

# Dunstable College

Inspection report

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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](http://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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement 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
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: health, public services and care; information and communication technology (ICT); hairdressing and beauty therapy; leisure travel and tourism; arts, media and publishing; preparation for life and work; and business, administration and law.

## Description of the provider

1. This is a medium-sized general further education (GFE) college based in Dunstable in South Bedfordshire. The main campus, Kingsway, is close to the town centre. The college provides courses at four other smaller sites in Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard and Luton. The college's mission is 'to establish and maintain a distinct role as the high quality provider of vocational training and education for the community of Dunstable and South Bedfordshire'.
2. The college offers courses in 13 sector subject areas (SSA). The highest numbers of learners in 2007/08 were in: preparation for life and work; health, public services and social care; information and communication technology; retail and commercial enterprises; leisure, travel and tourism; arts, media and publishing; and business, administration and law. The college provides Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes as well as training for apprentices and advanced apprentices. It also makes provision for learners aged 14 to 16 from local schools. The college has a contract in partnership with other Bedfordshire Colleges for European Social Fund (ESF) projects and with Jobcentre Plus for basic skills assessment. The college offers specialist full-cost courses to local employers.
3. In the current academic year, the college has enrolled 4,524 learners so far, of whom about 80% are adults, about 60% are women and just over 20% are from minority ethnic groups. Around 50% of learners are from South Bedfordshire and about 25% from Luton. Most of the remainder are from neighbouring local areas. In 2006/07, the college had 76 work-based learners, 49 E2E learners and 518 learners aged 14 to 16.
4. South Bedfordshire's population is 112,637, of which 7% are from minority ethnic groups. South Bedfordshire ranks 253 out of 354 for the average scores for the highest levels of deprivation in England. The employment rate in South Bedfordshire is just above the national average. In 2007, the percentage of pupils gaining five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was 47% in Bedfordshire, in line with the national average, and 41% in Luton.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: contributory grade 3</i>

### Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care	Good: Grade 2
Information and communication technology	Inadequate: Grade 4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leisure, travel and tourism	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Arts, media and publishing	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2
Business, administration and law	Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The effectiveness of the college's provision is satisfactory. Overall success rates have improved substantially and achievement and standards are now satisfactory. However, in 2006/07 learners' success rates remained too variable between different levels of course and between different curriculum areas. Learners demonstrate good workplace skills, while their standard of work is satisfactory. They make satisfactory progress from their respective starting points.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Planning of lessons is thorough and teaching and learning for full-time learners are often good. The provision and use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons are insufficient and teaching and learning for part-time ICT learners are inadequate.
7. The college's response to social and educational inclusion, and to the needs of learners and employers are, good. For those with few formal qualifications and learners aged 14 to 18 the variety of courses is good. The range of short, long and specialist courses matches the needs of employers effectively.
8. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Full-time learners receive good support for additional learning needs. This is less effective for part-time learners. Group tutorials are good. Targets in most individual learning plans are too general and tutors do not monitor learners' progress sufficiently.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governance is good. Standards and success rates have increased but managers and governors are aware work remains to provide good provision for all learners. The college's vision for the future is clear, but not adequately reflected in college planning. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory, but the evaluation of outcomes from them is insufficient. Management of sector subject areas and promotion of equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Financial management is good.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. Capacity to improve is satisfactory. Quality assurance arrangements are adequate. Low long course success rates have increased to a largely satisfactory position but in the different sector subject areas, and between levels of study, the rates are mixed. Although provision overall has improved, particularly in leisure, travel and tourism, it is now inadequate in ICT. The college sets and mostly meets its targets. Good opportunities are available to staff to improve their skills. Management of sector subject areas is satisfactory overall and finances are well managed. The strategic plan requires updating and the development plan provides an unsatisfactory basis for operational planning. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. However, issues in this area have a negative impact on learners' experiences.

11. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The self-assessment report provides a mostly accurate assessment of the quality of provision, although judgements on achievement and standards and teaching and learning are imprecise and hinder the setting of appropriate, measurable targets.

