above national averages. Retention rates are also high overall, although there are pockets of low retention. Learners achieve well in their key skills tests. Attendance and punctuality are good.

51. The standard of learners' work in theory classes is good. Good practical skills are developed, including specialist skills in butchery and fishmongering. Learners work to realistic deadlines. They follow recipes and create complex dishes with good quality finishes and artistic presentation. High quality food for public consumption is produced and suitable attention is given to health and safety, good working practices, hygiene, and the development of good professional standards. Items produced by learners, including chocolate and sugar work, are of good quality. Learners have been successful in competitions.

### Quality of provision

52. Teaching and learning are good. Detailed lesson planning embraces both the desired learning outcomes and the needs of individual learners. There is an appropriate range of teaching activities with frequent checking of learning and assessment. Information and learning technology is increasingly used to good effect in lessons.

53. In practical lessons, teachers require and obtain from learners a very strong emphasis on professionalism. Learners develop good craft skills in the specialist kitchens, in preparation for the intensity of the production kitchens which prepare food for all college catering outlets. Learning includes understanding about new commodities, recipes and food cultures, together with the development of life skills, confidence, self-management and team-work. Strong links with the hospitality and catering industry, both locally and nationally, benefit learners.
54. A good range of courses is offered. Practical facilities in the kitchens are very good. There is insufficient specialist teaching on food service courses, because of limited teacher availability and the shortage of specialist skills. Changing facilities for learners and staff are inadequate and do not support a healthy lifestyle nor ensure the safekeeping of possessions.
55. Support for learners is satisfactory. Progress is effectively monitored with the use of individual learning plans. A new intranet-based individual learning plan is being piloted to good effect. Assessment is good. Learners receive detailed feedback on assessed work. Internal verification is satisfactory.

#### Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are good, with a strong emphasis on quality improvement. Good analysis of data is undertaken to help to maintain high standards. Staff development is productive. The self-assessment report is accurate. CoVE status has been used effectively to increase links with schools and industry, and to improve facilities. Equality and diversity are insufficiently promoted through the curriculum.

Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Satisfactory: grade 3

### Context

57. The college offers full- and part-time accredited and non-accredited courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A minority of lessons are held at community venues as a stepping-stone to the college. Of the 354 learners currently enrolled, 106 attend full-time, 158 are female and 95 are aged 16-18.

### *STRENGTHS*

- strong emphasis on experience of work
- good support for hearing-impaired learners
- good progression within the college.

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- insufficient development of learners as individuals
- insufficient challenge in lessons
- ineffective use of learning support assistants.

### Achievement and standards

58. Learners' achievements on national awards are satisfactory, with most of those entered for qualifications being successful. Although learners develop some skills in lessons through the completion of group activities, there is insufficient focus on the development of individual personal and social skills to support their development as adults in the local community. It is difficult to accurately assess learners' achievements as small incremental steps of individual learning have not been sufficiently established. However, the strong emphasis on work experience in vocational settings benefits learners. Attendance and punctuality at lessons are good. Learners enjoy attending college. They progress well between courses in the section and to other courses in the college.

### Quality of provision

59. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although a significant minority of lessons are inadequate. In better lessons, teachers encourage learners to learn from the activities, such as using a zebra crossing, to develop personal, social and behavioural skills. In poorer lessons, activities are insufficiently varied and challenging, and planning has insufficient focus on individual learner need. Within a minority of lessons, learners were not always engaged in the lesson activities. Learners' previous experience is not routinely used as a basis for recapping and consolidating learning. Teachers miss valuable opportunities to link lesson activities to learners' future lives as adults in the wider community, to other lessons, or to learners' planned progression within the college. In the

majority of lessons, learning support assistants are ineffectively used by teachers. The promotion of health and safety in lessons is good. Resources for teaching are good, although the building used for the provision is often overcrowded.

60. The college has a positive commitment to providing programmes of study for learners with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities who live in the wider local community. The range of programmes is sufficient to meet the needs of learners. Links with local partner schools and a local independent specialist college effectively support learners' successful transition to the college.
61. Guidance and support are good. Learners and their parents appreciate the support from teachers and learning support assistants. Support for hearing-impaired learners is good and supports learners' effective integration into lesson activities.

#### Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications between staff are good. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and evaluative but not sufficiently accurate. Staff appraisal is well established with targets set for professional development. Key weaknesses identified in the last inspection report have not been fully addressed. The use of standard college formats for planning learning inhibits the development of detailed lesson plans focused on individual learners.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Good: grade 2

## Context

63. The area offers courses from entry level to level 2. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,460 learners on literacy and numeracy programmes, 120 ESOL learners on the main college site and 54 on courses in the community. The majority of learners are aged 16-18 and working towards vocational qualifications as well as national tests.

## *STRENGTHS*

- high and improving pass rates on national tests
- high pass rates on key skills qualifications
- effective strategy to promote literacy and numeracy across the college
- good curriculum management.

## *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- insufficient focus on meeting the needs of individual learners
- undeveloped use of individual learning plans.

## Achievement and standards

64. Achievements are good overall. A large number of learners are entered for national tests in literacy and numeracy, and pass rates have improved and are now high. Pass rates are also high on ESOL courses, with good progression onto higher levels of study. The college's strategy to improve pass rates on key skills qualifications has been successful, with high pass rates at both levels 1 and 2, particularly in application of number. The standard of learners' work is good, reflecting the college's determination to embed literacy and numeracy into the vocational curriculum.

## The quality of provision

65. Teaching is satisfactory. There is a strong focus in lessons on the achievement of accredited qualifications. In the better lessons, there is good development of learners' skills through a range of interesting activities and tasks. Careful attention is paid to individual learning needs. However, in some lessons, there is insufficient challenge for the more able learners, or teachers do not focus sufficiently on ensuring the needs of the less able are fully met. The use of individual learning plans to track and monitor progress is not yet fully developed. Targets in learning plans are frequently very general and do not offer sufficient guidance to learners and vocational teachers on how best to develop learners' specific skills.
66. The extent of provision is good. In addition to discrete classes, the college's strategy of integrating literacy and numeracy into vocational courses has helped

to ensure that learners throughout the college are developing essential skills, and improving their opportunities for further progression and employment. Provision for literacy and numeracy in the community has been reduced in line with funding priorities.

67. Support for learners is satisfactory. All full-time learners undergo an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills in the first week of their vocational programme, and action on the results is timely. Learners enjoy their time at college and value highly the guidance they receive. Standards of accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

### Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are good. Leaders' determination to raise the profile of essential skills throughout the college has resulted in much improved outcomes for learners. Many of the college staff have taken the national tests themselves. Self-assessment of the quality of provision is accurate. Staff development is good, with extensive opportunities for professional updating.

Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: grade 3

### Context

69. Most learners are adults, and are enrolled onto part-time NVQ courses at levels 2 and 3. A much smaller number of full-time learners follow BTEC national and first diploma awards and business administration courses, with a mix of level 1 and level 2 units. There is one class in each of AS and GCE A-level law, one in GCSE business, two access to higher education business groups, and fifteen apprentices.

### *STRENGTHS*

- good teaching and learning on vocational business courses
- very effective use of ILT to support learning
- good links with employers.

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- low retention rates on levels 2 and 3 courses for adult learners
- low success rates on long courses for students aged 16-18 years
- lack of punctuality on full-time courses
- insufficient range of modules on some full-time programmes.

### Achievements and standards

70. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Overall success rates are below national averages, although they are improving. For adults following NVQ programmes, success rates are close to national averages, although retention rates on levels 2 and 3 courses are low. Success rates fell sharply in 2005/06 for learners aged 16-18 on most long courses, although success rates on the national diploma in business were high. Full-time administration learners achieve well on some of the units of their programmes. For apprentices, full framework completions have improved markedly and are now above national averages.

71. Learners enjoy their studies and their progress is satisfactory. Vocational business and administration learners are well prepared for work. The standard of learners' written work is satisfactory overall, with some very good NVQ portfolios. Attendance is low on many courses and learners are too often late for lessons.

