

Newham College of Further Education

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.

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 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.

Description of the provider

1. Newham College of Further Education is a large general further education college in the London Borough of Newham in East London. There are two main campuses, in East Ham and Stratford, and six local neighbourhood and specialist learning centres integrated with partners' and community activities. The college has 16 collaborative partners for its substantial Train to Gain and Skills for Jobs programmes. The college is a double Beacon Award winner and holds five Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) awards. It is the only college nationally approved to lead the development of a National Skills Academy (NSA) for fashion, textiles and jewellery skills.
2. The college provides vocational and academic programmes for both young people and adults in 14 of the 15 sector subject areas, although not all

provision is funded by the LSC. In 2007/08 the college had 13,261 learners. Of these, 3,080 attended full-time and the remainder attended part-time. Nearly 80% of learners were aged 19 and over. There were nearly 250 learners aged 14 to 16. In 2008/09 the college has nearly 8,000 Train to Gain learners. The college offers higher education provision, most of which is funded by university partners. The college has recently established the University Centre Stratford, to develop undergraduate provision of its own. Seventy per cent of all learners are from minority ethnic groups and 59% of all learners are women.

3. Newham is an area of extreme and multiple deprivations and is rated the sixth most deprived English local authority district. Unemployment is double the national average and 41% of adults are workless; nearly twice the London average. Newham has the youngest population of any borough in London. Child poverty, including the risk to health, is the second worst in England. Sixty-one per cent of the local population are from minority ethnic groups.
4. Employment in Newham is largely within micro and small and medium-sized businesses with a very large concentration of minority ethnic owned businesses. The largest single employers are in the public sector. Newham is experiencing significant economic and infrastructure development, amounting to some £19bn of investment, including work for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and the Stratford City and Canning Town developments.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

5. The overall effectiveness of provision is outstanding and the college has outstanding capacity to make further improvement. Achievement and standards are good. Overall success rates have improved significantly since the last inspection. They are now often above the most recently available national comparators for similar colleges and well above for learners aged 16 to 18 and for adults on level 1 courses. Learners' progress, relative to their prior attainment, is good overall. Success rates for Train to Gain programmes in Skills for Life are good and they are satisfactory for apprenticeship programmes. Standards of learners' work are often good.
6. The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good overall and satisfactory on apprenticeship programmes. Teaching and learning have significantly improved since the last inspection. Most lessons are well planned and executed and the use of information learning technologies (ILT) is much improved. Less good teaching and learning utilises a poorer range of techniques to engage learners. Learners respect one another and their teachers. Well-qualified teachers provide good support to learners. Initial assessment and the assessment of learners' work and progress are good.
7. The college's response to educational and social inclusion and to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. An extensive, innovative and inclusive curriculum successfully widens participation in education and training. The college's own progression and employability framework very effectively attracts learners from exceptionally diverse and often disadvantaged backgrounds. Awareness of local labour market needs is particularly strong. Relevant courses are provided in an unusually wide variety of niche sectors. Partnerships with business and the local authority are strong. Employers' needs are well met.
8. Guidance and support for learners are outstanding. Initial advice and guidance are very good. Arrangements for identifying and supporting learners with additional support needs are particularly effective. Learners are well supported by student learning advisers. Those at risk of not completing their courses are identified early and given very good guidance and support. A good range of specialist welfare services supports the very diverse and often complex needs of learners. Comprehensive systems support and promote learners' health and safety.
9. Leadership and management are outstanding. Governance is outstanding. Leadership is clear and purposeful. Strategic planning and operational decision-making work very well and are highly inclusive of managers and staff. Quality improvement and the thoroughness and accuracy of the self-assessment process are outstanding. Extensive and highly effective performance evaluation leads to continuous improvement over time. Management reporting is

exemplary. Systems for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are rigorous. Equality of opportunity is outstanding and its key principles are intrinsic to the life and work of the college. The college is compliant with equality and diversity legislation and robust procedures are in place for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

10. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. It has clearly defined and well-understood strategic goals and is highly successful at achieving its targets. Since the last inspection, the college has strengthened its pivotal role in promoting the social and economic development of its local community. Performance monitoring and quality improvement arrangements are outstanding, demonstrably and progressively improving the quality of provision. The thoroughness and accuracy of the self-assessment process is outstanding. The self-assessment report is accurate, highly evaluative and comprehensive. Action planning provides a clear and realistic agenda for improvement. The college has a strong financial position and resources are well managed to meet educational needs and college priorities.

