

New College Durham

Inspection report

Provider reference 130659

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

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

The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

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

Scope of the inspection

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

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

Description of the provider

1. New College Durham is a large general further education (GFE) college. The college is the largest provider of vocational further and higher education in County Durham. Within a 15 mile radius there are six colleges, four universities and 12 schools with sixth forms.
2. The development of the new campus at Framwellgate Moor was completed in 2005. Most full-time learners are based at this campus, with significant numbers of part-time students being taught there as well as in community locations. During 2007/08, 81% of the 14,922 enrolments on further education (FE) programmes were to full-time courses. Seventy two per cent of these learners were aged 16 to 18. Fifty seven per cent of learners were enrolled on level 3 courses. Courses are offered in all 15 sector subject areas. Higher education (HE) courses are provided to over 1,200 full-time equivalent learners in the region, nationally and internationally. The college is attended by 375 learners aged 14 to 16 from 13 local secondary schools. In 2007/08, 313 learners were enrolled on apprenticeship programmes in construction, engineering, motor vehicle, plumbing, business administration, accounting, hairdressing, hospitality and catering, sport and health and care. There were over 100 enrolments on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes. The college has held a Train to Gain (T2G) contract with around 400 learners for the last three years and since September 2008 has led a very large consortium with some 3,000 learners. The college has managed a wide range of local and regional projects financed by European funding.
3. The unemployment rate across County Durham is around 4% above the national rate. The college's catchment area includes 46 disadvantaged wards. In 2007/08 a below average proportion of school leavers achieved five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and Mathematics, across County Durham. The proportion of school leavers not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) was 10.4% in 2007 compared with the national rate of 8.2%. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is relatively low; the proportion matches that of the local population. Around 60% of learners are female.
4. The college's mission is 'To provide first class learning and training for individuals, business and the community'. It has three Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in travel and tourism and one for engineering and construction, which is offered in partnership with other colleges in the region.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

5. The overall effectiveness of provision is outstanding. Since the last inspection achievement and standards have improved significantly and are now outstanding. Participation rates have increased, particularly for 16 to 19 year-olds and for adults on T2G programmes. The success rates of learners aged 16 to 19 are outstanding. Progression between levels and into HE is excellent. Attendance rates and punctuality are very good. For learners aged over 19 success rates are very high on most courses. Literacy, numeracy and key skills success rates are outstanding. Learners make excellent progress in their personal development and attitudes to learning.
6. Work-based learning is good. Success rates on the apprenticeship programmes are good and on T2G programmes they are outstanding. On E2E programmes learners make good progress in developing their confidence and social skills. Learners benefit from exceptionally good pastoral support. The college is extremely good at responding to the needs of employers.
7. Teaching and learning are good. Learners benefit from excellent resources. Most lessons are of a high quality. Teachers are experts in their vocational areas and use a wide range of interesting activities to ensure learners are well motivated. Information learning technology (ILT) is used well in many lessons. Learners' progress is monitored closely in most areas; however, the use of value added data could be improved in a small minority of subjects to ensure that all learners are challenged by their work. Lesson planning is comprehensive and there are extensive links to the Every Child Matters themes. The lesson observation system is used in a supportive way and provides an accurate method of assessing the quality of individual lessons. Tutorials are very effective and supplemented by excellent one-to-one support from teachers.
8. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The range of provision is very wide and meets the needs of learners well, including those at risk of becoming disengaged from education employment or training. The college is particularly successful in engaging hard to reach groups and works very well with a wide range of partner organisations. The transition arrangements between school and college are strong. Opportunities for learners aged 14 to 16 are very good and a high proportion progress to full-time courses. Initial assessment is comprehensive and accurate. A high proportion of students identified in need of support access it.
9. The support, advice and guidance learners receive are outstanding. It ensures high levels of retention and attendance. Induction programmes allow learners to get off to a flying start. Transfer rates between courses are low. A very wide range of specialist external support agencies work with the college to supplement its excellent welfare service. Careers advice is outstanding. A very high proportion of learners progress to appropriate HE or employment.

10. Leadership and management are outstanding. The college has a culture of mutual respect and shared accountability for learners' achievement. The strategic leadership of the principal and senior team is outstanding. Governance is excellent. Governors closely monitor the college's performance and challenge and support leaders as necessary. Curriculum management is very effective and action planning for improvement works very well. The college has wonderful accommodation and resources. Financial management is excellent and the college provides outstanding value for money. Quality assurance arrangements are very robust. However, the growth in the T2G consortium programme has provided the college with many challenges and quality assurance is not as well established here as it is in other aspects of the college's work. The college makes a very significant contribution to the economic and social regeneration of the community it serves. It responds very flexibly and quickly to the changing needs of its partners. Staff understand college policies on equality of opportunity and arrangements to promote equality are good.

Capacity to improve**Outstanding: Grade 1**

11. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. The self-assessment process is thorough and rigorous. The resulting report is an accurate assessment of the college's overall strengths and provides a good basis upon which to develop improvement plans. In a few cases the evidence used to validate the judgements about the quality of teaching and learning are based on rather limited evidence. Support for learners is outstanding. Improvement strategies are very effective. Very challenging targets are set and usually exceeded. Management information is accurate and extensively analysed. Resources and financial management are outstanding. Success rates have improved significantly.

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

12. The college has made outstanding progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Achievement and standards have improved, particularly for learners aged over 19 on long courses. Leadership, management, support and guidance have all improved significantly. Existing strengths have been consolidated to improve the response to social inclusion. The quality of the provision has improved and is now outstanding. Key skills provision has improved and success rates are outstanding. Attendance rates and punctuality have improved. The number of learners has grown significantly. The high quality accommodation built in 2004 has been very well cared for and maintained. Financial investment continues to be well-targeted to bringing about improvements to the learner experience.

Key strengths

- outstanding success rates on most programmes
- outstanding support for learners
- excellent range of progression routes
- very strong strategic leadership
- very effective improvement strategies
- significant contribution to social inclusion
- outstanding financial and curriculum planning
- wonderful accommodation and resources
- culture of mutual respect and support
- high proportion of good teaching.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the use of value added to improve the quality of teaching
- insufficiently rigorous arrangements to assure the quality of T2G sub-contractors

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grade:

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

13. The self-assessment report correctly judges achievement and standards overall as outstanding. This applies at almost all levels for both 16 to 18 year-olds and learners aged over 19 and includes both vocational and academic programmes.
14. There has been significant improvement in retention, achievement and success rates since the last inspection. The overall success and retention rates are well above the national average and places New College within the top 10% of colleges nationally. Retention rates at all levels, for learners aged 16 to 18 and 19+, are outstanding. On long courses, retention rates were over 90% for both 2006/07 and 2007/08 at all levels. Pass rates on long courses are also above the national average and well over 90% at levels 1 and 3. The slight decrease in the pass rate at level 2 for adults in 2007/08 is recognised by the college. Progression to FE, employment and HE is excellent. Learners develop an excellent range of vocational skills.
15. Apprenticeship success rates have improved and are good. Both apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship overall success rates are above average. Success rates on the college's T2G programme are high and this year overall success rates on the new consortium programmes are very high. Progression rates on the E2E programme have doubled in the last three years. On a minority of apprenticeship programmes, although there is an improving trend, success rates are sometimes low. Key skills success rates have improved significantly and are very high. Male and female students perform equally highly. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Success rates of learners from minority ethnic groups achieve well and in line with their peers. The college tracks the success rates of vulnerable groups and most make very positive gains in social and academic skills.
16. Given their starting points, learners make the progress they should on most General Certificate of Education (GCE) AS and A-level courses. Rates of progress are improving, although there is some variation between subjects. Learners make good progress on Council for Awards in Children's Care in Education (CACHE) and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) National Diplomas, although it is slower on BTEC National Award and BTEC National Certificate programmes.
17. Attendance and punctuality are excellent. Inspectors observed learners developing good and sometimes outstanding levels of skills and work produced is of a very high standard. Learners aged 14 to 16 have outstanding pass and retention rates and a high proportion progress onto college courses or work-

based learning. The college makes a significant contribution to reducing the number of young people aged 16 who are classified as NEET.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Good: grade 2
Good: grade 2

18. The overall quality of provision is outstanding and in work-based learning and T2G it is good. The college correctly identified this in its self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are planned meticulously and classes are effectively managed. They are lively and purposeful, with clear aims that are explained well to learners. A mixture of individual and group work is used very well. There is a sharp focus on skills development. Vocational staff have good links with industry and maintain the currency of their occupational knowledge. In a few lessons, teachers do not sufficiently use activities that stretch and challenge more able learners and in a few cases opportunities are missed to promote and reinforce equality and diversity. The college's outstanding resources are well used in lessons. The college has invested heavily in ILT and training for staff in its use. Good use is made of technology in many lessons.
19. The college is highly committed to continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning. The well established self-assessment and observation process accurately evaluates the quality of individual lessons and effectively rectifies underperformance. However, opportunities are sometimes missed, particularly in A-level lessons, to use value added data to ensure that activities are focused on individual learner needs. Frequent accurate assessment takes place. Learners clearly understand what is expected, particularly deadlines for assignment completion or when they fall behind with their studies. Internal verification is thorough and meets external awarding body requirements. Timely and comprehensive initial assessment identifies learners' individual needs at an early stage. Follow-up support is quickly available and highly effective. However, outcomes are not used consistently enough to plan learning and set individual targets for the minority of learners who decline additional support.
20. The college has outstanding success in meeting the needs and interests of learners, the community and employers. It is particularly successful in promoting learning through its highly successful full-time, part-time and employer-based programmes. The range of provision is outstanding. Progression pathways are carefully matched to local needs. Since the last inspection the college has significantly increased its level 1 provision and work-based learning through its T2G and apprenticeship programmes. Very effective use is made of employer and learner feedback to inform the further development of programmes. There is a strong and effective commitment to stimulate learner participation in college life. Many learners succeed in attaining additional relevant qualifications. Very few learners transfer between courses or leave their programmes early. Extensive arrangements exist with local schools