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

12. The college has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Success rates have increased substantially to a satisfactory level and teaching and learning have improved overall. Poor attendance is now satisfactory. Key skills provision has improved. Management of work-based learning and employer engagement are much better. The college has made progress with the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons but the monitoring of its impact is underdeveloped. Inadequate provision in sport, travel and tourism is now satisfactory. Initiatives to improve individual target setting have proved more effective in some subjects than others.

### Key strengths

- significant increase in the overall long course success rate
- good acquisition of workplace skills by learners
- carefully planned teaching and learning
- particularly effective provision for learners aged 14 to 16
- good employer links
- good group tutorial support for full-time learners
- good governance.

### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- declining and low long course success rates at level 2 for adult learners
- inadequate provision in ICT
- insufficient provision and use of ILT in lessons
- insufficient opportunities for work experience for learners aged 16 to 18
- insufficient arrangements for supporting and sharing good tutorial practice
- unsatisfactory strategic and development planning
- insufficient analysis of the outcomes from quality assurance arrangements.

## Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Contributory grade:*

*Learners aged 14 to 16*

*Good: grade 2*

13. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. This matches the self-assessment report. Between 2004/05 and 2006/07, the long course success rate increased very substantially to a satisfactory level. The increase in long course success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 at levels 2 and 3 between 2004/05 and 2006/07 was marked, and at level 1 it was particularly large. At levels 1 and 2 the long course success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 reached a satisfactory level in 2006/07, but it remained poor at level 3. For adults the long course success rate was doubled between 2004/05 and 2006/07 at levels 1 and 3, but the success rate declined significantly at level 2. Adult success rates in 2006/07 were high at level 1, low at level 2 and satisfactory at level 3.
14. Long course success rates improved between 2004/05 and 2006/07 in most curriculum areas but not in engineering and manufacturing. Only in ICT was the improvement less than substantial. However, in 2006/07, long course success rates in science and mathematics, engineering and manufacturing and ICT were low.
15. Long course success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups are similar to the college as a whole. The long course success rate for women is slightly better than that for men. Success rates on short courses increased significantly between 2004/05 and 2006/07. They are now mostly high.
16. Framework success rate for work-based learners increased markedly between 2004/05 and 2006/07 to around the national average. In 2006/07, a high proportion of E2E learners progressed to further education, training and employment. The success rate for learners aged 14 to 16 is high and a substantial proportion move into further education, employment and work-based learning. Key skills success rates increased substantially in 2006/07 but remain low.
17. Learners' good workplace skills help them achieve economic well-being. Progress from prior levels of attainment is adequate and the standard of learners' work is satisfactory. At the end of their studies, nearly all learners progress to employment, further and higher education or training. Learners make a positive contribution to the community through charitable activities and volunteering to work with local schools.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Contributory grade:*

*Learners aged 14 to 16*

*Good: grade 2*

18. The quality of provision overall is satisfactory as the college has judged in its self-assessment report. However, inspectors judge teaching and learning, assessed as good by the college, to be satisfactory. However, teaching and learning for full-time learners are often good. Teachers plan most lessons carefully and management of learning is effective. In the better lessons, a wide range of innovative methods ensures learners make good progress with their studies. In the weaker lessons, teachers do not take sufficient account of learners' individual learning needs or use questioning ineffectively to check learning, and the range of teaching and learning approaches is narrow, particularly in ICT workshops for part-time learners. The provision and use of ILT in lessons is insufficient to meet learners' needs. The teaching of key skills is improving, but only in some lessons is key skills integrated with the learners' main course of study.
19. Support for additional learning needs is good for most full-time learners at the Kingsway campus. It is less successful at other sites and for part-time learners. Most teachers work closely with learning support workers to ensure support is effective in lessons. The success rate of learners receiving additional learning support are similar to the college as a whole.
20. Arrangements for assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. Managers provide appropriate support for recently appointed assessors. In some subjects the monitoring of learners' progress is good but in others it is insufficiently effective.
21. Established arrangements to observe teaching and learning provide teachers with detailed and mostly accurate feedback on their performance. The outcomes from the observations are used by managers to inform useful staff development but its impact on teachers' work is not fully evaluated. To help ensure grading is accurate, external consultants provide training on observations.
22. The college's response to the needs and interests of learners is good. For learners aged 16 to 18 and for those with few formal qualifications, the variety of courses meets their requirements particularly well. A very useful set of courses helps learners aged 14 to 16 to develop vocational skills. The range of short, long and specialist courses meets the needs of employers particularly well. At the time of inspection, 410 companies receive training through the college. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that an area for improvement is the range of work-based learning provision in hairdressing, care and construction. Enrichment is satisfactory overall but the range available differs from course to course. Opportunities for work experience for learners aged 16 to 18 are insufficient to help learners prepare for working life.

23. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. Successful partnerships with the local community extend provision to those not in education or training. Good quality courses are available for learners whose first language is not English at local schools, community venues and on employers' premises. The range of courses for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.
24. Support for learners is satisfactory. Group tutorials are good and relate effectively to the themes of Every Child Matters. Learners find tutorials helpful. Tutor assistants work well with learners, parents, carers and teachers to improve punctuality and attendance. Some tutors use useful packs for planning and monitoring learners' progress successfully. However, targets in most students' individual learning plans are too general, a concern identified through self-assessment, and tutors do not monitor learners' progress well enough. Tutors do not have a staff development programme and the college does not have formal arrangements to exchange tutorial good practice. Managers do not evaluate the quality of tutorials. Staff make good use of a wide range of external agencies to support learners, including counselling and childcare services. The well managed hardship fund is responsive to learners' needs. Healthy eating options are available at the Kingsway site.
25. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. College staff work with schools to give pupils appropriate information about courses at the college. Careers education is satisfactory. Links with Connexions are well established and the careers library is well resourced. Induction is thorough and includes a range of activities to help settle learners into their course.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Contributory grade:  
Equality of opportunity*

*Satisfactory: Grade 3*

26. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has resolved most areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, met its recruitment and success rate targets and secured its financial position to help improve standards overall. Morale is now high. The principal's strong leadership has developed a more self-critical culture at the college. Nevertheless, the principal, governors and managers are aware there is still much to do to secure good provision throughout the college.
27. Governance is good. Governors provide a broad range of experience and carry out their roles energetically. They scrutinise the college's work carefully and provide a good level of challenge to the principal and senior managers. They are particularly rigorous in monitoring standards of provision and finances.
28. Managers share a clear vision of the college's future, including participation in local regeneration, raising learners' aspirations, reshaping the curriculum and redevelopment of the Kingsway site. The good range of partnerships helps achieve these objectives. However, planning does not fully reflect the college's

vision. The current strategic plan requires updating and the development plan provides an inadequate framework for operational planning.

29. The standard of management of curriculum areas is variable but satisfactory overall. Increasingly effective use of accurate management information is helping in monitoring and improving course performance. Self-assessment and quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. However, insufficient detailed analysis and evaluation of outcomes from these arrangements detracts from their usefulness in informing and supporting curriculum area monitoring and planning.
30. Promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The college makes an appropriate response to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA). The college is compliant with requirements for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and attention to learners' health and safety is satisfactory. Managers are developing the use of equality and diversity impact measures to monitor college policies. Managers carefully analyse outcomes from different groups of learners and are developing procedures to reflect the experiences of different groups of learners through increased consultation. However, lesson observations do not provide sufficient information on the promotion of equality of opportunity in lessons and quality improvement plans have insufficient emphasis on equality of opportunity.
31. Managers work hard to ensure satisfactory learning resources but the Kingsway site is outdated. Around half of teachers are fully qualified. Most of the remainder are receiving training and it is effective in improving their performance. Financial management is good and value for money is satisfactory.

## Sector subject area

Health, public services and care

Good: Grade 2

32. The college offers full-time and part-time provision from level 1 to level 3 in childcare and education, health and social care, and public services. Learners can work towards NVQ, BTEC first and national diplomas and other vocational awards. Of the 366 learners, 194 are aged 16 to 18, 272 are women, 215 are full-time and 75 are from minority ethnic groups.

## Strengths

- high success rates on most courses in 2006/07
- good workplace skills of learners
- good teaching and learning
- good tutorial support
- particularly effective sharing of good teaching practice.

## Areas for improvement

- low success rates in 2006/07 on BTEC national diploma in care and some key skills qualifications
- insufficient use of ILT in teaching and learning.

## Achievement and standards

33. Achievement and standards are good. Between 2004/05 and 2006/07, long course success rates increased significantly. In 2006/07, success rates were very high on the certificate in childcare and education, first diploma in health and social care and the award in caring for children. They were low on the BTEC national diploma in care and for level 2 key skills in application of number and communication. The self-assessment report did not recognise these as areas for improvement.

34. Learners' workplace skills are good. Team working skills are well developed. Learners are confident and able to use their own initiative well in planning and meeting the needs of children. They use background knowledge particularly effectively during work experience. Employers value highly learners' ability to meet and understand clients' needs in the workplace. Learners' written work is satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are good.

## Quality of provision

35. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned, imaginative and maintain the interest of learners. In the most stimulating lessons, teachers use aims and objectives well to provide a range of challenging learning activities. In one lesson, blindfolded learners took part in a team activity to construct a jigsaw to develop their team working skills, ability to share information and meet deadlines. In most lessons, learners have insufficient access to ILT to undertake independent research which would

support their learning, an area for improvement in the self-assessment report. Assessment and verification are satisfactory. Teachers provide detailed written feedback to learners on how to improve their work. This is less effective for learners on public services courses. Identification of additional learning needs and the support provided to meet them are satisfactory.

36. The response to the needs of learners is satisfactory overall. The range of provision for full-time learners is appropriate and they can progress from level 1 to level 3. Enrichment activities are satisfactory. The range of provision for part-time learners is narrow.
37. Guidance and support are good. Tutorial support is particularly effective. Tutors set learners challenging targets and review learners' progress thoroughly. Tutorials link clearly to the themes of Every Child Matters.

### Leadership and management

38. Leadership and management are good. Managers have taken thorough and effective action to improve provision and increase success rates. They monitor closely learners at risk of leaving early. Regular contact with parents and the work of attendance officers have improved attendance significantly. The good peer teaching observation system contributes strongly to the sharing of good practice and staff development. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Self-assessment is broadly accurate.

## Information and communication technology

Inadequate: Grade 4

## Context

39. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in ICT from level 1 to level 4. These are available at college and community venues. Qualifications available to learners include NVQ, BTEC national diploma, GCE AS and other practitioner and user qualifications. Of the 1,044 learners, 895 are adults, 622 are women, 859 are part-time and 195 are from minority ethnic groups.

## Strengths

- good range of courses to meet learners' needs
- useful initiatives to develop full-time learners' skills.

## Areas for improvement

- low success rates on adult part-time courses
- narrow range of teaching on part-time courses
- no short-term learning targets for part-time learners
- ineffective actions to improve success rates on part-time programmes.

## Achievement and standards

40. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Success rates for adults on part-time courses have remained consistently low between 2004/05 and 2006/07. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 in 2006/07 on long courses were mostly adequate. The standard of full-time learners' work is satisfactory. Part-time learners gain useful ICT skills and full-time learners have well developed practical information technology (IT) skills. Most full-time learners enjoy their lessons. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is mostly good.

## Quality of provision

41. Contrary to the judgement in the self-assessment, the quality of provision and teaching and learning are inadequate. In the better lessons, questions are challenging and teachers maintain learners' interest through frequent changes in learning activity. They use particularly effectively initiatives through electronic systems to engage and develop the skills of full-time learners and to communicate and share ideas. The college has a partnership with a private provider for most part-time courses. The range of teaching and learning methods for this provision is extremely narrow and does not sustain learners' interest and motivation. For part-time learners, teachers do not use individual learning plans to record progress at monthly reviews or provide short-term learning targets. Assessment and marking of full-time learners' work are adequate and teachers return work promptly with useful comments. Support for additional learning needs is satisfactory.
42. The range of provision to meet the needs of learners is good. For full-time learners the range meets their needs well and builds on prior knowledge

effectively. The college provides a useful range of courses to meet the requirements of local adults to improve their ICT skills at easily accessible community locations. Response to the needs of employers is improving through specialist ICT training programmes.

43. Support for learners is satisfactory. Information and advice for most learners are satisfactory and much improved for new learners who also benefit from better diagnostic assessment. Arrangements for guidance, support and learners' welfare are appropriate.

#### Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management are inadequate. Managers clearly recognise they face major issues with such low success rates on part-time courses and have taken a number of initiatives to resolve this issue. These have not been successful. Managers and teachers closely monitor the performance of courses against the targets set for them. Resources are satisfactory. The self-assessment process is inclusive. However, the self-assessment report failed to identify the significance of some major areas for concern and over-graded this curriculum area. Arrangements to promote equality of opportunity are satisfactory.

## Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Context

45. The college offers full- and part-time courses leading to NVQ and other vocational awards at levels 1 and 2 in hairdressing and levels 1 to 3 in beauty therapy. In addition, the college offers a range of part-time specialist and health therapy courses. Of the 332 learners, 203 are adults, 313 are women, 206 are full-time and 36 are from minority ethnic groups. A further 84 learners are aged 14 to 16.

## Strengths

- high success rates in 2006/07 for adult learners on level 2 courses
- good standards of project work on level 2 hairdressing and by learners aged 14 to 16.

## Areas for improvement

- ineffective initial guidance for hairdressing learners at level 1
- slow progress on level 1 hairdressing courses
- insufficient employer and community engagement.

## Achievement and standards

46. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. In 2006/07, success rates were high for adult learners on level 2 courses; a strength recorded in the self-assessment report. Success rates overall improved markedly between 2004/05 and 2006/07 to a satisfactory level. The project work of level 2 hairdressing learners and learners aged 14 to 16 on level 1 courses is good. Learners use of ILT and their practical skills are satisfactory. Theatrical and media make-up learners deploy their skills innovatively to create simulated visible injuries for diagnosis and treatment planning by sports therapy learners. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

47. Quality of provision and teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, the enthusiasm and knowledge of teachers and stimulating activities provide learners with interesting lessons. Although teachers use a variety of teaching and learning methods, too often lessons lack pace and challenge. Support workers provide effective assistance for those with additional learning needs. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress are mainly satisfactory. However, the progress made by most level 1 hairdressing learners is slow. They do not have sufficient access to clients or opportunities for assessment to develop their practical skills.
48. The response to the needs of learners is satisfactory. Progress routes are available from level 1 to level 3 for beauty therapy learners but only to level 2 in hairdressing. The range of enrichment activities is satisfactory and include

visits from suppliers of hair and beauty products and stylists. The self-assessment report is right to identify the insufficient engagement with employers and the local community as an area for improvement. Full-time learners do not have work experience.

49. Support for learners is satisfactory overall. They receive appropriate personal and welfare guidance for the next stage of their careers. However, too many hairdressing learners start at level 1 rather than level 2, following ineffective initial guidance. Staff take insufficient account of learners' prior levels of attainment, results of initial assessments, salon experience or maturity. The quality of tutorials is too variable.

#### Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent management changes have led to a much clearer focus on raising standards and greater investment in resources. At the time of the inspection, it was too early to report on the impact of these changes. The self-assessment report provides a mostly accurate appraisal of the quality of provision. Specialist resources are adequate overall. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Leisure, travel and tourism

Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Context

51. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in sport from level 1 to level 4 and in travel and tourism for full-time learners at levels 2 and 3. Learners can work towards NVO, BTEC national and first diplomas and certificates and other vocational qualifications. Short course qualifications are available for older adults at community venues. Of the 128 learners, 96 are aged 16 to 18, 71 are men, 94 are part-time and 18 are from minority ethnic groups.

## Strengths

- high success rate on the BTEC first diploma in travel and tourism in 2006/07
- good standards of learners' work in travel and tourism
- much good teaching and learning.

## Areas for improvement

- low success rates on most level 3 courses
- poor course organisation in sport.

## Achievement and standards

52. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Between 2004/05 and 2006/07, success rates increased very significantly and are now broadly satisfactory. In 2006/07, the success rate was high on BTEC first diploma in travel and tourism but low on most level 3 courses, an area for improvement in the self-assessment report. College data for 2007/08 suggest retention rates will be high. The standard of learners' work is good in travel and tourism and satisfactory in sports. Travel and tourism learners have good knowledge of the industry, develop strong team working skills and their written work is well presented. Sports learners' written work makes effective use of references to sporting practice. Attendance of learners is good.

## Quality of provision

53. Quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. The planning of most lessons is thorough. Teachers use a variety of good teaching and learning approaches to engage the interest of learners well. In a sports lesson, learners participated in a stimulating discussion on team dynamics using relevant examples from sport theory. Teachers use questioning effectively to check learners' understanding. In less successful lessons, learning is insufficiently challenging and lesson planning is weak. The identification of, and provision for, additional learning needs are effective and assessment of learners' work is accurate.

54. The range of provision to meet learners' needs is satisfactory. Links with industry are improving in sport through the enrichment programme in football

development. In travel and tourism, links with industry provide a range of useful educational visits and work placements.

55. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Tutors provide learners with appropriate personal support and guidance for career progression. In travel and tourism, tutors monitor learners' progress closely. However, the use of targets and the monitoring of learners' progress in sport varies between tutors and a minority of learners do not make sufficient progress.

#### Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, managers and staff have improved provision from inadequate to satisfactory. Regular team meetings have a better focus on improvement and managers and staff pay more attention to data on learners' attendance and punctuality. Accommodation and resources are adequate, but sports learners at Houghton Regis have unsatisfactory access to ICT facilities and staff workrooms. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The self-assessment report provides a largely accurate assessment of standards. However, it did not recognise that the organisation of sports courses is poor. Changes of staff, timetables and rooms and teachers not following the assessment calendar have lowered learners' morale and motivation.

## Arts, media and publishing

Good: Grade 2

## Context

57. Full- and part-time courses are available from level 1 to level 4. Learners can work towards NVQ, GCE AS and A level, BTEC national diplomas and certificates, foundation diplomas and other professional qualifications. Of the 335 learners, 181 are adults, 258 are women, 192 are full-time and 79 are from minority ethnic groups.

## Strengths

- high success rates on craft and design courses and the foundation diploma in art and design
- high standards of learners' practical work
- highly effective learning resulting from good teaching
- good support for learners
- good sector subject leadership and management.

## Areas for improvement

- low success rates on the national diploma art and design in 2006/07
- low success rates on key skills level 2 communication.

## Achievement and standards

58. Achievement and standards are good. Long course success rates overall have improved substantially between 2004/05 and 2006/07, a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. Success rates for learners on the craft and design course and foundation diploma art and design were high in 2006/07, but low for the national diploma art and design. A significant number of learners are not successful at key skill level 2 communication.

59. Learners' work is good. In art and design, learners produce imaginative creative work using a wide range of media and methods. At Kingsway, the display of learners' artwork is very good and brightens the campus. All learners develop good interpersonal skills. Learners from different subjects and levels work well together on cross-curricular projects; for example, performing arts and media learners develop a wide range of work-related and personal skills through working together on live performances. A high proportion of learners move on to higher education. Attendance is particularly high.

## Quality of provision

60. Quality of provision and teaching and learning are good. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods to ensure learning is highly effective, lessons are lively and interesting and learners make good progress. Carefully planned learning tasks and assignments challenge and motivate learners particularly effectively. Assessment is good. Teachers give helpful feedback on what learners need to do to improve their work.

61. A good range of provision and progression routes meets the requirements of learners. The particularly useful ranges of visits are used successfully by learners to bring a wider variety of ideas to their work. Learners have effective access to work experience opportunities through the increasing links with employers.
62. Support and guidance for learners are good. Learners receive much useful individual support and guidance from their tutors. Learners with additional support needs are particularly successful in achieving their qualifications. Teachers make effective use of support workers to improve learning in lessons. The tutor assistants make a very good contribution to improving attendance and retention.

#### Leadership and management

63. Leadership and management are good. Staff morale is high. Managers provide a clear strategic direction and focus clearly on improving provision for learners. They have made significant and swift improvements to the quality of provision. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Self-assessment is inclusive. However, judgements in the self-assessment report are not always clear. Recruitment is declining on level 3 courses. Plans to increase numbers do not contain sufficient detail on how managers will resolve this problem.

## Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

## Context

64. The college provides courses for literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), Entry to Employment programmes and discrete provision for learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties and key skills. Qualifications are available from entry level to level 2. Of the 590 learners, 464 are adults, 387 are women, 364 are part-time and 98 are from minority ethnic groups.

## Strengths

- high success rates
- good independent living and working skills of learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties
- good teaching and learning
- broad range of programmes
- good support for learners
- good curriculum management.

## Areas for improvement

- insufficient computers, rooms and learning resources
- insufficient use of targets for recording and measuring progress of learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties.

## Achievement and standards

65. Achievement and standards are good. Since the last inspection, success rates have increased substantially. In 2006/07, they were high; a strength in the self-assessment report. Learners' work is good. All learners develop a high level of confidence and self-esteem. Development of independent living and working skills for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Learners improve their chances of gaining employment substantially through acquiring good work skills, including timekeeping, teamwork and communication, as well as vocational competences. Attendance and punctuality are good with the exception of ESOL where they are satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

66. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are good. Planning of teaching and learning is thorough. Teachers combine theory and practical learning activities very effectively to ensure learners are motivated and make good progress in lessons. ESOL learners have very clear individual learning plans with measurable and challenging targets. Constructive feedback provides learners with appropriate guidance on how to improve. Detailed monitoring of learners' progress takes place for most accredited courses. However, staff do not make sufficient use of targets to record and measure progress of learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties.

67. The response to the needs of learners is good. A broad range of courses is available at entry level and level 1 at college, and particularly for ESOL at community venues and on employers' premises. Courses for learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties are available in a range of vocational subjects. The mix of accredited courses and individual learning programmes is good and includes realistic work experience and personalised timetables for learners with learning disabilities and/or disabilities.
68. Support and guidance for learners are good. Support staff provide good study and personal support and follow up non-attendance effectively. Literacy, language and numeracy support help learners develop their learning skills and achieve their qualifications. Tutorial support is good for ESOL and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management are good, particularly for off-site ESOL provision. Managers have been particularly effective at improving success rates and provision since the last inspection. Sharing of good practice is effective. Lesson observations are thorough. Opportunities for staff development are good. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Self-assessment is mostly accurate. However, the self-assessment report did not record the impact of insufficient resources on learning. Not all classrooms have computers and some computers are out-dated. Other rooms, used for ESOL lessons, are noisy and cramped.

Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

70. The college offers a range of courses in business, administration, accounting and law from level 1 to level 4. Qualifications available include NVQ, BTEC awards, first and national diplomas and other vocational awards. Of the 440 learners, 312 are adults, 230 are men, 325 are part-time and 98 are from minority ethnic groups. Eighteen learners are on work-based learning programmes. Around 1,000 learners are on short courses in trade union studies.

### Strengths

- high success rates on BTEC business courses and apprenticeships
- good range of trade union studies' programmes
- good support for learners.

### Areas for improvement

- low success rates on administration level 1 and 2 courses
- low key skills success rates
- insufficient ILT facilities for learners.

### Achievement and standards

71. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. This matches the judgement in the self-assessment report. Most success rates have increased significantly between 2004/05 and 2006/07 to a satisfactory level. Success rates in 2006/07 were high for BTEC qualifications in business and administration and apprenticeships. Success rates for learners on level 1 and 2 administration programmes were low in 2006/07. In 2007/08, learners on these programmes were making good progress. Key skills' success rates were low in 2006/07 with the exception of those for apprentices. The standards of learners' work is satisfactory overall. Learners develop good independent learning skills on business programmes; most answer questions accurately and confidently showing good understanding of topics in lessons.

### Quality of provision

72. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, the planning and management of learning are good and teaching methods motivate and maintain learners' interest. In other lessons, standards are satisfactory. Assessment is accurate. Teachers monitor learners' work carefully and provide useful feedback on how to improve their work. The identification and provision of support for additional learning needs are satisfactory.

73. The response to the needs and interests of learners is good. A particularly strong feature is the good range of well-organised short courses for trade union

representatives. The college holds these courses at convenient local locations and they cover a wide range of relevant topics, including employment law, health and safety and equality. Enrichment is satisfactory.

74. Support and guidance for learners are good. Staff provide good support to meet learners' personal and social needs. Learners receive good guidance and advice on the business, administration and law provision the college offers and on careers. Learners particularly value the interest and support they receive as individuals from staff.

#### Leadership and management

75. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have successfully improved provision and increased success rates overall. Success rates were particularly low. Equality of opportunity is good. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory and the self-assessment report provides a mostly accurate evaluation of the quality of provision. Although some effective links with industry are in place, plans for developing local employer links have not been successful. ILT facilities are unsatisfactory. Most classrooms do not have ILT available for learners to use. Other resources are satisfactory. Managers and staff monitor punctuality and attendance carefully and they have worked hard to improve them. Although punctuality and attendance are now satisfactory, they remain below college targets. Managers have not been effective at up-dating teachers' commercial and industrial experience.

## Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	04/05	318	44	65	-21	2298	44	62	-18
	05/06	309	64	69	-5	2082	47	65	-18
	06/07**	318	74	*	*	719	81	*	*
GNVQs	04/05	35	51	68	-17	3	67	64	3
	05/06	19	89	72	17	2	100	...	...
	06/07**	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	49	53	68	-15	43	60	66	-6
	05/06	109	66	72	-6	81	77	74	3
	06/07**	55	73	*	*	19	37	*	*
Other	04/05	234	41	64	-23	2252	43	62	-19
	05/06	181	60	69	-9	1999	45	65	-20
	06/07**	263	74	*	*	700	82	*	*

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	04/05	396	54	61	-7	570	57	60	-3
	05/06	390	64	66	-2	627	65	66	-1
	06/07**	375	67	*	*	751	52	*	*
GCSEs	04/05	76	37	64	-27	28	61	63	-2
	05/06	56	55	68	-13	53	72	67	5
	06/07**	51	61	*	*	38	66	*	*
GNVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07**	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	108	50	57	-7	80	43	60	-17
	05/06	120	58	65	-7	47	72	67	5
	06/07**	131	63	*	*	434	41	*	*
Other	04/05	212	63	61	2	462	60	59	1
	05/06	214	70	66	4	527	64	65	-1
	06/07**	193	72	*	*	279	68	*	*

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, 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	04/05	325	52	68	-16	395	32	58	-26
	05/06**	312	63	70	-7	344	57	63	-6
	06/07	438	64	*	*	312	61	*	*
A/A2 Levels	04/05	3	100	86	14	4	50	69	-19
	05/06	3	67	87	-20	6	17	72	-55
	06/07**	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
AS Levels	04/05	17	24	66	-42	24	50	52	-2
	05/06	16	25	67	-42	20	25	55	-30
	06/07	141	61	*	*	18	56	*	*
GNVQs	04/05	14	50	61	-11	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07**	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	25	68	63	5	31	16	56	-40
	05/06	15	80	71	9	23	22	63	-41
	06/07**	17	65	*	*	19	32	*	*
Other	04/05	266	52	60	-8	336	32	59	-27
	05/06	278	64	65	-1	295	63	64	-1
	06/07**	280	66	*	*	275	63	*	*

\* Not available

\*\* College data (use where complete, validated and produced using proprietary software)

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes managed by the college 2005 to 2007.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	26	50%	48%	31%	34%
		timely	26	15%	31%	4%	22%
	05/06	overall	21	38%	53%	29%	44%
		timely	23	22%	34%	17%	27%
	06/07	overall	22	59%	64%	55%	58%
		timely	18	56%	43%	50%	37%
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	19	26%	51%	16%	39%
		timely	22	14%	29%	9%	22%
	05/06	overall	21	76%	58%	57%	52%
		timely	18	50%	38%	44%	34%
	06/07	overall	18	72%	65%	61%	61%
		timely	19	58%	47%	47%	44%

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

Table 5

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college 2006 to 2008.

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate*	Progression rate**
2005/06	42	83%	69%
2005/06	36	86%	64%
2007/08	49	80%	80%

Note: 2007-08 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the 3 months or greater of the LSC contract year

\* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

\*\* Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period

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