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

11. Improvement is outstanding since the last inspection. The college has strengthened its commitment and actions to achieve the best possible outcomes for its diverse range of learners. Strong leadership and governance, with skilled and supportive staff, continue to drive the college forward. Very good progress has been made in eliminating areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Learners' success rates have significantly and progressively improved and are now often above national comparators. The quality of teaching and learning has significantly improved. Management and organisational restructuring have provided an enhanced sense of purpose and focus on improvement. Learners' punctuality and attendance have improved since the last inspection but the college recognises the need for further improvement.

Key strengths

- vibrant, tolerant and respectful college community
- innovative and inclusive curriculum
- highly successful partnerships, exceptionally well focused to meet community needs
- outstanding support for learners
- outstanding performance evaluation and improvement
- outstanding governance.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the further improvement of success rates on apprenticeships and Train to Gain
- expanding the range of teaching and learning techniques
- the further improvement of learners' attendance.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

12. Achievement and standards are good. This agrees with the judgement in the self-assessment report. They are satisfactory for work-based learning apprenticeships.
13. Overall success rates have risen significantly since the last inspection, improving for both long and short courses. Between 2005/06 and 2007/08, overall success rates on long courses have consistently improved at each level and for both age groups, except for learners aged 16 to 18 at level 1 in 2006/07. In 2007/08, headline success rates for both long and short courses are above the most recently available national rates for similar colleges. They are well above for learners aged 16 to 18 and for adults at level 1. Learners' progress, relative to their prior attainment, is good.
14. For learners aged 16 to 18, success on long courses at level 1 is high, at 86% in 2007/08; well above national rates, and much improved from the 69% achieved in 2005/6. At levels 2 and 3, overall success rates have risen consistently over the last three years and are now just above the most recently available national averages. Long course success rates in most sector subject areas reflect this overall improvement but success rates in a small number of general certificate of education (GCE) A2 subjects were below national rates in 2007/08. Overall retention is well above national rates and is particularly high at levels 1 and 2. In the small number of sector subject areas where retention is low, it is a major contributor to poorer success rates.
15. Success rates for adults on long programmes have improved considerably since the last inspection. In 2007/08, for all levels, they are at or above the most recently available national rates. Success at level 1 for long courses is high, at 89%. The overall success rate in 2007/08 for the very large number of adult learners following short courses is well above the national average. Achievement in key skills is very good.
16. Success rates for Train to Gain Skills for Life are high, at 87%. They are satisfactory for the Train to Gain occupational national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and for apprenticeships. There is recent significant improvement in apprenticeship success but the timely success rate is still low.
17. The college has consistently reduced the amount of provision that falls below the success rate threshold in the LSC Minimum Level of Performance data. Less than 1% of long course and short course provision fell below the threshold in 2007/08.

18. Success rates for most minority ethnic groups often exceed national averages for similar colleges. However, success rates for Black Caribbean and White British learners aged 16 to 18, at around 75%, have not improved significantly over the three years to 2007/08. There are no significant variations in success rate by gender. Success rates overall for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are higher than for the college overall. Similarly, learners receiving additional learning support often perform better than all learners in their particular group.
19. Standards of learners' work are often good and learners enjoy their studies. They develop work-related skills well. In lessons for IT, learners ably apply their learning to carry out practical tasks successfully. In engineering, learners confidently use equipment and resources in their practical tasks. Learners speak very positively about the development of their personal skills and confidence.
20. Learners progress well to further courses within the college. Progression to the next level of course is rarely under 60% and at level 3 it is over 80%. Eighty-one per cent of the respondents to a recent college survey of those who had finished their courses were in education or training, either at the college or elsewhere and 5% were in employment. Learners' attendance is improving and is satisfactory, at 81.3% overall in 2008/09.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grades:

Train to Gain

Good: grade 2

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

21. The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good. The college's self-assessment of teaching and learning is accurate and correctly identifies areas for improvement. These are: improving the use of question and answer techniques; emphasising learning; and reducing the amount of teacher-led talk.
22. The college has a very effective range of formal and informal systems to monitor and continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning. These include internal learning audits, 'learning system reviews', peer coaching and use of the professional learning advisers. Study coaches help learners to develop their study skills. The student representative system and suggestions from learners are used well to improve teaching.
23. The system for observing teaching and learning is well established and thorough. Observers are well trained and give helpful and professional feedback to enable teachers to improve. Most observations accurately identify key strengths and areas for improvement, though a few lessons appear over-graded. The follow-up to lesson observations is thorough and systematic and the support well directed, leading to definite improvements. The college monitors the quality of tutorials well.