to offer a good range of options for 14 to 16 year-olds. Links with employers and other community and social partners are highly productive and they regard the college as particularly responsive to their needs. Many projects are developed which are successfully engaging hard to reach learners in the community. The college is aware of the need to develop better arrangements to ensure that all learners have the opportunity for appropriate work experience. Enrichment activities are extensive and highly valued by learners. Group tutorials are highly effective and include a core of activities including lifestyle and healthy living issues.

21. Guidance and support for learners are outstanding. Information, advice and guidance for courses, progression and support are comprehensive, impartial and accessible. An extensive range of effective pre-entry activities successfully supports the transition from school to college. Induction is very good and helps learners quickly settle into college life. Interview and selection processes are comprehensive and ensure that learners are enrolled onto the right course. Extensive consultation and communication with parents and employers takes place throughout the year. Additional learning and specialist learning support is outstanding and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve very well. Information technology (IT) is used well to support learners and there is good staff training to help identify learner needs. There is effective, external multi-agency support for the most vulnerable learners. Group tutorials provide excellent personal and social education. Learners benefit from excellent pastoral support and a wide range of welfare services. Specialist resources appropriately meet the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

Work-based learning

Good: grade 2

Train to gain

Good: grade 2

22. Overall leadership and management are outstanding and in work-based learning and T2G it is good. The self-assessment report correctly identifies strong strategic direction from senior leaders and governors which contributes very effectively to the outstanding success rates and quality of provision. Board members are committed, challenging and possess a broad range of skills and expertise supported through appropriate training. They are well informed and receive a high standard of timely, accurate and useful information which enables them to monitor closely the performance of the senior leadership team and the college's overall performance. A culture of mutual respect is promoted very successfully. Staff and learners understand roles, responsibilities, expectations and share college values. Staff are highly committed and motivated and are effectively encouraged to participate, contribute and take ownership for learners' success. Communication effectively ensures that staff at

- all levels are well informed. Teamwork, empowerment and a collective goal to raise student success, is the key driver underpinning the performance management process. Policies and procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.
23. Performance management is highly effective. A very ambitious approach to target setting and action planning is used. In most areas there is a clear focus on reducing bureaucracy. Business and development planning are very effective and clearly aimed at raising standards. Resources and accommodation are extremely well managed and increasingly take into account sustainability issues. Financial management is outstanding and provides excellent value for money. Staff are very well supported to achieve their individual targets through personalised development, the observation process and training initiatives. Management information is valued by all staff and used effectively as an important tool for aiding action planning and self-assessment.
 24. Quality improvement arrangements are rigorous. A culture of continuous quality improvement is firmly embedded across the college. Strategies to improve retention and achievement are successful. Lesson observations are supportive in driving improvements in the quality of lessons. However, in a small number of cases, too much emphasis is placed upon a small number of lesson observations to evaluate the overall quality of teaching and learning and the range of other evidence used is not broad enough. The outcomes of observations are used well to inform staff development and the sharing of good practice. The college's own T2G provision is well managed. However, arrangements to assure the quality of the subcontracted T2G provision are insufficiently rigorous. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and inclusive. The report reflects accurately the key strengths and areas for improvement. The development plan clearly links to self-assessment and identifies progress.
 25. Links with external partners are very productive. The college plays a key role in many initiatives and often uses its resources in a creative way to provide support. Activities with schools contribute very well to ensure arrangements for learners aged 14 to 19 are effective. There is a meaningful two-way relationship with employers which encourages and guides college provision.
 26. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good and permeates throughout the college. Equality champions help to ensure equality and diversity infuses each of the curriculum areas. The college works hard to promote a cohesive community based on respect, shared values and a celebration of diversity. Difference is celebrated and respect for others is promoted as paramount. The culture of the college is very supportive and staff and learners are valued as individuals. Data are rigorously analysed and success rates are compared against ethnicity, disability, age and gender. There are no significant differences in the performance of groups. A clear focus on impact assessment is evident and measured through performance and audit activities. The college is fulfilling legislative requirements regarding race, gender and disability and is currently pursuing the development of a single equality plan. Governors closely monitor

the impact of all policies. The board of governors is not yet representative of the community in terms of minority ethnic communities but considers this in its recruitment and selection arrangements. The college recognises there are a few missed opportunities to promote equality of opportunity within teaching and learning. Plans are in place to further improve aspects of equality of opportunity. Outstanding management of pastoral support helps learners behave in a mature and responsible way and learn to value the qualities of tolerance and understanding.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with 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	279	82	69	13	738	67	65	2
	06/07	476	78	74	4	537	84	70	14
	07/08*	519	86	N/A		316	86	N/A	
GNVQs/AVCEs	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	...	...	N/A	...	...	...	N/A	...
NVQs	05/06	55	95	72	23	5	100	74	26
	06/07	106	91	75	16	31	97	77	22
	07/08*	162	93	N/A		28	93	N/A	
Other	05/06	224	79	69	10	733	67	65	2
	06/07	370	74	74	0	506	83	70	13
	07/08*	357	83	N/A		288	86	N/A	

* College data

... Too few starts to warrant inclusion

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with 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	733	76	66	10	819	75	66	9
	06/07	901	81	70	11	672	79	69	10
	07/08*	903	86	N/A		500	79	N/A	
GCSEs	05/06	134	69	68	1	119	70	67	3
	06/07	119	78	71	7	83	82	70	12
	07/08*	154	83	N/A		101	83	N/A	
GNVQs/AVCEs	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	...	...	N/A	...	...	...	N/A	...
NVQs	05/06	171	79	65	14	314	73	68	5
	06/07	154	85	68	17	342	77	69	8
	07/08*	170	90	N/A		218	76	N/A	
Other	05/06	428	77	66	11	386	79	65	14
	06/07	628	81	70	11	247	82	69	13
	07/08*	579	85	N/A		181	80	N/A	

* college data

... Too few starts to warrant inclusion

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with 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	1376	78	71	7	977	69	64	5
	06/07	1563	82	73	9	808	73	68	5
	07/08*	1850	81	N/A		606	83	N/A	
*A/A2 Levels	05/06	202	97	87	10	24	96	72	24
	06/07	187	96	87	9	16	100	76	24
	07/08*	162	95	N/A		30	83	N/A	
AS Levels	05/06	403	79	67	12	30	70	55	15
	06/07	458	79	69	10	5	100	59	41
	07/08*	695	71	N/A		2	50	N/A	
GNVQs/AVCEs	05/06	12	75	66	9	24	96	57	39
	06/07	...	...	...		28	75	59	16
	07/08*	...	...	N/A		24	88	N/A	
NVQs	05/06	55	87	71	16	200	63	63	0
	06/07	95	86	74	12	141	79	69	10
	07/08*	45	89	N/A		126	83	N/A	
Other	05/06	704	71	65	6	699	69	64	5
	06/07	823	79	70	9	618	70	69	1
	07/08*	948	85	N/A		424	82	N/A	

* college data

... Too few starts to warrant inclusion

Table 4

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

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	80	66	52	55	43
		timely	72	44	34	36	27
	06/07	overall	81	72	63	69	56
		timely	79	67	43	62	38
	07/08#	overall	77	82	68	74	63
		timely	73	81	48	75	44
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	114	55	57	48	51
		timely	116	34	37	31	33
	06/07	overall	204	72	64	70	60
		timely	186	61	47	60	45
	07/08#	Overall	200	73	67	69	64
		timely	197	70	53	65	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/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record (ILR)

QSR report.

Table 5a

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider/college, 2007 to 2009.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	204	91
		timely	204	55
	2007/08	overall	405	85
		timely	405	69
	2008/09 (9 months)	overall	1097	74
		timely	1097	35

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/provider prior to inspection

Table 5b

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain skills for life programmes managed by the college, 2007 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider skills for life rate**
Train to Gain (skills for life)	2006/07	overall	22	100
		timely	22	82
	2007/08	overall	13	81
		timely	13	54
	2008/09 (9 months)	overall	2320	100
		timely	2320	93

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/provider prior to inspection

Table 6

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college, 2006 to 2009

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate* (%)	Progression rate** (%)
2005/06	52	48	31
2006/07	88	50	36
2007/08	106	59	54
2008/09 (9 months)	129	64	60

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

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

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

Note: E2E 'achieved objective' and 'progression' rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection.