



Bolton Community College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post sixteen

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130495

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Bolton Community College
Type of college:	General Further Education
Principal:	Alison Bowes
Address of college:	Manchester Road, Bolton, BL2 1ER
Telephone number:	01204 907 200
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Chair of governors:	Bob Oxtoby
Unique reference number:	130495
Name of lead inspector:	Nigel Flood
Dates of inspection:	31 October – 3 November and 7 – 11 November 2005

Background of the organisation

1. Bolton Community College is a medium sized general further education college. The college's mission is: Bolton Community College will take you further towards achieving your full potential, by providing high quality lifelong learning opportunities.
2. The college operates from six hubs in Bolton, which includes the main site at Manchester Road. The remaining hubs are the Horwich Centre, Clarence Street, Westhoughton Centre, New Bury Community Centre and Deane & Derby Local Learning Centre. The college offers adult and community provision at over 100 venues across the borough. Around 80% of the college's learners are from Bolton. The remaining 20% are mostly from areas close to Bolton
3. Bolton's population is around 261,000. Bolton has a ranking of 50 out of 354 for the highest levels of deprivation in England. Some 11% of the local population are from minority ethnic groups. The college recruits 54% of its learners from areas of high deprivation. The percentage of pupils gaining five GCSE at A*- C in Bolton is 46% compared to a national average of 54%.
4. The total number of learners in 2004-05 at the college was 16,106. The number of adult learners was 10,148 of whom just over 90% were part-time. Slightly more than 50% of learners aged 16-18, are full-time. Just over 60% of learners are women. Slightly less than 15% of learners are from minority ethnic groups, more than half of whom are of south Asian heritage. The college had 763 work-based, 92 E2E and 131 employer training pilot learners in 2004-05. There were 138 learners aged under 16. The college has a contract with Bolton LEA for adult and community learning. In 2004-05, the college had 5,381 adult and community learners.
5. The college offers courses in all subject sectors with the exception of agriculture, horticulture and animal care. In 2004-05, the highest number of enrolments was on preparation for life and work courses, followed by health, public service and care and ICT courses. Just over 50% of all enrolments were on level 1 provision.

Scope of the inspection

6. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
- overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management
 - specialist provision in: health, social care and early years; ICT; sport, recreation and leisure; arts, media and publishing; languages, literature and culture and preparation for life and work.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: grade 1
Achievements and standards	Good : grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2

Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.

Curriculum areas

Health, social care and early years	Outstanding: grade 1
ICT	Good: grade 2
Sport, recreation and leisure	Satisfactory: grade 3
Arts, media and publishing	Good: grade 2
Languages, literature and culture	Good: grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Good: grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

7. Learners' achievements are good overall. Success rates at all levels have increased since the last inspection. For learners aged 16-18 most have increased significantly to around the national average. Success rates for adult learners are high and since the last inspection, most have greatly increased. Success rates for adult and community and work based learners are high and very high for E2E learners.
8. Teaching and learning are good. Well-qualified teachers use a range of effective teaching methods to provide good learning and develop learners' skills well. Teachers check learning carefully and provide effective guidance to learners on how to improve. Use of ILT in lessons and planning for individual learning is insufficient.
9. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. Many courses are targeted at those under-represented in education. The range of provision is responsive to local needs. The college's approach to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of learners is good.
10. Learners receive good guidance and support. Well-resourced support services contribute effectively to improving learners' performance. Support is particularly good for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and additional needs in literacy and numeracy. Effective tutorials help full-time learners make good progress in their studies.
11. Leadership and management are good. Governors and the principal set a clear direction for the college. Managers are very effective at raising standards of provision. Governors regularly monitor and challenge the performance of managers.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

12. The college demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve its provision. Quality assurance arrangements are rigorous and effective. Managers have secured substantial improvements in provision. The college has significantly increased success rates and standards of teaching and learning. Well-managed staff development supports college priorities and helps raise standards to a high level. Managers and staff use the accurate learner data very effectively to make provision better.
13. The implementation of action plans to maintain strengths and address areas for improvement is very thorough and monitored regularly by managers.

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

14. The college has made outstanding progress in addressing areas for improvement noted during the last inspection. The proportion of teachers successfully completing courses has increased significantly. Most teaching and learning is now of a high standard. Management has improved substantially, particularly for work-based learning. Managers monitor and develop actions to improve college performance particularly effectively. Staff development is good with effective sharing of good practice. Quality assurance and self-assessment have improved greatly and are securing significant improvements. Learner data is now reliable and managers use it particularly well to raise standards. Tutorial arrangements for learners have improved. Further work is needed to improve some aspects of teaching and learning.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- outstanding health, social care and early years provision
- good provision in ICT; arts, media and publishing; languages, literature and culture and preparation for life and work
- high success rates for adult learners
- high success rates for adult and community and work-based learners and particularly for E2E learners
- high success rates for learners receiving additional support
- good progress and development of learners' skills
- extensive and effective support for learners with sensory impairments, dyslexia and in literacy and numeracy
- good approach to educational and social inclusion and the promotion of equality of opportunity
- strong and productive links with local schools and the local community
- proven capacity to improve
- rigorous and supportive management of performance
- effective management and leadership.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- success rates for learners aged 16-18 and at level 3
- low key skills success rates
- insufficient planning for individual learning
- insufficient use of ILT in lessons
- insufficiently effective communications on the arrangements for childcare provision
- unsatisfactory resources for ICT.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

Contributory grades:

*Learners aged 16-18
E2E*

*Satisfactory: grade 3
Outstanding: grade 1*

15. Since the last inspection, success rates for learners aged 16-18 on long courses have increased. Between 2000/01 and 2003/04, most success rates for this age group stayed around the same level and some declined. However, in 2004-05 most increased significantly by 10% or more on the previous year. In 2004-05, the majority of success rates for learners aged 16-18 were around the national average. However, as the self-assessment recognises success rates for level 3 were below the national average by 6% Short course success rates for learners aged 16-18 since the last inspection have increased greatly by nearly 30% and in 2004-05 were substantially above the national average.
16. Success rates for adult learners in 2004-05 were high on long courses and since the last inspection have increased substantially with the exception of level 3 which has remained at the same level; above the national average. At levels 1 and 2 the increases were particularly significant with the success rates rising by 25% and 20% respectively. Short course success rates have increased significantly since the last inspection to around the national average.
17. In 2004-05, overall success rates for adult and community learning for both long and short courses were high. The success rates for non-accredited courses were particularly high. In adult and community provision, the success rates for non-accredited provision in art, media and publishing; and preparation for life and work were based on challenging course outcomes. High numbers of learners at the completion of adult and community programmes move on to accredited courses at the college or with other providers.
18. The proportion of E2E learners, in 2004-05 who progressed to other training programmes or work was very high; a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. Of the 82% successfully progressing, 90% moved to employment with training, work-based learning or courses in further education and the remaining 10% into work. Between 2002-03 and 2004-05, the proportion of work-based learners that successfully complete has increased significantly to a high level.
19. Learners make strong progress in developing their subject skills. In art, media and publishing most learners produce work of a high standard. Older sport, recreation and leisure learners develop good co-ordination of movement to

music. ICT learners who previously had little belief in themselves in using computers develop particularly strongly confidence in their own ability. Preparation for life and work learners with many barriers to succeeding, develop the self-assurance to learn they previously lacked. The oral skills of language and ESOL learners are good.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

20. Teaching and learning are good across all provision. The self-assessment report accurately identified the strengths and areas for improvement for the quality of provision. Well-qualified teachers use a variety of activities to provide good learning and motivate learners to make good progress. Teachers check learners' understanding carefully and provide effective guidance on how to improve. Promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good. In health, social care and early years lessons teachers make very good use of practical demonstrations to explain concepts and to link theory to practice. In preparation for life and work, teachers effectively link learning activities to learners' experiences. Sport, recreation and leisure teachers use good instructional techniques in practical lessons. In ICT good assessment and feedback in lessons helps learners improve. In languages, literature and culture well-designed handouts, games and graphics help learners learn. Teachers in arts, media and publishing, set challenging standards for most learners. Initial assessment of learners' support needs is thorough. Assessment is satisfactory. Most teachers use appropriate assessment methods and provide learners written or oral feedback to help them improve.
21. Teachers' planning is not sufficiently detailed to meet individual learners' needs and some learning targets set for learners are insufficiently clear. The self-assessment report acknowledges these areas for improvement. In ICT, teaching on full-time courses is often dull in contrast to the very good teaching on part-time courses for adults. Other than in ESOL and languages, literature and culture there is insufficient use of ILT in lessons.
22. Resources to support learning range from satisfactory to good. Resources and accommodation for ESOL learners are good. In ICT, problems with accommodation and equipment adversely affect learning. Accommodation for performing arts is poor.
23. Good support is available for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, sensory impairments and dyslexia and in literacy, numeracy and language. All learners identified as needing support receive help but there is insufficient language support for bilingual learners. Learners receiving additional support have high success rates.
24. The college has improved its provision and assessment of key skills since 2003/04. The teaching of application of number and communication skills is generally effective. Teachers develop learners' key skills in a vocationally

relevant context. Although the overall success rate has improved significantly in the past year, at 38% this remains low.

25. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. Many courses are targeted at those under-represented in education. Over 250 young people from schools attend vocational training programmes as well as young people outside mainstream education who are aged 14 to 16. Some 54% of learners are from areas of high deprivation. Over 17% of learners are from minority ethnic communities. Good local partnerships help the college provide better provision for excluded or vulnerable groups such as those with mental health problems and alcohol and drug users. The college's approach to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of learners is good.
26. The college provides a good and responsive range of courses which meets the needs and interests of learners, local communities and most employers well. Learners can progress from entry to higher level provision. Senior managers work closely and effectively with employers, local communities and the local LSC to meet the skills and educational needs of the area, particularly to raise levels of literacy and numeracy. The range of enrichment activities is satisfactory but opportunities to participate in sport and community activities are insufficient.
27. Learners receive good guidance and support. Well-resourced information, guidance and counselling services contribute effectively to improving learners' performance and to their social and economic well-being. Support is particularly good for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and needing additional support in literacy and numeracy. This strength was recorded in the self-assessment report. Support for learners aged 14 to 16 is very thorough. Arrangements to monitor and improve the attendance and performance of learners at risk of leaving early are good. Tutorials are effective in helping full-time learners make good progress in their studies and to move to employment, further training or higher education. Tutorial support for part-time learners takes place in the lesson. Learners have good access to Connexion advisers and those wanting to progress to higher education receive effective support. The promotion of health and safety to learners through the tutorial system is good. Teachers receive useful training in dealing with disruptive behaviour. Changes to college arrangements for learners' childcare have not been sufficiently well communicated.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

28. Leadership and management are good. Managers have resolved key weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Adult success rates are high. Success rates for learners aged 16-18, although not as high, have increased significantly since the last inspection. The quality of provision most learners receive is good. Governors and the principal set a clear direction for the college. Most curriculum management is good. Senior managers thoroughly review curriculum managers' performance. Managers implement quality

assurance systems particularly well. Senior managers moderate the outcomes of the process rigorously. Managers pay particularly effective attention to improving the quality of teaching and learning, and raising learners' success rates. Teaching and learning are good overall but some aspects are less than satisfactory. For example, the planning of individual learning. The self-assessment report has clear and accurate judgements. Rigorous and supportive staff appraisal and development, based firmly on college and learners' needs provides effective support to improve provision. College data is accurate and readily accessible. Governors receive reports on learners' performance and the quality of provision they receive. They regularly monitor and challenge the performance of managers. The college has taken action to ensure child protection and governors have received appropriate training.

29. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college effectively promotes courses to under-represented groups. The college is substantially compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Appropriate action has been taken to meet the requirements of the amended Race Relations Act. Links with employers, schools and the community are good. Employer training is increasing rapidly but from a low level. Although there has been substantial investment in ICT, learners are still experiencing difficulties with access to computers. The college provides effective security for learners. However, buildings are expensive to maintain and provide inflexible rooming. Given its good success rates and the good quality of provision, overall the college provides good value for money.

Curriculum area inspections

Health, social care and early years

Outstanding: grade 1

Context

30. The college offers full- and part-time health, social care and early years courses from levels 1 to 4, including NVQs, first and national diplomas and other vocational qualifications. Courses include childcare, early years education, play work, health and social care and counselling. Of the 1,298 health, social and early years care learners, 142 are from minority ethnic groups, 950 are adults, 883 are female and 1,104 are part-time. Adult and community provision has 204 learners and 25 learners are on E2E.

STRENGTHS

- very high success rates
- high standards of learners' work
- very good attendance and punctuality
- much good teaching and learning
- effective links with placement providers, employers and the local community
- very good support for learners
- outstanding management of the curriculum area

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficient account taken of individual learning needs of more able learners in some lessons

Achievements and standards

31. Learners' achievements on health, social and early years courses are outstanding. Success rates are very high. Learners produce a very high standard of work. They have particularly good occupational skills and link written work very effectively to practice in the workplace. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Learners make very good progress with their studies. All but a few learners progress to a higher level of course or directly into employment.

Quality of provision

32. Much teaching and learning is good or very good. Very effective practical activities develop learners' occupational skills. Teachers use practical demonstrations particularly well to explain topics. Teachers are very good at making theory relevant and showing learners that a good theoretical understanding underpins high standards of practical work. Occasionally teachers do not provide learning activities which challenge and take account

of the individual learning needs of more able learners. Teachers assess learners' work accurately and fairly and assessment practices are good.

33. Courses meet the needs and interests of learners and employers well. The college has particularly strong links with placement providers, employers and the local community including Bolton's health, social and welfare services and the private sector. Meetings with these groups are very effective, particularly those with placement providers. The provision the college offers in health, social and childcare is very responsive to employer and local community needs.
34. Staff are well qualified, experienced and vocationally competent. The college has effective arrangements for staff to update their vocational skills. Accommodation and resources range from mostly satisfactory to good. However, there is insufficient ILT equipment to support teaching and learning.
35. Health, social care and early years learners receive very good support. Tutorials are very effective. Careers education and guidance is good. Additional learning support is particularly strong, including very good individual and classroom support.

Leadership and management

36. Leadership and management in this curriculum area are outstanding. Managers work particularly well with staff to ensure standards of teaching and learning are high, learners develop good occupational skills, success rates remain very high and learners' attendance is very good. Quality assurance arrangements are extremely effective, and include the sharing of good practice, comprehensive review of managers', teachers' and learners' performance and accurate self-assessment.

ICT

Good: grade 2

Context

37. The college offers adult and community and further education full- and part-time ICT provision to 1,723 learners from entry to level 3 at venues across Bolton. Learners can work towards a variety of awards, including computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), European Computer Driving License (ECDL), NVQs and other vocational qualifications. Some 1,684 learners are part-time, 1,468 are adults, 1,000 are female and 310 are from minority ethnic groups. Five learners are on work-based learning programmes and 581 are adult and community learners.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates on most courses
- good acquisition of vocational skills
- good development of confidence and skills by adult learners
- very good teaching for adult learners
- highly responsive provision
- good support for learners
- good curriculum leadership

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficient planning for individual learning
- uninspiring teaching of full time learners
- unsatisfactory resources
- insufficient sharing of good practice between full- and part-time teachers

Achievement and standards

38. Most ICT rates in 2004-05 were high and increased significantly compared with the previous year. A very high proportion of learners successfully complete non-accredited adult and community learning courses, although learning outcomes for these programmes are not always challenging. All learners acquire good vocational skills, particularly for advanced office applications, programming and computer installation. Adult learners who previously had little belief in themselves in using ICT develop confidence in their own ability and have good ICT skills.

Quality of provision

39. Teaching and learning of adults are very good. Teachers use teaching methods which successfully inspire and encourage learning. Good assessment and feedback techniques ensure learners know how to improve. Teaching of further education full-time learners is often uninspiring. Teachers dominate discussions and questioning does not effectively check

understanding. Planning for individual learning is insufficient. Teachers do not analyse learners' individual learning needs adequately and individual learning plans lack clear objectives.

40. Staff are well qualified. Most computers are new and network facilities are improving. The lay out of computer rooms is poor, central desk space is insufficient, chairs are broken and there are trailing cables. Not enough projectors or electronic boards are available.
41. The college provides a good and highly responsive ICT provision which meets the needs and interests of learners well. Good introductory courses provide communities with a significant proportion of those who have barriers to education to start learning. Good progression routes help learners progress from beginners' courses to higher education or employment. Where there is new demand the college is swift to start courses and those which are less successful, it rapidly replaces.
42. Learners receive good support. Support workers provide effective help to learners with additional learning needs. Teachers of adults provide good additional materials, activities or individual support to help learners. Staff work well with learners aged 16-18 who miss lessons, to improve their attendance. Most now have high attendance rates.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are good. Very good staff development and good teamwork ensure learners receive good provision. Managers use an excellent course monitoring system to produce detailed reports on learners' progress. Quality assurance is mostly good and self-assessment is thorough. The self-assessment report provides a mostly accurate assessment of ICT provision. The good practice of teachers of part-time adult provision is not shared effectively with those who teach full-time learners.

Sport, recreation and leisure

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

44. The college offers a satisfactory range of full- and part-time courses in sport, recreation and leisure from entry to level 3. Most learners aged 16-18 are working towards first and national diplomas and are on short courses in gym instruction, sports massage and sports leadership. Part-time provision, which is mainly for adult and community learners, includes non-accredited courses in yoga, tai chi, pilates, keep fit and body toning. Of 402 learners, 333 are on adult and community learning courses, 382 are part time, 360 are adults, 37 are from minority ethnic groups and 241 are female.

STRENGTHS

- good development of fitness skills in adult and community learning
- effective instructional techniques in practical lessons
- good variety of class activities to promote learning in theory lessons
- good promotion of equality and diversity

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low retention rates on full-time sports programmes
- too much lateness in general further education sports lessons
- insufficient planning for individual learning

Achievement and standards

45. Success rates are high on adult and community learning courses. However, learning outcomes for non-accredited provision are not always sufficiently challenging. Pass rates for full-time courses in 2004-05 were around or above the national average but retention rates were low. Since the start of 2005/06, the number of learners leaving early compared to the same period last year has declined significantly. Adult and community learners develop good fitness skills. They have high levels of fitness and good breathing control and coordination. Attendance is satisfactory but too high a proportion of full-time further education learners on courses in sport are regularly late to lessons.

Quality of provision

46. In practical lessons, teachers' instructional techniques are good and they develop learners' sport and fitness skills well. Theory lessons contain a wide range of interesting activities to promote learning effectively and motivate learners well. Assessment is fair and learners receive prompt and detailed feedback from teachers on how to improve. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced and regularly update their subject knowledge. The range of accommodation and equipment for learning is satisfactory. Planning for individual learning is insufficient. Planning for the use of support workers is

not clear and there are insufficient extension activities for students that are more able.