24. Learning activity plans and schemes of work are comprehensive and detailed, requiring teachers to identify activities and strategies to address the differing needs of their learners, including promoting equality and diversity. The considerable investment in resources, particularly in ILT, is helping to improve teaching and learning; a clear improvement since the last inspection.
25. The initial assessment of learners' support needs is thorough and follow-up support is timely and effective, particularly the provision of in-class learning support. Assessment is good. Individual learning plans accurately identify what learners need to do, with specific, helpful targets. However, targets on Train to Gain programmes are insufficiently specific. The range of study support for learners is comprehensive and good.
26. The management and delivery of key skills are good. Key skills are fully integrated into the curriculum and teachers explain their purpose and relevance well in the context of the courses.
27. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The curriculum is extensive, with courses from entry level to higher education. Awareness of local labour market needs is particularly strong. Relevant courses are provided in an unusually wide variety of niche sectors. The college has achieved part A of the Training Quality Standard and is applying for part B in its five CoVE areas. It leads on the development of an NSA and other innovative schemes. Good facilities and training programmes are available to local enterprises, including three successful commercial enterprises. An extensive Train to Gain programme includes large and successful Skills for Life provision. The range of apprenticeships offered is narrow.
28. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. The college's own progression and employability framework is particularly effective in attracting learners from exceptionally diverse and often disadvantaged backgrounds. Progression routes are very clear and used effectively. Provision for learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties is good. Learners make an outstanding contribution to the college and external communities and they are very well prepared to achieve economic well-being.
29. Partnerships with the local authority are particularly strong, leading to a good range of community-based provision, including extensive ESOL programmes. A varied curriculum for learners aged 14 to 16 includes the first five 14-19 Diploma lines and provision for excluded and unplaced pupils.
30. Guidance and support for learners are outstanding. The college's strategies for support are outstanding in practice. Good marketing and publicity materials are easily accessible in a wide variety of media. Initial advice and guidance are very good. The admissions process is particularly focused on learners' needs and is highly efficient. Arrangements for identifying and supporting learners with additional learning needs and/or disabilities are very thorough. Full-time learners receive a series of relevant progression and employability skills modules encompassing topics in Every Child Matters. Supported independent study sessions are timetabled for full-time learners. An annual programme of

college-wide events to focus on learners' progress, and ongoing support, help to ensure their progress.

31. Learners are well supported by student learning advisers. They closely monitor attendance, punctuality and behaviour and provide high levels of confidential support and encouragement, through regular reviews and effective use of personal improvement targets. Effective incentive schemes have been established. A good range of specialist welfare services supports the very diverse and often complex needs of learners. Nursery provision and financial support are particularly valued by learners. Comprehensive systems support and promote learners' health and safety.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: grade 1

32. Leadership and management are outstanding. The college has made, and continues to make, outstanding progress since the last inspection, including significant improvements in success rates and the quality of teaching and learning.
33. Leadership is clear and purposeful. Strategic planning and operational decision-making are very effective and highly inclusive of managers and staff. Management arrangements, well restructured over the past two years, successfully promote and support the tighter focus on improving achievement, quality and the curriculum.
34. Staff strongly support, and are wholly involved in achieving, the college's objectives. A wide range of meetings and forums successfully inform and harness staff involvement in improvement. Electronic and paper-based media are used well to communicate key corporate messages. Teachers are well qualified. They all have, or are working towards, an appropriate teaching qualification. They are very well supported by their managers and colleagues. Opportunities for professional development for all staff are particularly good. The quality of accommodation and resources at most sites is generally now very good.
35. The college very successfully meets the diverse learning needs of its local area, through open access and flexible learning arrangements. It plays a pivotal and evolving role in supporting the economic and social development of the Newham community. Its partnership working is outstanding, notably with Newham Council and local strategic and business groups.
36. The college is outstanding in identifying and attracting well-defined local target groups of learners into education and training, and in retaining them. In particular, young people and adults who have not previously engaged with education on a sustained or successful basis are well served. The diversity of

teachers, administrative and managerial staff and governors is a particularly good reflection of the community served by the college.

37. Quality improvement and the thoroughness and accuracy of the self-assessment process are outstanding. The process is exhaustive. The report is perceptive and accurate. Extensive and highly effective performance evaluation arrangements demonstrably support continuous improvement over time. Management reporting is exemplary, concise and informative. A broad range of performance data are used well by staff throughout the college. Systems for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are rigorous. The quality assurance arrangements for apprenticeship training and Train to Gain are sound but not as well developed as for other provision.
38. Equality of opportunity is outstanding and its key principles are intrinsic to the college provision. The college has responded well to equalities and diversity legislation, typically with good practice, and meets its obligations. Diversity themes are incorporated very well into teaching and learning in most curriculum areas. There is little difference in the comparative achievement of different learner groups. Equalities monitoring is extensive and actions for improvement are prompt. Learners treat each other, and staff, with great respect. The college is a calm and harmonious environment.
39. Governors provide outstanding support and challenge to the college. They pursue a dynamic approach to setting and achieving strategic priorities and challenging targets and closely monitoring the college's performance. Governors are representative of the local community and bring a very broad range of professional, academic and business experience to their role. The college provides outstanding value for money. Its financial health is outstanding.
40. Safeguarding procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults are robust and meet government requirements. Identification and monitoring systems are extensive and effective. The college responds promptly to the often complex individual issues identified. All governors and staff receive training to raise their awareness of safeguarding issues and policies. Criminal Records Bureau checks are undertaken systematically for all relevant staff.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, 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	05/06	210	69	68	1	835	80	67	13
	06/07	359	63	73	-10	2,502	89	71	18
	07/08*	140	86	n/a		952	89	n/a	
NVQs	05/06	...	...	...	...	74	96	71	25
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	05/06	210	90	67	23	761	89	67	22
	06/07	359	87	73	14	2,502	90	70	20
	07/08*	140	81	n/a		952	86	n/a	

* college data.

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, 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>
2 Long	05/06	651	57	65	-8	1,223	59	66	-7
	06/07	734	69	69	0	931	68	70	-2
	07/08*	505	75	n/a		990	72	n/a	
GCSEs	05/06	155	85	69	16	49	76	67	9
	06/07	194	80	71	9	62	69	70	-1
	07/08*	176	84	n/a		76	75	n/a	
NVQs	05/06	125	58	64	-6	231	51	69	-18
	06/07	145	71	66	5	255	66	71	-5
	07/08*	132	71	n/a		393	76	n/a	
Other	05/06	371	81	63	18	943	78	65	13
	06/07	395	84	69	15	614	82	70	12
	07/08*	197	86	n/a		521	86	n/a	

* college data.

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, 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	05/06	1,131	59	68	-9	1,200	57	62	-5
	06/07	983	71	70	1	1,263	68	67	1
	07/08*	905	76	n/a		1,177	74	n/a	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	201	83	86	-3	105	76	74	2
	06/07	179	93	84	9	117	88	77	11
	07/08*	132	85	n/a		103	86	n/a	
AS Levels	05/06	450	59	64	-5	113	58	57	1
	06/07	311	64	64	0	101	65	59	6
	07/08*	237	73	n/a		98	89	n/a	
NVQs	05/06	22	55	66	-11	95	53	65	-12
	06/07	27	59	75	-16	136	54	71	-17
	07/08*	32	78	n/a		113	68	n/a	
Other	05/06	458	51	62	-11	887	55	62	-7
	06/07	466	69	68	1	909	76	66	10
	07/08*	504	79	n/a		863	81	n/a	

* college data.

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the college 2006 to 2008.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	68	50	52	73	43
		Timely	75	24	34	25	27
	06/07	overall	100	42	63	65	56
		timely	94	21	43	34	38
	07/08	overall	44	61	68	60	63
		timely	42	33	48	19	44
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	15	67	57	13	51
		timely	11	36	37	9	33
	06/07	overall	18	61	64	50	60
		timely	20	45	47	52	45
	07/08	Overall	11	73	67	73	64
		timely	15	33	53	50	50

* 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

Table 5a

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the college 2007/08.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2007/08	overall	1,561	71
		timely	1,561	71

* 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

** NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college prior to inspection

Table 5b

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain skills for life programmes managed by the college 2007/08.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college skills for life rate**
Train to Gain (skills for life)	2007/08	overall	1,049	87
		timely	1,049	87

* 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

** Skills for life qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection