



Somerset College of Arts and Technology



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-Sixteen

Published
April 2007

Provider reference
130804

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Basic information about the college

Name of college: Somerset College of Arts and Technology

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Alison Scott

Address of college: Wellington Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 5AX

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Chair of governors: Chris Bishop

Unique reference number: 130804

Name of lead inspector: Paul Fletcher, ALI

Dates of inspection: 26 February – 2 March 2007

Background of the organisation

1. Somerset College of Arts and Technology is a large general further and higher education (GFE) college situated in Taunton, Somerset. Four tertiary colleges are within a 25-mile radius of the college together with a sixth form college in Taunton. The college has recently completed a substantial refurbishment and re-build programme and is systematically replacing out of date 1960s buildings and workshops. The college has centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) status in residential care, construction, crafts, professions and sustainability and hospitality and tourism. Its mission statement is "To contribute to the development of our community by recognising, valuing and maximising the learning potential of every student".
2. The college has provision in all sector subject areas. The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) learners in 2004/05 was 3,526. Of these, 41% were aged 16-18. Over 12,000 learners are on roll and account for over 22,500 enrolments. Of the number on roll, 55% of learners are female. Almost 95% of learners are white, with Chinese as the most significant minority group. Most learners come from Somerset or Devon. The majority of learners take other vocational qualifications. For learners aged 16-18, just over half study on level 3 courses and about a third at level 2. For adults, about a quarter each study at levels 1 and 2 and just over a third study at level 3. The most popular sector subject areas for learners aged 16-18 are health, public services and care, construction and arts, media and publishing. Learners aged 19 and over mainly take courses in health, public services and care, construction, sport, arts, media and publishing and preparation for life and work. The college provides work-based learning for 157 learners in engineering, construction, hairdressing and catering.
3. In November 2006, the unemployment rate for the South West was 1.6% and in Somerset it was 1.2%, below the England average of 2.5%. According to the 2001 Census, 98.8% of residents in Somerset are from white backgrounds. The proportion of school leavers in 2006 with 5 or more GCSEs in the county was 56.6%, slightly below the England average of 59.2%

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; construction, planning and the built environment; information and communication technology (ICT); sport and recreation; arts, media and publishing; and preparation for life and work.

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

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	Good: grade 2
Construction, planning and the built environment	Good: grade 2
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: grade 3
Sport and Recreation	Satisfactory: grade 3
Arts, media and publishing	Good: grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Good: grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

5. This is a good college. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates, particularly on vocational courses, have improved significantly since the last inspection and in 2005/06 they were at or above and, at some levels, significantly above, the national averages for 2004/05. Success rates on key skills are high. Success rates in work-based learning remain below the national average. Retention rates on level 3 courses for learners aged 19 and over are below the national average. The standard of learners' work is high. They develop good vocational skills in many areas. Attendance is good.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory or good. The proportion of outstanding or inadequate teaching and learning is very small. The quality of key skills provision has improved significantly since the last inspection. Initial assessment is good. The monitoring and assessment of learners' progress is satisfactory. The text in many lesson observation summaries does not always reflect the grade awarded. Target setting to raise learners' performance is insufficiently detailed.
7. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good, as is its response to the needs and interests of learners and employers. The college has consolidated its provision and offers good vocational progression routes from pre-entry to level 3 and higher education in many areas. Strong partnerships with schools, employers and the community benefit most learners.
8. Learners receive good guidance and support. Good wider welfare and learning support have improved learners' attendance and retention. Tutorial arrangements are satisfactory. Learners benefit from good and impartial advice before they enrol. Careers advice and guidance are good.
9. Leadership and management are good. The principal and senior managers provide highly effective leadership. Strategic management is good. Curriculum management is good. Staff development is comprehensive. Learners benefit from the impressive new accommodation and its many high quality facilities. Some older specialist accommodation is poor. Quality assurance is satisfactory. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. The college provides a safe environment.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

10. The college demonstrates good capacity to improve. Leaders and managers set and meet challenging targets to improve learners' achievements. Managers use data with confidence to evaluate performance. A culture of continuous improvement permeates the college. The quality improvement plan contains sufficient detail to sustain strengths and make further improvements. The

implementation of some actions for improvement is slow with insufficient monitoring. The college has refurbished or rebuilt most of its premises and has developed an additional strategy to improve the remainder of its premises. The college's financial health is good.

11. The college's self-assessment process is satisfactory. The self-assessment report is largely accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement with clear action plans to secure further improvements. It does not clearly identify the key strengths and areas for improvement. It over graded some of its provision.

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

12. The college has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in sustaining key strengths and has effectively tackled most, though not all, of the main areas for improvement. On re-inspection the previously inadequate work-based learning provision in hairdressing was graded as good. In this inspection, as in the last, much provision is good, but none is outstanding. The college has reduced the proportion of inadequate teaching but the proportion of outstanding teaching remains small. Retention rates have improved, but are still low at level 3 for learners aged 19 and over. Key skills performance has improved significantly and learners' punctuality and attendance have improved. Success rates in work-based learning remain low and target setting for learners remains an area for improvement.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- good leadership and management
- good curriculum management
- high success rates on many vocational courses
- good development of learners' vocational skills in many areas
- strong and responsive partnerships for the benefit of learners and the community
- very good range of provision to meet the needs of learners and employers
- good support for learners
- inspiring new learning accommodation.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the low success rates on work-based learning
- retention rates at level 3 for learners aged 19 and over
- raising the proportion of good and outstanding teaching
- the quality of feedback on lesson observations

- target setting and the recording of learners' progress
- the specialist accommodation in sport, performing arts and for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the implementation and monitoring of some action plans and quality improvement procedures.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Inadequate: grade 4

13. Success rates have improved significantly since the last inspection. Overall success rates for all learners on long courses have improved in each of the three years to 2005/06 and are now high and above the national average for 2004/05. Success rates on longer short courses, where significant numbers of learners study, have remained above the rising national average in each of the three years to 2005/06. Success rates for key skills have improved significantly since the last inspection and have been substantially above the national average in each of the three years to 2005/06.
14. For learners aged 16-18, success rates have improved significantly over the three year period at all levels and are now at or above the national average for 2004/05. For other vocational provision, where most learners study, success rates at level 3 have been significantly higher than the national average over the same period. Retention rates have improved and are now at or near the national average. Achievement rates for all levels in 2005/06 were above the national average for 2004/05 and significantly so at levels 1 and 2. At level 3, they have been consistently high.
15. Success rates for learners aged 19 and over have improved significantly over the three year period. At level 2, they are 10 percentage points above the national average for 2004/05. Similarly for other vocational provision where most learners study, success rates have improved at all levels, especially at levels 2 and 3 where they are high at more than 10 percentage points above the national average for 2004/05. Retention rates have improved and are now at or above the national average except for level 3 where they remain low. Pass rates are high at levels 2 and 3, but remain 5 percentage points below at level 1. Success rates on longer short courses have been significantly above the national average in each of the three years to 2005/06.
16. Overall success rates in work-based learning remain low. They have fallen in each of the three years to 2005/06. Through its self-assessment process, the college has significantly improved the management of its work-based learning. It now has good arrangements in place to track learners' timely success.
17. The standard of learners' work is high. They develop and display good practical and vocational skills in most areas and enjoy their study. In care and public services, learners demonstrate good professional standards. In sport and recreation, learners achieve a good range of industry relevant qualifications and demonstrate safe exercise practice. In art and design, learners' work is of high quality and in performing arts, they exhibit good professional rehearsal standards. In preparation for life and work, learners have increased significantly

their confidence, communication and study skills. Learners' progression to higher level courses or employment is high. Learners' attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

18. The overall quality of provision is good. The good range of courses and the high level of support for learners have significantly raised learners' achievements. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Inspectors identified good teaching as a key strength in half of the curriculum areas inspected. Inspectors identified little outstanding teaching which confirms the college's evaluation that most of its teaching is satisfactory or good. The college's lesson observation system is mostly accurate. In lesson observations conducted jointly by college staff and inspectors, there was close agreement about the strengths and areas for improvement. Since the last inspection, the college has reduced the proportion of inadequate lessons. The college has recently implemented many initiatives to raise the quality of teaching and learning with a strong focus on improving satisfactory teaching. However, text in many lesson observation summaries does not always reflect the grades awarded. The college has established a more rigorous system to moderate the grades of lesson observations.
19. In the better lessons, teachers plan thoroughly and demonstrate very good subject knowledge. In these lessons, teachers use a good range of activities, techniques and projects to meet the needs of individual learners. They check and challenge learners' understanding regularly. In the less effective lessons, the planning is insufficiently thorough with little review of learners' understanding. The teaching does not challenge learners and progress is slow. In a few lessons, teachers do not engage learners fully or provide activities that respond to each learner's needs. The college has recognised this area for improvement in its self-assessment report. The teaching excellence team works closely with teachers to improve specific aspects of lessons.
20. The use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support and enhance teaching in lessons is satisfactory. It is good in the integrated learning centres (ILC). Learners make good use of the ILCs to develop their study skills.
21. At the last inspection, inspectors identified key skills as an area for improvement. Since then, the college has improved significantly the management and quality of its key skills provision. Learners now undertake the most relevant key skill for their studies.
22. Initial assessment is good. Learners receive additional learning support promptly. Tutors do not always prepare learning support assistants sufficiently before the start of the lesson. The monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory. Most learners receive feedback on their work which is of sufficient detail to enable them to make improvements. Arrangements for reporting learners' progress to their parents or carers are satisfactory.

23. Target setting to raise learners' performance is insufficiently detailed and of variable quality. This was an area for improvement at the last inspection. In some areas, targets for improvement are not measurable and lack sufficient challenge. In others, targets are clear, regularly updated and specific to the learners.
24. The college's response to the needs and interests of learners and employers is good. The college has restructured its curriculum to provide more vocational courses. The college offers a wide range of courses that enable good progression from pre-entry level to level 3 and higher education in many areas. Taster courses at level 1 are particularly innovative and successful. Strong and beneficial partnerships exist between curriculum areas and many employers. The college uses information from employers well to develop and provide new courses. School pupils aged 14-16 benefit from comprehensive and imaginative provision. The college provides well organised vocational courses for seven local schools.
25. The participation of learners in enrichment activities is satisfactory. An appropriate range of sporting, cultural and social activities promotes learners' awareness of healthy lifestyles and the positive contribution they can make in college and their community. The college programme includes a good introduction to aspects of diversity, respect, world affairs and learners' rights and responsibilities. Curriculum-based enrichment is particularly good in many areas.
26. Guidance and support are good. The college has maintained this strength since the last inspection. Learners receive high quality information and advice to enable them to choose their courses. Induction is good and enables learners to settle into their studies quickly. Learners benefit from a wide range of well-publicised and well-organised support facilities, including in-house counselling, sexual health clinics, careers advice and guidance, and police liaison visits. Tutorial arrangements are satisfactory. Learners value the personal interest and support they receive from personal tutors. Student support officers have played an important role in improving learners' attendance and retention.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

27. Leadership and management are good. The principal and senior managers provide good leadership. A revised curriculum management structure has enabled greater teamwork and improved the management of courses. Communication is good. Success rates have improved significantly since the last inspection.
28. Strategic planning is good. In producing the strategic plan, managers undertake extensive consultation with staff and ensure that plans include national and local priorities. The well informed governors contribute to this process well. Productive and responsive partnerships with employers, the community and other educational institutions have provided learners with additional resources and learning opportunities. The college leads or is a partner in three centres of

vocational excellence (CoVE), and coordinates the local consortium for developing new 14-19 diplomas.

29. Learners benefit from the impressive new accommodation on the main campus and the very good resources in the ILCs and many vocational areas. It has developed a further property strategy to improve the poor facilities in art and design, performing arts, construction and sport and recreation. The college manages its finances well. The college has improved its financial health category since the last inspection and provides good value for money.
30. Curriculum management is good in most areas. Managers understand their roles and responsibilities clearly. The college has further strengthened its curriculum management through the appointment of qualification managers who have responsibility for each course. It has been slow to address the poor performance in work-based learning, an area for improvement at the last inspection. With the recent appointment of a work-based learning manager, more appropriate systems are now in place, though they have yet to impact fully on learner performance. The college's management information system remains effective and more staff use data confidently to make decisions.
31. Quality assurance procedures are satisfactory. Managers conduct thorough curriculum reviews to evaluate course performance or to explore particular practice across the college. However, the implementation of actions to promote quality improvement is sometimes slow and managers do not always monitor actions rigorously. Some action plans are imprecise and targets are not specific. The college has successfully reduced the proportion of inadequate teaching, but has had less impact on raising the proportion of good or outstanding teaching. Internal lesson observations are too variable in the quality of feedback to teachers and the college has only recently introduced a system to moderate findings.
32. Staff development is good. Staff value highly the extensive range of developmental opportunities which the college identifies through appraisal and curriculum reviews. The proportion of teachers with, or working towards, teaching qualifications is high.
33. The college provides an inclusive and safe environment. A rich range of activities promotes equality and diversity well across the college. The management of health and safety is satisfactory although the updating of risk assessments in construction has been slow. The college meets the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Discrimination Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. Arrangements for carrying out and centrally recording Criminal Record Bureau checks are satisfactory.

Curriculum area inspections

Health, public services and care

Good: grade 2

Context

34. The college offers full-time courses to 185 learners mostly aged 16-18 in care at levels 1 to 3 and in early years and public services at levels 2 and 3. Approximately 1,100 learners mostly aged 19 and over, take part-time courses, including NVQs at levels 2 to 4 and many short courses. The college has a CoVE in residential care. The college also offers foundation degrees validated by the University of Plymouth.

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses
- much good teaching
- outstanding employer engagement
- successful actions by managers at all levels to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient development of key skills in public services
- insufficiently precise and challenging targets for full-time learners.

Achievements and standards

35. Achievements and standards are good. Pass rates are high on many courses and have been consistently above the national average in each of the three years to 2006. Success rates improved significantly in 2005/06 and many are now above the national average by at least 10 percentage points. Learners' progression to the next level of course and to employment is high. Learners' work is generally of a high standard. Portfolios contain a wide range of evidence and demonstrate good development of knowledge, understanding and practical skills. Learners' attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

36. Teaching and learning are good. In the better lessons, planning is thorough and learning outcomes are clear. Teachers use a variety of techniques to engage and motivate learners. They use questioning well to check, develop and extend learners' understanding. Teachers make good use of learning resources that challenge learners' perceptions and develop their understanding of equality and diversity. In a childcare lesson, learners enjoyed discussing difficult concepts as they explored their own understanding of discrimination and prejudice. In a minority of lessons, planning is insufficient with learning activities that are too difficult for the level of course. Teachers do not regularly inform learning

support staff of the content of lessons before they start. Key skills on public services courses are insufficiently developed. The teaching does not integrate application of number sufficiently for learners to develop the essential numeracy skills needed for their qualification until the final year on long courses.

37. Assessment is good. Assessment planning is thorough for NVQ learners and assessors provide detailed observations of practice that include identification of candidate knowledge and understanding.
38. The range of provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. Employer engagement is outstanding. Strong partnerships with employers provide responsive training to meet local needs and contribute to the national training targets for the care sector. Through the CoVE, the college and its partners have developed highly innovative technological solutions to training and development in the residential care sector. Flexible delivery of NVQs, distance learning and the use of new technology provide good access to training and assessment for learners unable to attend the college. Learners benefit from good curriculum-based enrichment. Work placements provide many good opportunities for learners to apply their learning and develop practical skills to professional standards in both care and public services.
39. Support is good. Learners benefit from good pastoral support. Initial assessment identifies learners' additional support needs well. Target setting for full-time learners is insufficiently precise and challenging. Action plans do not contain specific and measurable targets. Tutors do not update action plans and agree new improvement targets with learners.

Leadership and management

40. Leadership and management are good. Management of the CoVE is good. Successful actions by managers at all levels have raised standards. A strong commitment to continuous improvement has improved success rates significantly. Communication is good. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The self-assessment and annual course review processes are thorough and actions for improvement are regularly monitored.

Construction, planning and the built environment

Good: grade 2

Context

41. The college offers courses from entry level to level 3 to 167 full-time learners aged 16-18 and 60 full-time learners aged 19 and over. Progression to higher education is available in painting and decorating, plumbing, carpentry, brickwork and electrical installation. Approximately 300 learners mostly aged 19 and over study on part-time courses. Work-based learning includes 53 plumbing apprentices. About 60 school pupils aged 14-16 follow entry level qualifications in construction. The college has a CoVE in construction, crafts, professions and sustainability.

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- good use of learning resources
- productive employer links benefiting learners
- good use of individual learning plans to monitor learners' progress.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates for work-based learning apprenticeships
- insufficient frequency of review of risk assessments.

Achievement and standards

42. Achievements and standards are good. Pass rates on most courses have been substantially above the national average in each of the three years to 2005/06. Success rates improved significantly in 2005/06 and in most cases they are now above the national average. Success rates for key skills are high. Overall, success rates for learners completing apprenticeships were low at 10 percentage points below the national average in 2006. More than two-thirds of apprentices, however, complete their NVQ. The standard of learners' practical work is satisfactory. Most learners make good progress. On the national diploma in construction, the quality of learners' assignment work is high.

Quality of provision

43. Teaching and learning are good. Learners enjoy their lessons. In a lesson on waste systems, learners were highly attentive and demonstrated good understanding of the importance of pressure testing to meet statutory requirements. In a few lessons, teaching fails to challenge more able learners. The assessment and monitoring of learners' work and progress is good. Marking is thorough and teachers return work promptly.
44. Learning resources are good. Learners benefit from the well equipped integrated learning centre. In most lessons, teachers make very good use of

interactive whiteboards and nationally produced learning materials to develop learners' knowledge. Practical workshops are spacious and contain good simulated working environments that enable learners to gain good job-related and practical skills. The 'Genesis Centre' provides learners and employers with a good example of real sustainable construction methods.

45. The range of provision is good. Learners benefit from many good opportunities through national competitions to enrich their skills. Through extensive employer links and the CoVE, learners develop a wide range of additional practical skills. The college has worked closely with large scale developers to identify local skills shortages and deliver training to ensure a local skilled construction workforce is available for employment as part of the town's regeneration plans.
46. Guidance and support are good. Most learners with identified needs benefit from good individual support. Tutors use individual learning plans well to monitor learners' progress closely. Individual learning plans contain clear targets which are reviewed regularly.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are good. Effective management has improved the quality of provision and raised success rates. Management of the CoVE is good. Teachers maintain their current industry knowledge and skills through regular planned activity days. Quality assurance is good. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and evaluates accurately the quality of the provision. Internal verification is good. Regular standardisation meetings take place across all subjects. The college has completed risk assessments for all activities. In construction, some risk assessments had not been reviewed with sufficient frequency to maintain their currency.

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

48. About 350 learners, mostly aged 19 and over, attend part-time courses through the adult ICT centre that includes the computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) certificate at level 1 and the European computer driving licence (ECDL) at level 2. Approximately 100 full-time learners aged 16-18 study on first and national diplomas for ICT practitioners. A further 143 engineering and media learners complement their main courses with an additional ICT qualification.

Strengths

- high success rates on the first diploma for ICT practitioners
- high progression rates for full-time learners
- good range of courses to increase employability and access to higher education
- good additional learning support.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on CLAIT
- insufficient challenge and checking of learners' progress in lessons
- insufficient target setting and recording of learners' progress.

Achievements and standards

49. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on the first diploma for ICT practitioners are high and have been almost 20 percentage points above the national average in each of the three years to 2006. On most other full-time courses and on ECDL, success rates improved significantly in 2005/06 and are now above the national average. Success rates on CLAIT are low and have remained significantly below the national average for the last three years. Progression rates for full-time learners are high. In 2005/06, 70% of the first diploma and 90% of the national diploma learners progressed onto higher level courses or employment. Most learners demonstrate good practical skills. In one lesson, learners successfully networked computers using cables that they had prepared in a previous lesson. The standard of assignment work is satisfactory. Learners on part-time courses make satisfactory progress.

Quality of provision

50. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers provide a good mix of activities including practical, theory and electronic quizzes to stimulate and maintain learners' motivation. In many workshop and practical lessons, teachers do not check learners' progress with sufficient frequency and more able learners lack challenge. For example, in some lessons where learners

receive feedback on assignments from the teacher individually, the other learners have little purposeful activity and become easily distracted. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory. Feedback on assignments is detailed with clear comment on how learners can make further improvement.

51. Programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners well. The range of courses is good and increases learners' employability and access to higher education. A new and well-planned curriculum provides clear progression routes and opportunities for learners to gain additional industry recognised qualifications and skills. Links with employers have increased. A new scheme with a local large employer gives learners the opportunity to gain valuable work experience by supporting network installations in small businesses.
52. Guidance and support for learners are good. All students receive good advice and guidance before they start their course. This includes informative taster pre-enrolment days to ensure they are on the most appropriate course. Additional learning support is good. In 2005/06, all learners in receipt of support for individual needs achieved their qualification. Target setting and progress recording are insufficient. Teachers do not use target setting effectively to motivate learners to achieve higher grades. In many cases, the electronic tracking system is not updated for learners to monitor their own progress.

Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the college has restructured the management of this area. Success rates and resources have improved significantly. Most of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been remedied. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the report accurately identifies most of strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback from the observation of teaching and learning often fails to give sufficient detail as to how the lesson might be improved.

Sport and Recreation

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

54. The college provides courses in sport from levels 1 to 4. Currently, 50 learners aged 16-18 and 2 adults study on national diploma and national certificate in sports development and fitness courses and 22 learners aged 16-18 and 2 adults study on the first diploma in sport. All learners take additional qualifications including the community sports leadership award and the certificate in exercise and fitness. There are 6 part-time adult learners working towards a NVQ in instructing in exercise and fitness at level 2 and 15 school pupils aged 14-16 follow a GCSE in leisure and tourism.

Strengths

- high success rates on the community sports leadership award
- good development of learners' vocational skills
- wide range of productive partnerships for the benefit of learners
- successful curriculum management to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on the first diploma in sport
- ineffective use of targets to raise learners' performance
- poor specialist resources.

Achievements and standards

55. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on the community sports leadership award have been consistently high in each of the three years to 2006. Success rates on most courses improved significantly in 2005-06 to well above the national average. Progression to higher level qualifications and into related employment is good. Success rates on the first diploma in sport have been consistently low over the three year period. The standard of learners' written work is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory. Behaviour in some lessons is poor.
56. The development of learners' vocational skills is good. Learners achieve a good range of additional industry relevant qualifications. All learners benefit from good work experience placements and much coaching practice in local schools. They use their skills well to make positive contributions to the community through participation in local sporting events. Learners demonstrate safe exercise practice.

Quality of provision

57. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In better lessons, learners benefit from good planning that includes frequent change of activity, regular checks on learning and good reinforcement of health and safety. In an expedition skills lesson, progressive exercises successfully introduced compass skills enabling learners to locate simple bearings. In the less effective lessons, strategies to manage poor behaviour and ensure all learners participate are ineffective. Arrangements for key skills are satisfactory. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory.
58. The range of provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. Strong links with schools, sports partnerships and employers exist to support good curriculum development and planning. Projects with schools promote healthy living and productive participation in sport. Learners benefit from a comprehensive range of vocationally relevant enrichment activities that include work placements, industry and residential visits and guest speakers.
59. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. The college identifies pastoral and additional learning needs appropriately and supports learners well. The use of targets to raise learners' performance is ineffective. Teachers make insufficient use of initial assessment outcomes to set learners specific and meaningful targets.

Leadership and management

60. Curriculum leadership and management are good. Successful curriculum management has raised standards and learners' achievements. Managers have strengthened personal and learning support to improve learners' attendance and success rates. Managers make better use of data to evaluate learners' progress. The observation of teaching and learning does not include the coaching teachers in the sports academies. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the report is largely accurate. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.
61. Specialist resources are poor. The overall sports accommodation is satisfactory. Some lessons take place in inappropriate classrooms where noise from adjacent sporting activities disrupts the learning. Some flooring is unsuitable for practical activities. The college has only one football pitch. Learners have to use the specialist facilities of other sports centres but their access to these facilities is often insufficient.

Arts, media and publishing

Good: grade 2

Context

62. About 450 learners, mostly aged 16-18, follow first or national diploma courses in fine art, three-dimensional design, graphic design, media make-up and textile design. A further 43 learners study on performing arts courses. Approximately 80 learners are aged 19 and over. They take the access to higher education course or the diploma in foundation studies in art and design.

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- high standard of practical work
- good range of vocationally related projects
- excellent independent learning and critical evaluation skills in performing arts
- wide range of curriculum enrichment activities.

Areas for improvement

- declining pass rates on some courses
- insufficient range of teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners
- insufficient rigour in some quality improvement processes.

Achievements and standards

63. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates on many courses are high and have been consistently above the national average in each of the three years to 2006. Pass rates on the national diplomas in performing arts, textiles and the diploma in foundation studies have been above the national average over the same period. In performing arts, the number of learners achieving a distinction is outstanding. Success rates on key skills in communication are very high. Retention is good. Progression to higher education is high. Pass rates have declined on some courses. On the national diploma in fine art, the pass rate fell 10 percentage points below the high national average in 2005/06. The standard of learners' practical work is high. Learners in performing arts demonstrate professional standards of rehearsal skills. The overall quality of drawing is high on art courses.

Quality of provision

64. Teaching and learning are good. A good range of vocationally related projects maintains learners' enthusiasm and enjoyment in many art and design lessons. In a drawing lesson, learners relished the challenge of making a series of quick sketches as they improved their observational drawing skills. On courses in performing arts, learners exhibit high levels of motivation and demonstrate

excellent independent learning and critical evaluation skills. In one lesson on directing, learners shared their ideas well as they interpreted roles and characters. Some teaching relies on a narrow range of strategies with insufficient attention to learning outcomes. In these lessons, learners fail to complete project research and planning requirements or make slow progress.

65. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory. Most feedback is helpful and identifies how learners can improve. Some feedback does not always explicitly relate to assessment criteria.
66. A good range of programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners well. A good variety of course-related activities including visits to many cultural centres introduces learners to the work of contemporary artists and performers.
67. Guidance and support for learners are good. Recruitment information is good. Learners value the good levels of personal support that they receive from tutors. Learners in receipt of additional learning support achieve well.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the college has changed the organisation and structure of this area significantly to provide clearer lines of communication and responsibility. The area has maintained most of the strengths and improved most of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Staff are well qualified and have current professional experience. The monitoring of learners' performance is satisfactory and managers make appropriate use of accurate management information. The self-assessment report is satisfactory. The implementation of some quality improvement processes is insufficient. Programme reviews and reports from quality boards lack rigour and are too descriptive. They contain insufficient evaluation of achievement and teaching and learning. Improvement targets in action plans are insufficiently defined and monitored.
69. Accommodation and specialist resources are satisfactory. Facilities in performing arts are basic and in poor decorative order.

Preparation for life and work

Good: grade 2

Context

70. At the time of the inspection, 26 full-time and 116 part-time learners aged 16-18, and 24 full-time and 711 part-time learners aged 19 and over had enrolled on courses in this area. The college offers courses in literacy, numeracy, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) from entry level to level 2 including courses for learners with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities and profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In addition, 225 learners aged 16-18 take key skills courses in communications and application of number at levels 1 and 2. Lessons take place on the main college site, in community venues and in the workplace.

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- good development of learners' skills
- good teaching and learning
- very good support
- good actions to improve the quality of provision.

Areas for improvement

- low pass rates on some ESOL courses
- inadequate accommodation for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities.

Achievements and standards

71. Achievements and standards are good. Pass rates for levels 1 and 2 in adult literacy and numeracy tests, key skills communications and GCSE English have been consistently high in each of the three years to 2006. Success rates on level 2 application of number and GCSE mathematics and ESOL at entry level 3 are satisfactory. Success rates for ESOL skills for life at level 1 and ESOL at entry level 1 remain considerably below the national average.
72. Learners demonstrate good development of skills. Many learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities exhibit higher levels of confidence and improved communication skills. ESOL learners demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. Most learners have improved their study skills. The standard of learners' work is good.

Quality of provision

73. Teaching and learning are good. The teaching of individual learners is particularly good. Individual learning plans are comprehensive. In literacy and

numeracy lessons, learners benefit from many good learning resources and use ICT well to support their learning. In ESOL, teachers make good use of repetition to improve learners' pronunciation. In most lessons for learners with learning difficulties, learners work purposefully and display confidence in their response to questions. In some lessons, where the group is taught as a whole, the range of activity is insufficient to involve and engage learners.

74. Learning resources in the open learning workshop are good. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are good. Tutors assess learners' progress thoroughly against the targets in their individual learning plans.
75. The range of provision is satisfactory with suitable progression routes to the next level. The college has no evening courses for ESOL learners.
76. Guidance and support are good. Managers ensure that learners receive the right level of support for their needs and evaluate this carefully. The college provides a high level of in-class support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for learners on literacy and numeracy courses. Teachers and support staff provide good individual support in the open learning workshops for literacy, numeracy and key skills. Improved initial assessment in ESOL identifies more accurately the level of course.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are good. Managers have taken effective actions to improve the quality of provision and weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been remedied. Communication is good. Staff development is good particularly for learning support assistants. Quality assurance is thorough. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the report is largely accurate. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Most teaching accommodation is good. Accommodation for some learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unsuitable. Some classrooms are in a poor decorative state and too small for the number of learners especially when many wheelchair users are present.

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	899	37	60	-23	1,883	40	59	-19
	04/05	578	64	64	0	1,248	61	62	-1
	05/06	516	68	-	-	1,037	64	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	22	64	65	-1	3	33	52	-19
	04/05	18	50	68	-18	1	0.0	-	-
	05/06	0	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
NVQs	03/04	25	32	61	-29	36	42	62	-20
	04/05	66	36	67	-31	87	78	67	11
	05/06	78	76	-	-	34	59	-	-
Other	03/04	852	36	60	-24	1,844	40	59	-19
	04/05	494	68	64	4	1,160	59	61	-2
	05/06	438	66	-	-	1,003	64	-	-

Data for 2005/06 from college sources

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	883	38	56	-18	2,025	45	54	-9
	04/05	790	51	61	-10	1,904	53	60	-7
	05/06	837	65	-	-	1,214	70	-	-
GCSEs	03/04	130	25	61	-36	87	51	59	-8
	04/05	144	62	64	-2	125	68	62	6
	05/06	115	59	-	-	90	74	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	29	66	63	3	5	20	57	-37
	04/05	17	65	67	-2	9	89	70	19
	05/06	0	-	-	-	2	0	-	-
NVQs	03/04	272	38	52	-14	773	62	54	8
	04/05	186	46	57	-11	927	43	60	-17
	05/06	151	56	-	-	432	56	-	-
Other	03/04	452	40	54	-14	1,160	33	53	-20
	04/05	443	49	60	-11	843	61	59	2
	05/06	571	69	-	-	690	79	-	-

Data for 2005/06 from college sources

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	884	62	64	-2	998	51	54	-3
	04/05	924	65	68	-3	1,060	48	57	-9
	05/06	783	68	-	-	893	59	-	-
A/A2 Levels	03/04	97	81	84	-3	23	57	66	-9
	04/05	111	78	86	-8	21	57	69	-12
	05/06	36	50	-	-	25	76	-	-
AS Levels	03/04	224	56	63	-7	39	46	50	-4
	04/05	166	53	66	-13	55	51	52	-1
	05/06	115	54	-	-	41	44	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	22	50	52	-2	14	71	44	27
	04/05	17	35	60	-25	1	0	-	-
	05/06	21	29	-	-	1	0	-	-
NVQs	03/04	9	22	54	-32	213	33	47	-14
	04/05	16	50	62	-12	334	21	54	-33
	05/06	25	56	-	-	211	30	-	-
Other	03/04	532	62	56	6	709	57	56	1
	04/05	614	67	60	7	649	61	58	3
	05/06	586	73	-	-	615	70	-	-

Data for 2005/06 from college sources

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2003/04 to 2005/06

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	21	38	32	38	47
	Advanced	22	32	31	45	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	33	36	39	36	50
	Advanced	10	20	34	30	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	57	23	53	46	58
	Advanced	31	29	44	39	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 **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	13	15	16	15	24
	Advanced	15	0	19	13	30
2004/05	Apprenticeship	33	24	21	24	29
	Advanced	7	29	21	29	31
2005/06	Apprenticeship	58	22	32	36	36
	Advanced	31	29	26	32	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'