

Northampton College

Inspection report

Provider reference 130769

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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
- specialist provision in: health, public services and care; engineering; hairdressing and beauty therapy; visual and performing arts, and media; literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); and independent living and leisure skills.

Description of the provider

1. Northampton College is a large general further education college situated in the East Midlands, created by the merger of the original Northampton College with Daventry Tertiary College in August 2004. Most learners live in Northamptonshire but some travel from Leicestershire, Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. At the time of inspection there were 3,830 learners on full-time programmes and 4,200 studying on a part-time basis. An additional 3,600 learners followed higher education, Entry to Employment (E2E), work-based learning (WBL), adult and community learning (ACL), 14 to

16 and full cost programmes, with 1,430 on Train to Gain provision. Nearly three-fifths of students are female and three-quarters are adults. At 15%, the proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than that of the local population.

2. The college offers provision in 14 out of the 15 LSC sector subject areas; the exception being land-based industries. Programmes in most curriculum areas are offered in both main centres in Northampton and Daventry, the Northampton centre being the largest. The third main centre in Lower Mounts in Northampton town centre offers courses in information technology (IT), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), ACL and higher education. The college's mission is 'to provide our community with the opportunity to develop through learning'.
3. The unemployment rate in Northamptonshire is lower than the national average at 3.8%. In 2008, the percentage of young people in Northamptonshire gaining five GCSEs at A* to C, including English and mathematics, was 45.4%, compared to the national average of 47.6%.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Good: contributory grade 2</i>

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care	Outstanding: Grade 1
Engineering	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good: Grade 2
Visual and performing arts, and media	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Independent living and leisure skills	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. Overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates have improved at a faster rate than nationally and are in line with national averages. For learners aged 16 to 18 they are high at level 2 but, although improving, low at level 3. Key skills success rates are low. Success rates are high in work-based learning, Train to Gain provision and for learners aged 14 to 16. Most learners enjoy college and make satisfactory progress. Attendance is satisfactory.
5. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The proportion of good or better teaching and learning is low. The quality of lesson observation reports is variable. Initial assessment is effective in identifying learners' needs and support is provided promptly. Assessment is satisfactory. The quality of learners' targets in their learning plans is inconsistent, as is the monitoring of their progress.
6. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good as is the approach to educational and social inclusion. A wide range of provision is offered across the levels, with good progression routes. Enrichment activities are satisfactory. The provision for key skills is satisfactory, although there are insufficient opportunities for learners to accredit their information technology (IT) skills. Employer links and partnership arrangements are highly effective. Learners from diverse cultures and who have disabilities mix together well.
7. Guidance and support for learners are good having improved significantly. Retention has improved. Support for learners with specific disabilities is good. They succeed at a higher rate than those not receiving support. Support is underdeveloped for gifted and talented learners.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory and good for learners aged 14 to 16. The principal and senior managers have established a very clear mission and vision. While senior management roles are clearly defined, leadership and management within some curriculum areas are not as effective. The impact of quality assurance arrangements is satisfactory overall. Not all targeted improvements have been realised across all curriculum areas. Performance management of staff is underdeveloped. Governance is good. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Financial management is strong and the college provides satisfactory value for money overall.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

9. The college has good capacity to improve. The self-assessment report, although over-generous in its overall grading, identifies many of the strengths and areas for improvement identified by inspectors. The process is sound and includes all staff in evaluating performance. Recent improvements in overall success rates have been secured through the application of robust quality assurance

arrangements and improved leadership and management, although they have yet to have sufficient impact in all areas. The quality improvement plan sets a clear agenda for further developments and the management structure provides clear lines of communication and accountability. Senior managers enjoy the confidence of staff in their ability to continue to improve provision and the college has sufficient resources to support such improvements.

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

10. The college has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Retention and pass rates have improved. Quality assurance arrangements have been strengthened, although they are not yet effective in securing improvements consistently in all areas. Training for both managers and governors has been beneficial and enables them to better perform their roles. All full-time and substantive part-time learners receive initial assessment and learners identified as requiring additional support receive it. Target setting and the monitoring of learner progress is completed, although this is more effective in some areas than others. Managers have increased the proportion of good or better lessons. The management and co-ordination of work-based learning has improved and is now satisfactory.

Key strengths

- high success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 2 courses
- high success rates on Train to Gain provision
- comprehensive range of provision
- highly effective links with schools, employers and other providers
- good pastoral and academic support
- very clear strategic direction and vision
- good governance
- good promotion of equality and diversity
- strong financial management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses
- low key skills success rates
- insufficient proportion of good or better lessons
- insufficient opportunities to accredit IT key skills for full-time learners
- underdeveloped support for gifted and talented learners
- underdeveloped appraisals and performance management of staff
- insufficient use and monitoring of targets to inform college and learners' improvement
- inconsistent curriculum management.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

Train to Gain

Good: grade 2

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

11. Achievement and standards, which the college self-assessed as good, are satisfactory. Success rates have improved at a faster rate than nationally since the last inspection and are in line with national averages. For adult learners, success rates are higher than for learners aged 16 to 18. At level 2, success rates are above national averages and high on GCSE courses for 16 to 18 year-olds but at level 3, although improving, success rates remain low.
12. Key skills success rates improved at level 1 in 2007/08 to above the low national average but remain low at level 2. Participation in key skills declined substantially in 2007/08. For adults on level 3 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) success rates declined in 2007/08 and are low. Numbers on most programmes are, however, small.
13. Success rates on employer-based Train to Gain provision are high when compared with national averages. These learners develop good skills and knowledge. On apprenticeships, college data indicate a continued upward trend in framework success rates, which are above national average for advanced apprentices. Timely success rates have improved and are broadly in line with national averages.
14. For males and females aged 16 to 18, success rates are broadly similar, although the gap between adult males and females widened in 2007/08. Success rates are improving for most minority ethnic groups. They fell for the small proportion of younger learners from an Indian background. For learners in receipt of additional learning support, success rates are higher than for those not in receipt of support. For learners aged 14 to 16 success rates are high.
15. Learners enjoy college and their attendance is satisfactory. They make the progress broadly expected of them when compared with similar learners nationally. The standard of learners' work is mostly satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grade:

Learners aged 14 to 16

Good: grade 2

16. The quality of provision, which the college self-assessed as good, is satisfactory. It is good for learners aged 14 to 16. Teaching and learning are

- satisfactory. Many learners enjoy their lessons and make satisfactory progress in them. Managers have increased the proportion of good lessons but the proportions of outstanding and inadequate lessons have been constant over the last three years. The effect of better teaching and learning is yet to be realised in improving the amount of progress made by learners. Information and learning technology (ILT) resources are good. Whilst many teachers manage these effectively to aid learning, their use is underdeveloped in other areas. Reports to parents, carers and guardians and to employers are informative.
17. The proportion of good or better teaching and learning remains relatively low. In the best lessons, learners are involved in a wide range of enjoyable and interesting activities which aid learning and enable good progress. Teachers plan lessons well and ensure that individual learners' needs are met. Learners benefit from using a variety of learning resources which enliven learning. Teachers and support staff work very well to enhance learning. In the less effective lessons, learners receive insufficient challenge and are not inspired to learn and progress. Teachers dominate lessons and do not involve learners sufficiently. They do not question learners to check that they have understood new topics. Lesson plans and learning activities frequently lack variety and interest.
 18. The college uses initial screening to diagnose learners' literacy and numeracy needs effectively and learners receive their support promptly. Most learners requiring additional support receive it but support for gifted and talented learners is underdeveloped. Screening outcomes inform the individual learning plan (ILP) well. However, the monitoring of the quality of ILPs is insufficient; their frequency and quantity are very variable. In some areas, target setting is very good and precise and encourages learners to improve. In other cases target setting is terse and unhelpful to learners.
 19. Assessment is satisfactory. Many teachers mark learners' work carefully and provide very clear guidance to help learners improve. Others do not correct spelling and grammatical errors and their feedback lacks formative advice. Internal verification is rigorous; verifiers challenge assessors' comments and judgements to ensure that learners' work meets appropriate standards. Managers monitor internal and external verification processes very carefully.
 20. Lesson observation outcomes inform staff development and appraisal effectively. Managers provide good staff development to observers and engage in moderation activities extensively. The quality of lesson observation reports is variable. Many contain a very good focus on learners and learning. In other cases, comments contain descriptions of activities rather than judgements and are preoccupied with the teacher's performance instead of learners' engagement.
 21. The extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs of learners is good. A wide range of provision is offered which meets the needs of learners and employers effectively, with good progression routes within the college and to higher education. Levels of progression within the college are satisfactory. Through strong partnership arrangements with local schools, employers and community organisations, the curriculum is developed well to meet local needs.

The college plays a key role in planning and supporting the development and delivery of the new diplomas with schools. Relationships with employers are good. They receive regular updates on programme requirements and learners' progress. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have limited opportunities to gain accreditation.

22. Enrichment is satisfactory overall, although opportunities are limited in some areas. Learners have satisfactory opportunities to contribute to college life and to the wider community through charity events and project work. Overall, opportunities for learners to develop and accredit their literacy, language and numeracy skills are satisfactory, although full-time learners have limited opportunities to gain accreditation for their IT skills.
23. Educational and social inclusion are good. The college attracts vulnerable groups proactively and promotes its provision effectively. The proportion of minority ethnic learners is significantly higher within the college than in the local community. Those attending the college are supported successfully to achieve. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in their personal and social development.
24. Support and guidance are good. Advice and guidance processes have improved significantly since the last inspection and are good, resulting in much improved retention. The college provides good personal support for learners with specific disabilities, enabling them to succeed. Support on financial, welfare and other issues is also good, as is literacy, numeracy and language support. However, support for gifted and talented learners is underdeveloped. Support for learners in the workplace is particularly effective.
25. Induction into the college is thorough, enabling learners to settle quickly. Attendance monitoring is satisfactory. Good coverage of health and safety, equality and diversity, citizenship and related themes takes place through central activities and the tutorial programme. Satisfactory processes to review the progress of learners in tutorials have been developed and are now followed more consistently. Learners have access to effective careers advice and guidance and are well supported in progressing to higher education and employment.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Contributory grades:**Equality of opportunity
Learners aged 14 to 16**Good: grade 2
Good: grade 2*

26. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and good for learners aged 14 to 16. The college self-assessed this aspect to be good. The principal and senior managers have led the college through a period of significant change and have established a very clear mission and vision. The management structure has been successful in establishing clear lines of accountability leading to improved outcomes for learners.
27. The principal, well supported by an able senior management team, provides sound and consultative leadership. Senior management roles are defined clearly and communication throughout the college is good. However, leadership and management within some curriculum areas are not as effective. The arrangements for the appraisal and performance management of staff are underdeveloped. Staff appraisal timescales are not sufficiently specific and do not enable the collation of performance management information for an identified academic year. Targets are not always sufficiently challenging or used effectively to monitor and improve all aspects of provision in a timely manner.
28. The impact of quality assurance arrangements is satisfactory. Procedures for observing the quality of teaching and learning and arrangements for internal quality review are thorough. The college has made considerable investment in providing leadership training for middle managers and in improving teaching and learning. However, despite this investment, improvements are not yet being realised in all curriculum areas. Arrangements for self-assessment are thorough and secure management information is used well to support the process. The report is generally accurate and correctly identifies many of the strengths and areas for improvement identified by inspectors. However, the college was over-generous in the grades it awarded in a number of areas.
29. Accommodation and resources, including staffing, are satisfactory overall. In some areas specialist resources for teaching and learning are good and learners have good access to computers and a wide range of learning materials in the learning resources centres. The virtual learning environment (VLE) is used well to support learning, although this varies considerably between curriculum areas. Work has started recently on a complete new-build to improve accommodation. Most full-time staff are appropriately qualified and experienced or are on an appropriate training course. However, many part-time staff have not yet achieved a teaching qualification.
30. Governance is good. Governors are fully supportive of the college mission and improvement strategies. Their wide range of experience and expertise is used well to serve the college and to provide challenge where appropriate. The college's capital programme is managed well and governors take safeguarding arrangements within the college very seriously. Financial management and control are good and the arrangements for safeguarding young people and

vulnerable adults meet current government requirements. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

31. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The profile of equality and diversity within the college is high. A well-considered single equalities scheme is about to be introduced with training planned for all staff. The college has responded well to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and monitors the recruitment and progression of both staff and learners by age, gender, ethnicity and disability. The college analyses data to identify the performance of different groups and success rates for the vast majority of learners from minority ethnic groups are improving. The promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum is good. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities and understand different cultures and values. The college promotes community cohesion well. Learners with mobility difficulties or identified learning needs are well supported and the college fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

Sector subject area

Health, public services and care

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

32. Currently 543 learners attend full-time programmes; most are aged 16 to 18 and follow courses at levels 1 to 3. There are 82 full-time and 370 part-time college-based adult learners, with 50 learners on apprenticeships and 165 on Train to Gain programmes in the workplace. As part of the school links programme, 34 learners aged 14 to 16 take courses in this area and a further 30 learners are supported in partner schools, including on the diploma for society, health and development. Almost one-third of learners are male and 14% are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Strengths

- high success rates on all courses and in work-based learning
- excellent progression rates into employment and higher education
- very good teaching and learning
- extensive provision that meets the needs and interests of learners
- very effective support for learners
- excellent curriculum management.

Areas for improvement

- no significant areas for improvement were identified.

Achievement and standards

33. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates are consistently high on early years and care courses and show recent improvement on public services courses. Train to Gain success rates are outstanding at 93%. Apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship success rates have improved and are now good.

34. Progression rates into employment and higher education are excellent. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners achieve high grades in their assignments. They demonstrate very effective personal and social skills in lessons and good work-related skills on placement or in their employment.

Quality of provision

35. The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are planned well, with clear aims and objectives shared with learners. Careful consideration is given to meeting the needs of individual learners. Lessons are well paced with a range of activities and a clear focus on equality and diversity. Assessment is good and progress monitored closely. The coordination of work-based training is very effective. Progress review meetings for work-based learners are good and records are clear and helpful in identifying development needs and acknowledging progress.

36. The extent to which the needs and interests of learners are met is outstanding. The range of provision is extensive and carefully planned to meet learners' needs. Links with employers are strong and courses are responsive to their requirements. Additional funding is used effectively to widen the participation of non-traditional learners. Enrichment activities are good and short, certificated courses enhance job prospects.
37. Guidance and support are outstanding. Advice and guidance for learners are good. Initial assessment is very effective. The tutorial system supports learners well. Monitoring processes are rigorous. Tutors provide excellent pastoral care.

Leadership and management

38. Leadership and management are outstanding. Curriculum management is excellent. Communication is very good and comprehensive. Staff development and performance management are good. Equality of opportunity is promoted very well. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities and apply their knowledge to their relationships with children, clients and others. Data relating to the success of differing groups are used very effectively to address any inequalities.
39. The focus on quality improvement is strong. Action plan targets are clear, specific, measurable and monitored routinely. Management information is used particularly well to monitor learners' performance. Good practice is shared effectively. A high priority is given to improving teaching and learning. The self-assessment report is inclusive, critical and provides a highly accurate reflection of the curriculum area.

Engineering

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

40. Courses are offered at levels 1 to 3 in mechanical, electronic, electrical installation and automotive engineering. There are currently 513 full-time learners, about one-fifth of whom are adults and 5% are female. Within the 575 part-time learners, some 80% are adults and 5% are female. There are 138 apprentices and 201 learners on Train to Gain provision. As part of the school links programme, 25 learners aged 14 to 16 attend courses in this area. Around 13% of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Strengths

- high success rates on full-time entry and level 1 motor vehicle courses
- high success rate for adults on the part-time certificate in welding at level 2
- innovative engineering curriculum
- good resources for delivering the engineering curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- low success rate on the national diploma in motor vehicle studies
- insufficient learner engagement in theory lessons
- some inappropriate teaching accommodation.

Achievement and standards

41. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on the full-time entry and level 1 motor vehicle courses and, for adults, on the part-time level 2 certificate in welding are well above the national average. The success rate on the national diploma in motor vehicle studies is well below the national average. Achievement of apprenticeship frameworks is above the national average. The standard of learners' practical skills is satisfactory, demonstrating confidence in a range of activities. Learners' behaviour is good and punctuality satisfactory.

Quality of provision

42. Quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In some theory lessons learner engagement and interaction, together with appropriate checks on understanding, were insufficient. In practical workshops, learners are very well supported by teachers who provide appropriate individual coaching. Advanced teachers promote the sharing of good practice effectively. Lessons are generally well planned, incorporating the Every Child Matters themes and key skills effectively. Assessment and internal verification are fair, accurate and effective.
43. The range of provision is good. The college has an innovative engineering curriculum which includes renewable energy, lean engineering and aerospace. Fundamental engineering concepts are applied across the curriculum, developing wider skills and stimulating interest. Strong links with external organisations, schools and employers are in place.

44. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Initial assessment ensures learners are placed on the appropriate course and additional support arrangements are effective. Individual support from teachers and learning support assistants in lessons is satisfactory. Tutorial sessions are planned well. Learner progress is monitored closely and individual action planning is effective. Learners enjoy college life, particularly their practical lessons.

Leadership and management

45. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-assessment is broadly accurate. Good communication is effective in keeping staff well informed. Performance data are used routinely by managers for planning and monitoring learners' progress. Resources are good and include rapid prototyping technology, a wind tunnel and automotive diagnostic equipment. Some aspects of accommodation are inadequate: certain classrooms are poorly furnished and lack wall displays; the soldering area has poor ventilation; and female learners do not have separate changing facilities. Health and safety awareness is good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall; equality and diversity are promoted and integral on all courses.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Good: Grade 2

Context

46. The college offers a range of full- and part-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy from levels 1 to 3. Currently there are 525 full-time and 388 part-time learners, half of whom are aged 16 to 18. Two per cent of the learners are male and 11% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In addition, 78 learners are following apprenticeship programmes.

Strengths

- good success rates on many courses
- good standard of learners' work
- good teaching and learning in many lessons
- comprehensive support for learners
- good curriculum management.

Areas for improvement

- lack of challenge in some practical lessons
- insufficient opportunities for industrial experience on beauty therapy courses.

Achievement and standards

47. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on many courses are good. Although improving, success rates on the NVQ level 1 course in hairdressing have been below the national average for three years. Achievement of apprenticeship frameworks is satisfactory. The standard of learners' written work and practical skills is good. Learners develop a good work ethic, adhering to strict codes of conduct in areas such as attendance, punctuality, and personal presentation.

Quality of provision

48. Quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are well prepared with detailed lesson plans and schemes of work. Teachers employ effective strategies to meet learners' needs. The VLE is used confidently by teachers and learners to enhance and promote learning. However, in some practical lessons teachers lack strategies to challenge and inspire the more able learners and questioning techniques are underdeveloped. Feedback is mostly detailed and constructive and guides learners towards improvement. Assessment is planned well in lessons and tracked effectively during tutorials. Internal verification is thorough.
49. The broad and inclusive range of provision meets learners' needs and interests well and helps promote progression rates from levels 1 to 3. Enrichment activities are well attended and give students valuable insights into different aspects of the industry. However, beauty therapy learners have insufficient opportunity to undertake external work experience routinely to broaden their understanding of current industry trends.

50. Support for learners is good. Comprehensive and effective support helps learners make good progress. All learners with identified needs receive additional support on an individual basis and in lessons by vocationally-qualified learning support tutors. Tutorials are planned well and valued by learners. Where appropriate, they receive financial support to purchase kits and uniforms.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are good. Good communication and a pro-active approach to intervention strategies ensure a prompt response to areas of concern. Targets for success rates and improvements are set at course level and progress is monitored effectively. However, not all targets are sufficiently challenging. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and contribute to self-assessment, focusing on improvements for learners. Self-assessment is largely accurate. Learners contribute to quality improvements through termly course representative meetings and surveys, resulting in clear action plans which are monitored closely. Resources overall are good. The town centre site is of a particular high standard. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and embedded across the curriculum. Stereotyping is challenged effectively. A 'males into hairdressing and beauty therapy' taster day was held recently; however, male learners remain significantly under-represented.

Visual and performing arts, and media

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

52. The college offers vocational art, design, media and performing arts courses at levels 1 to 3, with an academic option at level 3. The majority of learners are enrolled on visual arts courses. Currently there are 827 learners aged 16 to 18 and 163 adults who study full time. Fifty five per cent of all learners are female, 20% are part time and 11% are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Strengths

- good progression to higher education
- good development of practical skills in singing, dance, ceramics and media
- wide and inclusive range of provision.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on several courses
- poor attendance on some courses
- insufficient sharing of good practice.

Achievement and standards

53. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. In 2007/08, success rates rose on a minority of programmes to above the national average whilst the majority have remained at or below the national average. College data indicate retention rates are improving in 2008/09. Attendance rates remain low, particularly on art and design courses. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners acquire relevant skills and they are given opportunities to use them in various initiatives; for example, in music learners self-manage a series of gigs and in dance learners have established a company that performs at local venues. Progression to prestigious higher education institutions is good.

Quality of provision

54. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and outstanding in dance and singing. In the best lessons teachers insist that learners adhere to professional practices. Learners in these classes are able to manage their learning well and to work collaboratively where appropriate. They are engaged, co-operative and enjoy their studies. In many lessons little use is made of ILT and often strategies to ensure that learners remain active in their learning are undeveloped. Assessment of learners' work is good. Assignments are challenging and engage learners' interest. Verbal and written feedback are accurate and succinct and give clear advice for improvement.
55. The range of provision is good. Learners have a large variety of programmes to choose from across the levels. Effective use is made of bespoke courses to accommodate adult learners and other specific groups. Good links have been made with external organisations in music. Learners and the public have access

to specialist photographic equipment at weekends. Enrichment activities are good, including a trip for film learners to visit Universal Studios in Los Angeles.

56. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Individual needs are identified and appropriate support allocated on entry. Tutorials, through which progress is reviewed and potential problems are identified, are satisfactory. Effective systems are in place to support learners. Where appropriate, parents are involved in resolving difficulties. Learners appreciate the efforts made on their behalf by their staff.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Effective strategies have been implemented to improve retention rates. Take-up of key skills is very low. Few learners achieve level 1 in communication and numeracy is not offered. Arrangements for sharing good teaching practice are underdeveloped. Self-assessment is generally accurate; however, grading judgements do not reflect the low success rates on some programmes. Action plans are in place and monitored appropriately. Staff are encouraged and supported in their professional development and many have industrial experience that enhances their teaching. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory but there are insufficient computers for art and design work. Equality of opportunity is promoted well.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

58. Currently 1,423 learners attend full- and part-time accredited programmes from entry level to level 2. Around two-thirds of learners follow ESOL programmes of whom 11 are full-time learners aged 14 to 16. Twenty five learners follow Skills for Life courses on the Train to Gain programme. Provision is provided at three college sites and seven community venues. Two-thirds of learners are female.

Strengths

- good development of personal and language skills
- good teaching and learning
- good range of provision.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates in numeracy at level 2
- ineffective target setting in individual learning plans and progress reviews
- insufficient management action to improve numeracy provision.

Achievement and standards

59. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners develop good personal and language skills. Success rates improved on ESOL courses in 2007/08 to above the national average. For Train to Gain learners success rates are high. Progression rates into further education for learners aged 14 to 16 are very good. College data for 2008/09 indicate improvements in success rates in literacy to satisfactory levels. Success rates for the substantial number of full-time learners on numeracy courses at level 2 declined in 2007/08 and remain low. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners aged 16 to 18 on ESOL courses make slow progress. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

60. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. In most sessions, planning, pace and the variety of activities are good. ILT is used well to enhance learning. In the weaker sessions, learning is insufficiently challenging and activities are too repetitive. Assessment is satisfactory. Written feedback to learners is helpful; however, teachers do not always stress the importance of correct pronunciation and intonation. Target setting for learners in individual learning plans and progress reviews is ineffective. Many do not have timescales, while others record targets only when achieved. Learners' reviews do not assess progress towards achieving learning outcomes sufficiently or consistently.
61. The range of provision is good and includes weekend and summer schools. In their courses, learners enjoy opportunities to study topics of personal interest including citizenship and financial literacy. The wide range of enrichment activities is valued by learners. Accreditation is available on demand.

62. Guidance and support are satisfactory and good for learners aged 14 to 16. Learners value the support they receive on matters such as travel, childcare, careers and job applications. The advice and guidance learners receive inform them of appropriate progression routes, including for ESOL learners qualified abroad.

Leadership and management

63. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Management actions have been successful in raising attendance and success rates, particularly in ESOL, but insufficient in improving the quality of provision and success rates in numeracy. Lesson observations do not focus sufficiently on learning. Team working and communication are good. Good practice is shared effectively. Self-assessment is inclusive and broadly accurate. Staff appraisal is satisfactory for full-time tutors but part-time staff, who comprise some 40% of teachers in this area, are not appraised routinely. Learning resources are satisfactory and tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and reinforced well in lessons. Learners are valued equally in the college and they appreciate the rich diversity of cultures.

Independent living and leisure skills

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

64. Currently 86 learners attend full-time programmes and approximately 300 learners follow part-time programmes. Part-time programmes account for almost half the provision. The majority of learners are adults. The proportion of male learners is 58% and those from minority ethnic groups form 18% of learners. Programmes are provided at three college sites and in the community.

Strengths

- good development of learners' personal and social skills
- very good development of independent living skills on full-time programmes
- very good teaching and learning on full-time courses
- very effective personal support.

Areas for improvement

- ineffective planning and delivery of learning in many part-time lessons
- insufficient accreditation of learning
- insufficient work experience.

Achievement and standards

65. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners develop highly effective personal and social skills and are reminded of positive attitudes and behaviours. Learners develop these skills through carefully planned activities, building on prior experiences. Many learners on part-time programmes do not develop sufficient vocational and employment-related skills. On full-time programmes learners develop good independent living skills. Learners understand the importance of shopping for healthy foods. They develop good cooking skills and knowledge of hygiene and housekeeping. Learners are more confident about independent travel. Attendance and retention rates are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

66. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but very good on full-time programmes. These sessions are planned well and meet the vocational, social and support needs of learners. Activities are interesting and imaginative. Many part-time lessons are planned ineffectively. Learning objectives are insufficiently clear and learners complete routine tasks with little extension of learning. Some resources used are not age appropriate; however, specialist resources and adaptive equipment are good.
67. The range of provision is satisfactory. It includes a comprehensive range of modules such as music, cooking and horticulture; however, too few learners follow externally accredited courses. Literacy and numeracy qualifications have recently been introduced on one full-time course. Too few learners benefit from work experience. On part-time programmes most learners do not have work

experience outside the college with only a few attending work placements at the college.

68. Guidance and support are good. Personal support for learners is very effective. Support workers are very knowledgeable and work closely with tutors to support learners in the most effective way. Support workers keep learners on task and encourage them to participate in learning. Parents, guardians and carers are involved in developing support strategies for learners. The assessment of learners' social and support needs is good. However, the assessment of vocational and employment needs is insufficiently thorough.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication is good; meetings include daily briefings enabling staff to develop appropriate learning and support strategies for learners. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of bullying and harassment and health and safety arrangements. All staff have undergone training in safeguarding.
70. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Lesson observations often focus too much on teaching rather than the learning taking place. A comprehensive review of the curriculum and the recent internal quality report has identified appropriate areas for development. Many plans are not yet in place. The college has been slow to implement moderation of non-accredited programmes. Self-assessment is broadly accurate but some strengths are over-emphasised. Promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

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	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 1	05/06	845	67	69	-2	1883	52	65	-13
	06/07	579	73	74	-1	1419	62	70	-8
	07/08*	565	80	...	...	986	85	...	...
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	13	92	73	19	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	n/a	n/a	...	...	n/a	n/a	...	...
NVQs	05/06	95	80	72	8	17	29	74	-45
	06/07	102	80	75	5	5	20	75	-55
	07/08*	119	79	...	...	8	75	...	...
Other	05/06	737	64	69	-5	1866	52	65	-13
	06/07	477	72	74	-2	1414	62	70	-8
	07/08*	443	80	...	...	978	86	...	...

* 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	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 2	05/06	1613	65	66	-1	1355	60	66	-6
	06/07	1553	65	70	-5	1632	62	69	-7
	07/08*	1604	77	...	...	1473	72	...	...
GCSEs	05/06	478	59	68	-9	273	65	67	-2
	06/07	402	60	71	-11	302	73	70	3
	07/08*	268	82	...	...	262	81	...	...
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	...	...	69	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	6	100	73	27	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	64	80	...	...	7	86	...	...
NVQs	05/06	271	64	65	-1	414	59	68	-9
	06/07	290	61	68	-7	496	65	69	-4
	07/08*	300	66	...	...	556	66	...	...
Other	05/06	864	69	66	3	668	58	65	-7
	06/07	855	69	70	-1	834	56	69	-13
	07/08*	1028	77	...	...	695	72	...	...

* 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
All Long - Level 3	05/06	2733	61	71	-10	1387	60	64	-4
	06/07	2633	67	73	-6	1285	63	68	-5
	07/08*	2420	70	...	...	1408	69	...	...
A/A2 Levels	05/06	460	80	87	-7	113	69	72	-3
	06/07	579	84	87	-3	120	71	76	-5
	07/08*	476	86	...	...	128	76	...	...
AS Levels	05/06	1306	55	67	-12	182	45	55	-10
	06/07	1191	62	69	-7	187	57	59	-2
	07/08*	1014	62	...	...	150	67	...	...
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	135	39	66	-27	11	45	57	-12
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	n/a	n/a	...	...	n/a	n/a	...	...
NVQs	05/06	58	64	71	-7	219	61	63	-2
	06/07	89	51	74	-23	215	67	69	-2
	07/08*	89	76	...	...	224	60	...	...
Other	05/06	774	61	65	-4	862	61	64	-3
	06/07	774	64	70	-6	763	62	69	-7
	07/08*	838	69	...	...	898	72	...	...

* 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*	College NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	College framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	79	52	52	37	43
		timely	71	21	34	13	27
	06/07	overall	27	44	63	44	56
		timely	30	30	43	30	38
	07/08	overall	82	76	68	67	63
		timely	78	64	48	58	44
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	207	54	57	49	51
		timely	152	24	37	22	33
	06/07	overall	181	47	64	46	60
		timely	179	34	47	32	45
	07/08	Overall	189	63	67	60	64
		timely	185	48	53	45	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 (ILR)

Table 5a

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the college, 2007 to 2008.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	18	100
		timely	18	100
	2007/08	overall	296	89
		timely	256	77
	2008/09 (8 months)	overall	122	77
		timely	112	71

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* 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 to 2008.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	College skills for life rate**
Train to Gain (skills for life)	2006/07	overall	...	...
		timely	...	..
	2007/08	overall	10	91
		timely	10	91
	2008/09 (8 months)	overall	64	97
		timely	36	55

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

- * 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 prior to inspection