### Quality of provision

72. Teaching and learning are good overall, and are particularly good on vocational business courses. Learners work confidently and in a disciplined fashion. They are keen and interested in their studies, showing a clear understanding of the tasks they are given. Teachers and learners make very good use of ILT to

benefit learning, including the college's virtual learning environment. Learners' progress is monitored effectively using individual learning plans. Good links with local employers are effective in broadening learners' experiences.

73. The college offers a limited, but satisfactory, range of programmes. Some full-time learners, especially in administration, are unable to complete and achieve all aspects of their programmes because an insufficient range of options and modules is offered. There is a unique and successful NVQ programme in local taxation offered to the local council.
74. Full-time students receive good pastoral support, which they value highly. Tutors make themselves available to help and advise learners on a variety of social and financial issues. Group tutorials have sufficient breadth. Issues around health and diversity are included in the tutorial programme.

### Leadership and management

75. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have been successful in raising pass rates on most courses, although they have failed to ensure that learners attend well and remain on their courses. Staff development is good, with many courses offered in response to teachers' expressed needs. The self-assessment report reflects inspectors' findings in relation to teaching and learning, but does not identify some significant weaknesses in achievement and standards.

## Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, 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	03/04	1,057	50	59	-9	937	53	59	-6
	04/05	2,296	62	62	0	1,172	67	61	6
	05/06	1,915	65			955	66		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	14	71	63	8	-	-		
	04/05	16	75	64	11	-	-		
	05/06	14	86			-	-		
NVQs	03/04	210	55	61	-6	72	40	66	-26
	04/05	187	66	64	2	72	42	71	-29
	05/06	107	73			51	27		
Other	03/04	833	49	59	-10	865	54	58	-4
	04/05	2,093	61	61	0	1099	69	61	8
	05/06	1,794	64			904	68		

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, 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	03/04	893	50	56	-6	1,335	41	54	-13
	04/05	1,205	57	60	-3	1,643	68	59	9
	05/06	1,075	57			1,539	54		
GCSEs	03/04	143	66	64	2	44	57	57	0
	04/05	258	69	65	4	54	65	63	2
	05/06	197	68			76	68		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	67	57	59	-2	-	-		
	04/05	66	61	66	-5	-	-		
	05/06	42	45			-	-		
NVQs	03/04	325	38	50	-12	*	*		
	04/05	234	51	56	-5	543	58	62	-4
	05/06	194	60			660	55		
Other	03/04	366	53	53	0	452	52	53	-1
	04/05	647	54	58	-4	1,044	73	57	16
	05/06	642	53			797	53		

\* data unreliable

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, 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	03/04	806	52	61	-9	1,977	38	53	-15
	04/05	783	62	65	-3	1,389	57	56	1
	05/06	646	58			995	66		
A/A2 Levels	03/04	124	87	81	6	80	81	69	12
	04/05	112	86	85	1	51	73	73	0
	05/06	96	90			29	86		
AS Levels	03/04	319	54	60	-6	85	58	50	8
	04/05	309	66	64	2	64	52	53	-1
	05/06	273	51			54	65		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	102	20	50	-30	10	20	43	-23
	04/05	55	53	59	-6	10	40	51	-11
	05/06	31	52			8	50		
NVQs	03/04	72	40	50	-10	*	*		
	04/05	33	58	53	5	489	44	54	-10
	05/06	50	76			404	60		
Other	03/04	189	49	51	-2	921	42	54	-12
	04/05	274	50	56	-6	775	65	56	9
	05/06	196	50			500	69		

\* data unreliable

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2004/05 to 2005/06

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2004/05	Apprenticeship	78	12	39	33	50
	Advanced	30	17	34	30	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	52	50	53	58	58
	Advanced	27	26	44	48	53

\* 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 **
2004/05	Apprenticeship	73	4	22	23	29
	Advanced	35	14	21	26	31
2005/06	Apprenticeship	54	41	32	46	36
	Advanced	28	14	26	39	33

\* 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'