



Isle of Wight College

Inspection Report 30 April – 4 May 2007

Audience
Post-sixteen

Published
June 2007

Provider reference
130821

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievements and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. The Isle of Wight College is a general further education college (GFE) with a broad curriculum to reflect the needs of the island community. The main campus is sited in a central location on the outskirts of Newport, the county town of the Isle of Wight and the island's principal retail centre. A number of other centres around the island are used for adult education, basic skills

and family learning programmes, and for information and communication technology (ICT) courses.

2. The college is the island's major provider of further education and training for some 8,000 learners. The majority are adults and about 1,600 learners are aged between 16 and 18. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is small and reflects the balance in the local community. Around 600 pupils from local schools attend the college to follow vocational programmes. There is also a small provision for higher education to support the needs of about 120 local people.
3. The college has invested in accommodation over the past few years. Practical training facilities and access to accommodation and resources for learners with physical disabilities have been improved. However, there remains some outdated accommodation, which the college is actively trying to improve or replace. The college is a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in four areas; care, hospitality, marine engineering and early years.
4. The college's mission is "putting students first, working with employers, raising community aspirations".

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: grade 1
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Outstanding: grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Good: Contributory grade 2</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

5. The Isle of Wight College is an outstanding college that is working most effectively to meet the needs of the island community. Standards are very high and improving for all learners, who make outstanding progress during their time at college. Teaching and learning are good and improving. Guidance and support for learners are outstanding.
6. The college has made exceptional progress during the last seven years. The changes that have come about have been driven by outstanding leadership and management and a relentless focus on the vision to serve the community and on raising standards. Quality assurance procedures are robust and thorough. To improve further, the college needs to enhance target setting for individual learners and the delivery of key skills.
7. The approach to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. Vocational pathways are available from entry level to level 3 in most curriculum areas. There is a wide range of pre-entry programmes. Outreach work and community partnerships are very successful. The number of learners on Skills for Life courses has doubled since 2003/04. Outreach courses take place in a wide range of community venues. The college is very responsive to the changing local demography of the local community and has carried out a significant number of successful projects to meet the needs of under-represented groups of learners. The provision for employers is particularly effective in meeting their specialist needs. The impact of strategies to ensure equality of opportunity is good.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

8. The capacity of the college to improve its provision for learners is outstanding. Managers, governors and staff are wholly committed to putting learners first, widening the curriculum and engaging with partners. Self-assessment and quality assurance procedures are thorough and the college accurately identifies its key strengths and areas for improvement. The pace of change and improvements has been exceptional. Success rates for learners have risen steadily over the past three years.

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

9. The college has made very good progress in addressing the areas for improvement noted in the last inspection report. These include substantial

improvements to the range of provision, including work in prisons, work-based learning and for learners aged 14-19. Provision of work placements and retention rates at level 3 have both improved markedly.

Key strengths

- outstanding success rates for all learners
- good and improving teaching and learning
- a sharp focus on meeting the needs of stakeholders, particularly the specialist needs of employers
- outstanding outreach and community partnership work
- outstanding personal support for learners
- outstanding senior leadership and vision.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the effectiveness of target-setting for individual learners
- the delivery and assessment of key skills.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Outstanding: grade 1

10. Achievements and standards are outstanding. The college has very high expectations for all its learners. Targets for success are realistic and challenging. In 2005/06, more than 80% of full-time learners aged between 16 and 18 met or exceeded their target grade. Learners achieve very high standards on the large majority of courses and they make outstanding progress during their time at the college. They are enrolled on courses that are appropriate based on their previous attainment and, by the end of their course, the large majority have reached standards that are well above average. Standards achieved by learners in hairdressing and beauty therapy, leisure, travel and tourism, and basic skills are particularly high. However, standards on courses in construction, although around the national averages for similar colleges, are below the high standards set elsewhere in the college.
11. Success rates on all long courses have improved steadily since the last inspection. The overall success rate in 2005/06 was 77%, which is much higher than the average for similar colleges and places the college in the top 10% nationally. It represents an improvement of 10% over the past two years. Success rates are significantly higher than national averages at all levels of study for learners aged 16-18 and for adults. Overall retention rates are high and improving. Success rates on short courses are also well above national averages. Success rates for adult learners are particularly impressive. In 2005/06, 81% of adult learners finished their courses and gained the qualification, 15% above the 2005/06 national average. Learners enrolled on 'Learndirect' provision in the community achieve standards that are satisfactory. Results for key skills qualifications are good, improving and above the national averages. Pupils aged 14-16 from local schools also achieve very high standards. Success rates over the past two years have been very good and most continue to full-time courses at the college. More than 90% of the pupils enrolled on college courses in 2006/07 will complete their course.
12. Learners study in a safe and healthy environment and clearly enjoy their work. Attendance rates are above the national average for similar colleges and punctuality for lessons is good. Half the learners on advanced courses progress to higher education or stay in further education. Most of the remainder go into full-time employment. 64% of learners at levels 1 and 2 stay in further education. Many learners contribute in the local community through a wide range of activities.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

13. Teaching and learning are good. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the large majority of lessons are good or outstanding. Most learners enjoy their studies and good attendance at lessons improves learning. Teaching and learning in some curriculum areas are better than in others. Overall, the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is very low. In the better lessons, teachers use a wide range of activities to promote independent learning. Participation is good and lessons are lively and interesting. Learners enjoy group activities and work well collaboratively. There are many opportunities to link theory to the practical setting. Generally, the teaching of practical skills is good. In weaker lessons, some teachers fail to check learners' understanding, pay insufficient attention to individual needs and do not provide enough variety of activities. The quality of lesson planning is variable.
14. The initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills is good. It is timely and supported where necessary by additional diagnostic testing. A very high proportion of learners take up the support offered to them. Those identified as needing support generally receive effective help which impacts positively on learning and success. However, when learning support assistants are used in the classroom, no specific targets for improvement are set. In a minority of cases, learners do not receive targeted support for their numeracy needs. There is very good support for learners with learning difficulties.
15. The college's procedures for assessing and monitoring learners' progress are good. Work is generally set regularly and marked promptly. Written comments help learners to improve. The assessment of practical skills and internal verification practice are mostly thorough. In art and design, learning activities are very well planned and assignment briefs are exemplary. External verifier reports that identify compliance issues are dealt with thoroughly. Parents and employers receive periodic reports on learners' progress, but some reports are more informative than others.
16. Learning resources are generally good, particularly the additional resources generated by the four CoVEs. Equipment, materials and tools used in many vocational areas are at industry standards. Much teaching accommodation is good, but some is in need of upgrading. The use of information learning technology (ILT) is satisfactory. The college recognises that the pace of ILT development has slowed. However, in some areas there is very good practice.

17. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. As the only college on the island, managers plan very carefully to ensure that courses are available in all subject areas. They make good use of labour market information and links with industry to identify general and specialist courses that best meet learners' needs. The college is alert to local and national priorities. Careful changes to the curriculum reflect an increasingly strong focus on courses at levels 2 and 3 and skills for life. The four CoVEs have enabled the college to extend the curriculum in a number of areas. Many learners are only enrolled on one key skill qualification and the results of initial assessment are not always used to determine the most appropriate key skills for learners to study.
18. The college provides well for pupils aged 14-16 from local schools, which effectively helps to raise young people's aspirations and school attainment levels. Over 600 young people have participated in a wide range of college courses in 2006/07. All curriculum areas have at least one programme which is accessible to this age group.
19. There is a very strong focus on meeting the specialist needs of employers. Work with employers is a key strategic aim of the college and meeting local skills needs has a major influence on the curriculum. The college has achieved Action for Business status and has worked with more than 600 employers in 2006/07. Employers praise the responsiveness of the college in running very successful courses to meet their particular needs. The college takes a leading role in improving skills levels and the development of the island's economic strategy, and has made a significant investment in workforce development. The business development unit has been very successful in delivering high quality training. Employer engagement through Learndirect courses is very good.
20. The college's provision for the advice, guidance and support for learners is outstanding. Pre-course information is excellent and readily available in a large variety of paper formats, together with an audio version and via the college's website. Learners benefit from particularly good pre-entry guidance. Induction programmes are thorough and effective. The tutorial programme is very well developed and is flexible to meet the differing needs of learners. Tutors provide outstanding personal support. Learners are actively encouraged to stay healthy. In some curriculum areas, the setting and recording of rigorous academic targets is not well developed. There are particularly strong links with specialist agencies and learners benefit from good child care support in the college nursery. The college's promotion of educational maintenance allowances (EMA) and adult learning grants (ALG) is particularly strong and effective. Careers and higher education guidance and information is very good, impartial and widely

available. The college has well trained staff and rigorous procedures, including child protection arrangements, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people and vulnerable adults. There are insufficiently strong links between the learners' individual learning plans, and records used to record targets and to monitor their progress.

21. Learners have good opportunities to participate in a wide range of enrichment activities, including events that promote learners' general health and safety and encourage them to make a positive contribution to the island community. The college does not monitor learners' attendance at these events sufficiently. Most learners enjoy a wide range of imaginative subject-based enrichment opportunities and work experience.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

22. Leadership and management are outstanding. The college has successfully addressed the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Work placement opportunities for learners have significantly improved; retention on advanced courses is now well above the national average for similar colleges. Links with employers have been extensively developed.
23. The principal and senior management team provide outstanding leadership. Together with the governors, they articulate a clear vision and strategic direction which is well understood by staff. Communications in the college are very good. Managers at all levels work effectively to bring about improvements. Management information is well used to monitor performance and raise standards. Curriculum management is generally very good.
24. Quality assurance procedures are robust and well developed. Through the lesson observation system, course reviews and self-assessment processes, managers get an accurate picture of performance. Prompt actions are taken to address any identified weaknesses and the pace of improvement over recent years has been impressive. The self-assessment report and its accompanying development plans are both rigorous and accurate.
25. Equality and diversity are well celebrated. Extensive diversity training for all staff has enabled curriculum teams to place more emphasis on equality and diversity in lessons. In areas such as care and preparation for life and work, the celebration of equality and diversity is outstanding. A very wide range of education and training opportunities are provided across all 15 learning areas. As the only further education college on the Isle of Wight, the mission to provide for the full range of learners' needs is taken very seriously. A wide spectrum of learners, from pre-entry level to higher

education, from vulnerable groups to those interested in Gregorian chant, and from family learning to access groups, use the college and successfully gain their qualifications.

26. The site is accessible for those with physical disabilities. The college complies with legal requirements in relation to race equality, disability and child protection. Measures to ensure the safety, protection and wellbeing of young people are very effective. The performance of different groups of learners is very effectively monitored. Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. College staff are well qualified and good proportions of both full- and part-time staff have a relevant teaching qualification, or are working towards one. Recruitment procedures are strong and well organised.
27. Overall, resources are good and some new facilities are outstanding. There is a new visual arts block and a learning resource centre, together with other significant developments to the site. However, some accommodation remains old and unsuitable. Corridors, classrooms and other spaces are attractively decorated and successfully celebrate learners' achievements and the diversity of local communities. Learning resources are good and there is no shortage of up-to-date specialist equipment.
28. The governance of the college is very good. Governors are supportive and challenging and have high expectations of both learners and staff. They bring a wide range of expertise to their roles and monitor the college's performance effectively. They are well briefed and benefit from good quality induction and training. Women are currently under-represented on the governing body. Financial management is sound and the college provides very good value for money. Governors and managers have chosen to spend money on facilities for learners rather than retaining large reserves. Over the past three years, a six million pound building programme has been completed without generating any significant borrowing. The use of both human and physical resources is well tracked and monitored.
29. There are outstanding links with other providers, services and employers. The college is actively engaged in widening participation in education and training on the island. Over the past three years, employer engagement has increased dramatically. The college leads, or is a partner, in four CoVEs and is also a key partner with the local authority and secondary schools in the 14-19 strategic developments, which have successfully provided part-time vocational courses for 14-16 year olds.

Learner's 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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	03-04	735	66	60	6	719	76	59	17
	04-05	936	76	64	12	348	76	62	14
	05-06	625	72			242	84		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	81	69	65	4	12	33	52	-19
	04-05	63	62	68	-6	n/a	n/a	58	n/a
	05-06	6	0			n/a	n/a		
NVQs	03-04	89	73	61	12	62	65	62	3
	04-05	83	67	67	0	16	100	67	33
	05-06	113	59			24	83		
Other	03-04	565	64	60	4	645	78	59	19
	04-05	790	78	64	14	331	75	61	14
	05-06	506	76			218	84		

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	645	62	56	6	862	66	54	12
	04-05	627	70	61	9	886	75	60	15
	05-06	609	73			833	79		
GCSEs	03-04	76	61	61	0	226	67	59	8
	04-05	103	62	64	-2	212	76	62	14
	05-06	75	60			191	71		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	24	83	63	20	11	64	57	7
	04-05	n/a	n/a	63	n/a	n/a	n/a	70	n/a
	05-06	n/a	n/a			n/a	n/a		
NVQs	03-04	93	68	52	16	178	66	53	13
	04-05	101	71	57	14	238	71	60	11
	05-06	99	77			196	83		
Other	03-04	452	60	54	6	447	66	53	13
	04-05	423	72	60	12	435	76	59	17
	05-06	435	74			446	81		

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	262	65	64	1	429	65	53	12
	04-05	287	66	67	-1	511	71	57	14
	05-06	336	74			585	76		
A/A2 Levels	03-04	4	75	84	-9	17	71	66	5
	04-05	n/a	n/a	86	n/a	n/a	n/a	69	n/a
	05-06	n/a	n/a			n/a	n/a		
AS Levels	03-04	20	45	63	-18	50	38	50	-12
	04-05	7	71	66	5	51	61	52	9
	05-06	15	47			26	46		
GNVQs and precursors	03-04	17	53	52	1	n/a	n/a	44	n/a
	04-05	n/a	n/a	60	n/a	21	52	53	-1
	05-06	n/a	n/a			11	73		
NVQs	03-04	39	64	54	10	115	67	47	20
	04-05	42	67	62	5	99	72	54	18
	05-06	41	93			154	77		
Other	03-04	182	68	56	12	245	70	56	14
	04-05	235	66	60	6	339	73	58	15
	05-06	277	74			392	78		

Table 4

Outcomes on learndirect programmes

2005-06	Enrolments	Counted for data	Success rate (%)	Withdrawal rate (%)
All sectors	5023	5023	60	8
ICT	1833	1833	53	12
Skills for Life	3136	3136	64	5
Business and management	54	54	16	33

Q1 2006-07	Enrolments	Counted for data	Success rate (%)	Withdrawal rate (%)
All sectors	567	413	64	4
ICT	16	7	14	57
Skills for Life	550	406	65	3
Business and management				

Q2 2006-07	Enrolments	Counted for data	Success rate (%)	Withdrawal rate (%)
All sectors	945	792	51	5
ICT	24	12	8	42
Skills for Life	920	780	52	5
Business and management				

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