47. The self-assessment report recognised a number of problems in the curriculum area. Managers are making good progress in resolving them. They have appointed new specialist staff, reorganised provision so it meets demand more effectively, taken steps to ensure learners are on the appropriate course and introduced revised review and monitoring arrangements. Judgements for lesson observations and the self-assessment reports are not always sufficiently evaluative and development plan action points are not clear.
48. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Those identified as needing additional learning support receive help. The induction process settles learners into their studies effectively. Teachers monitor learners' performance regularly.

Leadership and management

49. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college provides, particularly in adult and community learning, a good range of courses for those under-represented in education. Learning materials make good use of images of those from a range of communities and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. A good range of wall display supports equality and diversity.

Arts, media and publishing

Good: grade 2

Context

50. The college offers provision in the arts, media and publishing from entry to level 3 at venues across Bolton. Full-time provision includes first and national diploma courses. Part-time courses, which are mostly for adult and community learners are mainly non-accredited. Of the 1,806 learners, 1,689 are part-time, 1,089 are on adult and community provision, 1,689 are adults, 1,191 are females and 163 are from minority ethnic groups.

STRENGTHS

- high adult and community learning success rates
- high standards of learners' work
- good teaching and learning
- good support for learners with additional learning needs
- effective widening of participation
- good leadership and management

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- lack of challenge for the most able learners
- poor accommodation for performing arts students

Achievement and standards

51. Success rates on adult and community learning courses are high. Most adult and community learning courses are non-accredited. Learning outcomes for these courses are particularly challenging. Success rates on level 1 and 2 further education courses have increased to at or above the national average in 2004-05. However, at level 3, success rates are slightly below the average. Learners produce high standards of work. On embroidery courses they produce innovative and detailed work. Dance learners execute movement particularly confidently and accurately. Progression from full-time courses is good, with many learners progressing from first to national diploma courses and to higher education.

Quality of provision

52. Teaching and learning are good. Well-planned lessons take account of the needs of most learners. Lessons are interesting and teachers motivate most learners well to improve their skills and confidence. Teachers assess work accurately and fairly and provide good feedback to improve learners' performance. Teachers return marked work promptly. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. For learners who are particularly able, teachers are not always successful at providing learning which challenges, and

extends their skills. Accommodation for performing arts students is poor. There is no rehearsal space and the theatre is cramped. Resources for visual arts students in some specialist areas are inadequate.

53. The range of provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good, particularly for learners under-represented in education. The college recruits very effectively from groups with a wide range of backgrounds and offers provision at venues close to local communities. Courses for traditionally hard to reach learners include multi-media for elderly learners and art for learners with mental health care needs. Progression from adult and community courses is good with many learners moving to ESOL and higher level courses. The college regularly consults community leaders on the curriculum.
54. Support for learners with additional learning needs is good. Further education learners attend well-organised and supportive weekly sessions if they are not progressing well. Good individual learning support is available for all learners with physical and sensory disabilities, learning difficulties and those with additional learning requirements. Learners receive effective pastoral and academic support and guidance.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management are good. Managers are consultative. They use the regular performance review and the quality improvement arrangements to work with staff to maintain and to improve the quality of provision effectively. The self-assessment report is rigorously self-critical and has development plans which have clear measurable outcomes. Teachers are fully involved in the self-assessment process.

Languages, literature and culture

Good: grade 2

Context

56. The college offers a range of part-time languages, literature, culture courses from entry to level 3, and include accredited and non-accredited adult and community provision. Courses are available at different times of the day and at weekends. Of the 1,643 learners, 585 are on adult and community provision, 132 are from minority ethnic groups, 1,539 are adults and 1,182 are female.

STRENGTHS

- high pass rates on the majority of courses
- good standard of learners' work
- innovative and effective teaching in most lessons
- good range of provision
- very effective team working

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- low retention rates on some beginners' courses
- insufficient focus on individual learning needs

Achievement and standards

57. Most success rates in 2004-05 were high and increased from the previous year. The pass rates for GCSE and British sign language qualifications were particularly high. However, the retention rates on some beginners' courses in 2004-05 were low. Learners have good spoken language skills. In lessons for British sign language, learners sign basic information fluently and confidently. Learners taking deaf awareness courses develop high levels of confidence and knowledge. In most beginners' classes, learners use basic language well to ask for and give simple information. Students on advanced courses use more complex language successfully in a range of different situations.

Quality of provision

58. Overall teaching and learning are good and often innovative. In deaf awareness courses guest speakers provide good quality presentations which improve learners' understanding and knowledge. In British sign language lessons, teachers use games and graphics particularly well to help learners to remember the language. Some teachers make good use of ILT to develop learning. In the best lessons, teachers allow learners to use language creatively, and provide the opportunity to work at an appropriate level and pace. Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory. Too many learning activities do not take sufficient account of individual learning needs.

Teachers do not record learners' progress effectively to set individual learning targets and to monitor performance.

59. The range of courses and levels to meet the needs of learners is good. The college offers ten languages, English and languages for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The most popular languages are on offer across Bolton and the less popular are available centrally so that learners can access them easily. Learners have a good choice between non-accredited and accredited provision at range of levels.
60. Support and guidance for learners is mostly good. The college has good arrangements for learners who have additional learning needs. Tutorials are supportive but in some instance tutors do not use them to improve learners' performance.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are good. Teams work well together to provide support to one another, share good practice and maintain good quality of provision for learners. Teachers use regular team meetings to develop actions to improve the standard of their work. Self-assessment is rigorous and the self-assessment report is an accurate assessment of provision. The self-assessment report has a clearly written action plan with clear measurable outcomes. The use of non-specialists for teaching observations is not effective. Observations missed the lack of focus on individual learning needs in language lessons.

Preparation for life and work

Good: grade 2

Context

62. The college offers full- and part-time non-accredited and accredited courses in discrete basic skills in literacy and numeracy, basic skills learning support, key skills, ESOL, foundation programmes for bilingual learners and language support. Courses are available at venues across Bolton during the day and evening. Of the 2,696 learners on preparation for life and work courses, 2,614 are part-time, 2,210 are adults, 224 are adult and community learners, 14 are aged 14-16, 1,456 are female, 701 are from minority ethnic groups and 67 are E2E learners.

STRENGTHS

- high and increasing success rates
- high standards of learners' work
- good teaching and learning
- good ESOL resources
- wide and responsive range of provision
- good curriculum management

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- insufficiently precise learning targets to meet learners' individual needs
- insufficient language support for bilingual learners

Achievement and standards

63. Success rates in 2004-05 were high and increased significantly on 2003-04. Success rates for adult and community learning are particularly high. The proportion of E2E learners, who progressed in 2004-05 to work and further training and education, was very high. Learners acquire good literacy, language and numeracy skills. They make good progress, learn new skills and develop high levels of confidence. Their use of written and spoken English is good. Standards of work in most lessons are high. Attendance and punctuality at lessons are good.

Quality of provision

64. Most teaching and learning is good. Planning of lessons is thorough and classroom management is good. Teachers use learning approaches and resources well to develop learners' skills and confidence. Teachers effectively check learners' understanding. Resources in ESOL are good both at college and community venues. Accommodation is of a high standard and the range

of ILT is good. ESOL teachers are particularly well qualified. Verification of non-accredited learning is good.

65. Teachers use initial and diagnostic assessment to inform individual learning plans and regularly review learning targets. However, targets are not sufficiently clear to meet individual needs or to measure progress. Targets do not always inform lesson planning.
66. The responsiveness and range of preparation for life and work provision are good. Local community links are strong. The college make good use of community workers to link with hard to reach groups. The range of courses is particularly effective at providing provision for those under-represented in education and raising local standards of literacy and numeracy.
67. Overall guidance and support is good. Learning support in literacy and numeracy lessons is strong. However, in adult and community learning, support fails to meet long-term literacy and numeracy needs. Good language support is available but insufficient to meet the growing needs of bilingual learners on vocational programmes.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management of the curriculum are good. Team working and communications are effective. Managers provide good guidance to staff. The sharing of good practice between staff and managers is effective. Good staff development programmes help increase standards for learners. The self-assessment is accurate and rigorous. The self-assessment report is useful and provides a clear assessment of the standard of provision. The report has a clearly written development plan, which managers and staff use effectively to improve provision. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college's strategy for skills for life is not fully established across all of the college.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2001/02 to 2003/04, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	01/02	689	54	53	1	2,376	51	50	1
	02/03	756	58	56	2	3,514	58	55	3
	03/04	890	55	60	-5	4,400	67	59	8
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	45	73	54	19	21	76	41	35
	02/03	53	53	60	-7	2	50	47	
	03/04	54	76	65	11	5	80	52	
NVQs	01/02	116	55	52	3	173	51	49	2
	02/03	59	44	56	-12	37	43	57	-13
	03/04	85	67	61	6	41	66	62	3
Other	01/02	528	52	53	-1	2,182	51	50	1
	02/03	644	60	56	4	3,475	59	55	4
	03/04	751	52	60	-8	4,354	67	59	9

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2001/02 to 2003/04, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	01/02	946	49	50	-2	2,473	51	48	2
	02/03	727	45	52	-7	2,717	50	49	1
	03/04	688	44	56	-12	2,211	54	53	1
GCSEs	01/02	235	51	54	-4	561	36	53	-17
	02/03	118	42	57	-15	353	37	55	-18
	03/04	114	38	61	-23	206	51	59	-8
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	96	64	56	8	7	57	50	8
	02/03	85	53	59	-6	3	67	53	
	03/04	83	66	63	3	7	86	57	29
NVQs	01/02	265	52	43	9	414	48	45	4
	02/03	288	41	42	-2	452	45	49	-4
	03/04	189	34	52	-17	400	57	53	3
Other	01/02	350	41	49	-8	1,491	57	48	8
	02/03	236	49	50	-1	1,909	53	48	5
	03/04	302	46	54	-8	1,598	54	52	2

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2001/02 to 2003/04, 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	01/02	437	45	60	-15	1,338	57	50	7
	02/03	338	37	62	-24	1,692	51	51	0
	03/04	261	40	64	-24	1,311	54	53	1
A/A2 levels	01/02	0		80		5	80	57	
	02/03	2	50	82		16	56	63	-7
	03/04	2	100	84		12	75	66	9
AS levels	01/02	29	41	60	-18	90	37	47	-10
	02/03	16	38	61	-24	167	44	48	-5
	03/04	13	38	63	-24	32	50	50	0
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	245	40	47	-7	218	71	43	28
	02/03	201	28	50	-22	52	38	45	-7
	03/04	102	45	52	-7	88	39	43	-4
NVQs	01/02	96	57	49	9	194	57	41	17
	02-03	47	40	51	-10	335	45	45	1
	03/04	30	53	54	0	188	53	47	6
Other	01/02	67	46	54	-7	831	56	54	2
	02/03	72	61	55	6	1,122	54	54	1
	03/04	114	32	56	-24	991	55	56	0

Table 4

Success rates on mainstream higher level qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2001/02 to 2003/04, 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
H Long	01/02	1	0	40		71	63	37	26
	02/03	1	100	51		69	62	41	21
	03/04	1	0	51		83	43	44	-1
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	0				0			
	02/03	0				0			
	03/04	0				0			
NVQs	01/02	1	0			36	72	36	37
	02/03	1	100			21	38	38	0
	03/04	1	0			42	31	39	-8
Other	01/02	0		41		35	54	38	16
	02/03	0		53		48	73	42	31
	03/04	0		54		41	56	47	9

Table 5

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college
2003-04 to 2004-05

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	82	52	33	69	50
	Advanced	42	38	32	72	50
2004/05	Apprenticeship	83	59	35	81	45
	Advanced	14	67	30	88	47

* 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'