

The review process

HM Inspectors undertake an independent review of the quality of provision in further education colleges on behalf of the Scottish Further Education Funding Council under a service level agreement between the council and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). Review teams include HM Inspectors, associate assessors and a lay member.

Each review, based on a proportionate model, has inter-related phases: *review phase one* and the *follow-through phase*. During *review phase one*, review teams evaluate the *learning and teaching process*, *learner progress and outcomes* and *leadership and quality management*. The outcome of this phase informs the scope of the *follow-through phase*. During the follow-through phase, review teams explore good practice that may have potential for wider dissemination across the sector. They also explore further as appropriate, the causes, impact and extent of significant weaknesses identified in *review phase one*.

During reviews, members of review teams observe learning and teaching and hold discussions with learners and staff. They examine information on learner attainment and evaluate learner progress and outcomes. They meet with members of the Board of Management and obtain feedback from community groups, partners and employers that work with the college.

This report contains confidence statements that express the review team's overall evaluation of *learning and teaching process*, *learner progress and outcomes* and *leadership and quality management*. It also contains grades for particular aspects of provision.

The primary purpose of this report is to convey fully the main outcomes arising from the review, to acknowledge the college's strengths and to provide a clear agenda for future action to improve and enhance quality.

This report uses the following word scale to make clear the evaluations made by review teams.

very good	major strengths
good	strengths outweigh weaknesses
fair	some important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

The report also uses the following words to describe numbers and proportions

almost all	over 90%
most	75-90%
majority	50-74%
more than a few	15-49%
few	up to 15%

A separate report has been published simultaneously to convey a summary of the main outcomes arising from the review.

Both reports are available on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. The website will give you easy access to review and inspection reports and a wide range of other publications. It will also provide you with more information on the work of HMIE and its role in Scottish education.

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1. Introduction

The college and its context

In carrying out the review of Coatbridge College, HMIE took the following college context fully into account.

Coatbridge College, established in 1891, has been operating from its main campus in Kildonan Street, Coatbridge since 1930. It provides education and training primarily to residents of the towns of Coatbridge and Airdrie. The college employs around 280 staff, caters for around 4500 learners per year and offers a broad curriculum. A higher than average proportion of the local working-age population has no qualifications and the proportion in employment is below the Scottish and UK average.

Most of the college's activity takes place at the main campus. However, by working with local partners, the college also provides access to education in local schools and in community venues.

After taking up post in November 2004, the current principal immediately accelerated a programme of development in relation to the college estate, policy and the curriculum. Within a period of twelve months, the college had gained Chartermark status, achieved SQMS accreditation and had undertaken a successful assessment for Investors in People.

In 1978 the college upgraded its main building and, in 1986, it opened an adjoining second building. The differing levels between the buildings and the absence of a lift in the main building make it difficult and sometimes impossible for learners with mobility impairments to access specific areas of the main building.

Recently the college secured funding for the construction of a new replacement nursery to be located on the main campus and completed by August 2006. The planned capacity of the new nursery is more than double that of the existing facility. The college is also in discussion with the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) regarding options to develop the main campus further and improve access for learners to all areas.

In the current strategic plan, the college has re-expressed its mission in the following way:

“ we seek to offer high-quality, enterprising lifelong learning opportunities which are accessible to and meet the needs of individuals and organisations within the communities we serve ”

In the last two years, college managers have re-established constructive partnerships with the local enterprise company, the local council and community groups and shared with these groups their commitment to improving access and inclusion. The college has links with several HEIs, the strongest being with Bell College and Glasgow Caledonian University.

The college revenue budget for 2005-06 is around £8.5m with grant-in-aid from SFC accounting for around 70% of the total.

The review

The review by HMIE took place in two phases in the weeks beginning 21 November 2005 (*review phase one*) and 23 January 2006 (*follow-through phase*).

The review team examined key cross-college functions and processes that have a direct impact on the quality of the learner experience. The review also covered seven subject areas in the college, together with a focus on core skills and flexible learning, as follows.

Business, management and administration

Care

Computing and ICT

Engineering: motor vehicle

Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies

Science

Special programmes

These areas, in which the provision ranged from levels 1 to 8 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), accounted for more than 65% of the college's work.

The review involved scrutiny of documentation provided by the college and interviews with senior and middle managers, Board members with a responsibility for overseeing the work of committees concerned with educational issues, learners, employers, external agencies and other users of the college. During *review phase one*, the review team focused on learning and teaching, learner progress and outcomes, and leadership and quality management. During the *follow-through phase*, the review team explored a number of issues requiring further scrutiny and discussed fully the examples of sector-leading and innovative practice identified in this report.

2. Executive summary

The following are holistic judgements made by HMIE relating to the key areas of the learning and teaching process, learner progress and outcomes, and leadership and quality management.

2.1 Confidence statements:

- **HMIE is confident that Coatbridge College has in place effective learning and teaching processes. However, the college needs to address the weaknesses in learning and teaching in computing and ICT.**
- **HMIE is not confident that learners are progressing well and achieving appropriate outcomes. However, in more than a few subjects, programme retention and attainment is high.**
- **HMIE is confident that the college is managing well, and improving the quality of, its services for learners. However, the college needs to improve the arrangements for guidance and support and resources and services to support the learner.**

2.2 HMIE identified a number of ways in which the college demonstrated its ability to deliver quality provision and services, and sustain and enhance them.

- The learning and teaching process was *very good* in three of the seven subject areas and *good* in three other areas.
- Learner progress and outcomes were *very good* in two of the seven subject areas and *good* in one.
- Committed, enthusiastic and inclusive leadership had led to substantial recent development and improvement activity across the college.
- Effective collaboration with key local stakeholders had been instrumental in informing college plans and curriculum direction.
- The college had a well-developed estates strategy which included a comprehensive campus re-development programme.
- The college had developed clear and comprehensive policies and procedures, founded on appropriate external quality standards, for almost all areas of activity that had an impact on the learner experience.
- Most staff demonstrated a commitment to improving the quality of the student learning experience.

2.3 The college should seek to improve:

- Learner progress and outcomes in those subjects where there are important or major weaknesses;
- Arrangements for both planning and evaluating the delivery of services;
- Specific aspects of its arrangements for learner guidance and support;
- Cross-college arrangements for core skills delivery;
- Arrangements to promote access and safety; and
- Equalities training and induction arrangements for new staff.

2.4 Summary of grades awarded

Subject Area	Learning and teaching process	Learner progress and outcomes
Business, management and administration	Good	Good
Care	Good	Fair
Computing and ICT	Fair	Unsatisfactory
Engineering: motor vehicle	Good	Fair
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	Very good	Very good
Science	Very good	Fair
Special programmes	Very good	Very good

Cross-college elements	Grade
Educational leadership, direction and management	Good
Access and inclusion	Good
Guidance and support	Fair
Resources and services to support the learner	Fair
Staff	Good
Quality assurance	Good
Quality improvement	Good

3. Overall findings in subject areas

3.1 Learning and teaching process

HMIE is confident that Coatbridge College has in place effective learning and teaching processes. However, the college needs to address the weaknesses in learning and teaching in computing and ICT.

- Most learners were well motivated and engaged actively and effectively in their learning activities.
- Learners developed independence in learning in most areas. This was particularly apparent in care, in hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies, in science, and in special programmes.
- In almost all subjects, teaching staff made effective use of their professional and subject knowledge in their teaching approaches and in setting appropriate standards.
- Learners in most subject areas used effectively the resources available, to support their learning and development.
- In a majority of subject areas staff and learners used ICT well as a tool to support learning.
- Most teaching staff used their awareness of students' learning needs to tailor learning and teaching approaches to meet those needs. In general, staff used a variety of effective learning and teaching approaches.
- Staff in almost all areas related theory and practice well through appropriate contextualisation of materials or work-based examples.
- Positive staff-learner relationships helped to support a purposeful atmosphere for learning in most lessons.
- Teaching staff generally planned activities well to include development of knowledge, understanding and a range of skills, including personal, core and vocational skills.

However:

- In a few subjects, learners' poor attendance slowed progress.
- Staff in a few areas did not share good practice in learning and teaching systematically.
- In computing and ICT, staff did not always engage learners sufficiently, and staff approaches to developing learners' personal, citizenship and broader skills for employability were not well developed.
- Learning was adversely affected by poor accommodation and equipment in a few subject areas.

3.2 Learner progress and outcomes

HMIE is not confident that learners are progressing well and achieving appropriate outcomes. However, in more than a few subjects, programme retention and attainment is high.

- In hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies, and in special programmes, learners made very good progress from their prior attainment.
- In general across the college, learners developed relevant vocational knowledge, skills and understanding.
- In most subjects, learners gained self-confidence and some developed their core skills further.
- Learners developed skills that would improve their employability in almost all subjects. In a few subjects, learners who left programmes early often did so to take up suitable employment.
- The development of skills for citizenship was particularly good amongst learners in care and beauty therapy.
- Learners attained well in award-bearing programmes in business, management and administration, in hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies and in special programmes.
- Retention rates among learners in special programmes were particularly high.

However:

- There were more than a few programmes across the college where learner achievement was particularly low, and learners on a few programmes had a low awareness of their core skills development.
- There was poor retention in programmes in computing and ICT, in science and in a few other programmes across the college.
- Unit attainment was low in computing and ICT, in care and in science.
- Learner attainment was low in more than a few specific care, motor vehicle and science programmes, and very low in full-time computing and ICT programmes.

3.3 Other significant factors

The purpose of this section of the report is to summarise other factors which had a significant impact on the learning and teaching process, and learner progress and outcomes.

The college's strengthened relationships with external partners and agencies had informed the development of a range of learning opportunities and programmes, particularly for learners at access level and for learners with additional support needs.

The college had made significant improvements in the overall decoration, furnishings and equipment in the main buildings. However, on occasion, technical difficulties and poor accommodation and equipment diminished the learning experience and learners' progress.

There were many examples where staff had developed learner support notes and teaching materials of a high standard that supported learning well.

Most teaching and support staff were enthusiastic and committed to delivering interesting and effective learning experiences and some updated their specialist knowledge on a regular basis. Well-qualified, experienced and committed staff worked cooperatively with each other and partner agencies to support learner development and progress.

In a few instances assessment planning had not been effective in providing suitable balance in learners' workloads.

There were some weaknesses in the implementation of arrangements for guidance and support. Occasionally the on-programme guidance, including recording and monitoring of learner progress was not systematic and learners at HN level were not all clear about the arrangements in place for guidance and support. In science, more than a few students who had been enrolled on HN programmes did not have the necessary prior knowledge and understanding to support study at that level. Weaknesses in guidance and support meant that learners who required support did not always receive it timeously. However, developments in guidance arrangements were helping to address these matters.

The college had re-emphasised the importance of assuring and improving the quality of the learner experience by using more systematic and formal approaches and had made improvements in aspects of self-evaluation activity. However, action points arising through self-evaluation activity did not always address the key factors that had led to low attainment and retention. In some instances there was insufficient evaluation of the learning and teaching process by staff.

4. Findings in individual subject areas

This section of the report outlines key strengths and weaknesses relating to the learning and teaching process, learner progress and outcomes, and other significant factors in each of the subject areas reviewed.

4.1 Business management and administration

Learning and teaching process

Strengths

- Almost all learners were well motivated and engaged effectively with teaching staff during lessons.
- In almost all lessons, productive and purposeful working relationships between learners and staff supported a positive learning environment.
- In the majority of lessons, learners worked towards appropriate learning objectives and displayed confidence in their use of ICT.
- Almost all learners were confident in engaging in discussions, in becoming involved in question and answer approaches and, when appropriate, asking for support and guidance.
- Teaching staff used work-based examples well to illustrate the practical application of theoretical concepts.
- Teaching staff used questioning techniques effectively to engage learners and help them progress towards their learning goals.
- The majority of teaching staff encouraged learners to take responsibility for aspects of their learning and made appropriate use of ICT through classroom activities and staff-learner communications.

Weaknesses

- More than a few learners had not developed fully their reflective skills to support future independent learning.
- There was too little systematic feedback to learners on HN programmes about their overall progress.
- In a few lessons staff did not plan learning activities effectively.

Learner progress and outcomes

Strengths

- Most learners who were attending classes regularly made appropriate progress towards their learning goals.
- Learners developed positive attitudes and approaches to learning through appropriate interactions with staff and through motivating learning activities.
- In a majority of programmes, learners made progress in developing broader skills appropriate for effective participation in the community.
- Learners developed skills for employability through a variety of initiatives including simulations, project work and work experience.
- Attainment in most full-time and part-time programmes was high.

- The majority of NQ learners who planned to progress to HE gained qualifications that enabled them to progress successfully.

Weakness

- Unit attainment rates were low in a few units and particularly low in a few others.

Other significant factors

- In a few lessons, teaching materials were unclear or otherwise poorly presented, reducing their effectiveness to support learning.
- In a few classrooms, poor temperature control contributed to learners being distracted from their work.
- Learners at HN level were not clear about guidance and support arrangements and were unable to derive full benefit from services on offer.

4.2 Care

Learning and teaching process

Strengths

- In almost all lessons, learners displayed high levels of motivation through active engagement in discussion on relevant topics with other learners and teaching staff.
- Effective relationships between teaching staff and learners promoted a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere in most classes.
- Almost all learners developed independence in learning through research-based activities and stimulating project work.
- Most staff set appropriate standards, applying their subject and professional knowledge effectively and enthusiastically to support learning.
- Teaching staff linked theory and practice well, through the use of contextualised learning materials including case studies, questioning, group work and work experience placements.
- Most staff demonstrated a clear understanding of differing individual and group learning needs. They planned lessons well and structured learning activities to assist learners in developing appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Staff encouraged learners to reflect on previous knowledge and experience.

Weaknesses

- In more than a few instances, learning materials had not been recently updated and, in some instances hand-written notes displayed using an overhead projector were not clear.
- The practice of providing written feedback on learners' work to help them reflect on their learning was not applied consistently and learners did not automatically receive written updates on their overall progress.
- Teaching staff did not take sufficient advantage of opportunities to plan and promote the development of learners' core skills.

Learner progress and outcomes

Strengths

- Most learners developed self-confidence in learning.
- Most learners developed skills in working with others and problem solving through well-judged group and project work.
- Most learners developed skills for employability by a variety of means including specific work experience.
- In more than a few programmes, learners undertook activities which promoted skills and values associated with citizenship.
- Programme attainment and retention was high in the PDA Support For Learning day release programme and the NQ Child Care and Education evening programme.

Weaknesses

- Retention in a majority of full-time HE and FE programmes was low, and in a few programmes was very low.

- There was low unit attainment in more than a few programmes at both FE and HE level.
- Programme attainment was low in more than a few full-time FE and HE programmes. In a few instances it was very low.

Other significant factors

- In the hutted accommodation there was no access for staff and learners to the ICT network and associated resources to support learning.
- Action points arising from self-evaluation did not always address the key factors that had led to low attainment and retention.

4.3 Computing and ICT

Learning and teaching process

Strengths

- Most HE learners were confident in their learning, worked independently when appropriate and made good use of ICT to support their learning.
- Staff encouraged and supported individual learners, based on their knowledge of learners' strengths and weaknesses.
- A few staff used ICT resources well to enhance the learning experience.
- All staff planned learning activities well to match the requirements of the units being taught.
- Most staff formed and maintained good working relationships with learners.

Weaknesses

- In all FE classes, more than a few learners were not wholly engaged in their learning.
- In a few classes learners did not experience sufficient level of challenge, either in terms of task completion, or extension of their work.
- FE learners did not receive sufficient encouragement to use on-line resources or other forms of flexible learning to develop their independence in learning, self-study or investigation techniques.
- Most teaching staff did not promote sufficiently the development of skills for employability and citizenship.
- In the majority of lessons teaching staff did not make the most of opportunities to use questioning to reinforce knowledge and understanding or help learners reflect on their learning.

Learner progress and outcomes

Strengths

- Most learners on HE programmes made good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding, and developed technical skills relevant to their vocational area.
- Almost all learners undertaking basic IT skills training made good progress in building their skills and confidence.
- Attainment in industry-recognised qualifications was high.

Weaknesses

- Full-time learners were unaware of their own development in personal and learning skills, and employability and citizenship skills.
- Retention rates were low for most full-time programmes and in some cases were very low.
- Attainment in a majority of HE units and a majority of FE units was low, and it was very low in a few units.
- Attainment in most full-time FE and HE programmes was low, and had been low for several years.

Other significant factors

- Learners were unable to complete planned learning activities on occasion, because of technical problems, and they had experienced persistent problems logging on to the college network.
- Software and hardware needed to support the delivery of several units was not available when required.
- Poor assessment planning resulted in an imbalance in learners' workloads.
- The recording and monitoring of learner progress was not systematic.
- There had been insufficient evaluation of learning and teaching approaches by staff and little associated development activity as part of quality assuring and improving learners' experiences.

4.4 Engineering: motor vehicle

Learning and teaching process

Strengths

- In most lessons, learners were attentive, engaged and well-motivated.
- Most learners applied themselves well to the range of practical activities in workshops.
- The purposeful atmosphere in lessons helped to promote learning.
- Learners benefited from the effective links staff made between lesson content and workplace practice.
- Teaching staff used a wide variety of relevant teaching approaches and resources to retain interest and motivate learners. This included the use of specialist automotive training software and associated high quality learning materials, workbooks and worksheets.
- Teaching staff used praise appropriately to encourage learners. They had suitable expectations and made learners aware of these.
- Teaching staff planned most lessons well to incorporate relevant vocational activities.

Weaknesses

- More than a few learners were not attentive unless directly engaged in practical workshop activity.
- Occasionally, teachers' planning for workshop activities and resources was not effective, and learning was adversely affected when equipment did not function properly.
- Teaching staff did not incorporate sufficiently, into their teaching plans, opportunities for learners' core skills development.

Learner progress and outcomes

Strengths

- Most learners made appropriate progress on their course work, acquiring relevant skills and knowledge and building well on their prior learning.
- Learners on full-time programmes developed their core skills through undertaking free-standing units and also by participating in tasks which helped develop those skills.
- Most learners felt more confident as a result of their college experience. They learned how to work together in teams, how to adjust to the disciplines of the workshop and how to approach practical tasks which they had not previously encountered.
- Learners on full-time programmes developed vocational skills that would assist them in progressing to employment.
- School pupils who attended the college gained valuable experience in the use of hand tools and equipment and the functioning of motor vehicles as well as important insights into specific vocational areas.
- The standard of written coursework of most learners reflected the requirements of units and programmes.
- Learner retention was high on the part-time Certificate of Professional Competence Road Haulage courses and on most school link classes in automobile practice.
- More than a few learners who left the full-time FE NQ programme in Automobile Mechanical/Electronics before completion took up jobs in the transport industry.

Weaknesses

- Poor attendance in most classes meant that more than a few learners were not progressing well.
- Learner retention and programme attainment rates were low on the full-time FE NQ programme in Automobile Mechanical/Electronics and the PDA Certificate in Motor Vehicle Systems Diagnostic.
- The retention rate was low on the schools' part-time Access to Road Haulage and Distribution course class groups.
- Learner attainment was low or very low on a few FE units.

Other significant factors

- Teaching materials and learner support notes were clear, relevant, mostly of a high standard and supported learning well.
- The drab, uninspiring and untidy motor vehicle workshops did little to motivate learners and adversely affected learning.
- In some instances, outdated equipment, the poor state of some other facilities and missing components on some engine rigs, detracted significantly from the quality of the learning environment and impacted adversely on the effectiveness of learning.
- Guidance records were insufficiently systematic to support the effective monitoring of learners progress, attendance and support needs.

4.5 Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies

Learning and teaching process

Strengths

- Learners were enthusiastic and highly motivated by their learning experiences. They engaged fully in lessons and displayed a positive attitude to learning.
- Learners carried out independent research and used ICT appropriately and effectively to develop and complete project-based assignments.
- Learners reflected well on their overall progress, skills development and on areas for improvement.
- Teaching staff used their skills, knowledge and experience with enthusiasm to benefit and enhance learning.
- Teaching staff worked well as a team, shared good practice, supported one another and acted as mentors for new colleagues. They regularly reviewed learning and sought the views of learners to ascertain satisfaction and to initiate change.
- Teaching staff encouraged learners to work independently, displayed a keen interest in learners' views and experiences and made learners feel valued.
- Teaching staff prepared learners well for employment ensuring that learning was sufficiently challenging and relevant to industry.
- Teaching staff and learners had developed a good rapport resulting in an ethos of enjoyment and purposeful learning.
- Teaching staff set appropriate standards for learners and planned lessons well.

Weaknesses

- No significant weaknesses were identified.

Learner progress and outcomes

Strengths

- Learners progressed well and demonstrated a good level of vocational competence.
- Learners developed confidence and improved their vocational skills through involvement in a variety of course enrichment activities and work experience.
- Learners developed their core skills within an appropriate vocational context and this supported their overall achievement well.
- In beauty therapy, learners developed their practical skills, gained confidence and increased their employability through community work, which focused on skills for citizenship.*
- Retention and attainment rates were high for most full-time programmes and almost all part-time programmes.
- Almost all learners progressed to relevant employment or to higher education.
- In hairdressing, learners achieved a high level of success in regional and national competitions.
- Teaching staff used assessment feedback effectively to support learner progression and improvement.

* Further details are provided in the section on sector-leading and innovative practice, on page 35.

Weakness

- Retention and attainment for one group of NC Beauty Care learners and one group of HNC Beauty Therapy learners were low.

Other significant factors

- Good links with industry and the community ensured all learners had a work placement. These work placements were particularly successful in enabling learners to develop vocational and personal skills.
- In Beauty Therapy a set of generic assignments reduced the assessment burden for learners.

4.6 Science

Learning and teaching process

Strengths

- Almost all learners were well motivated and engaged effectively and appropriately with teaching staff and other learners.
- Learners were confident in their use of resources, using laboratory work to develop their practical skills and to reinforce their understanding of theory.
- Learners had a good understanding of the progress they were making.
- Learners worked independently and confidently, using internet and library-based resources effectively.
- Teaching staff used their knowledge of current industrial practice well, to contextualise and illustrate their teaching.
- Teaching staff delivered effective and interesting lessons using a wide range of methods and resources, including ICT.
- Teaching staff were aware of individual learners' needs and took account of these appropriately during lessons.
- Staff-learner relationships were professional and friendly, providing a learning environment that was both purposeful and supportive.
- Teaching staff planned lessons well, resulting in effective learning and teaching and an efficient use of resources.
- Accommodation and resources for dental programmes were of a professional standard facilitating the development of modern vocational skills.

Weakness

- In a few instances teaching staff did not use questioning techniques effectively to test learners' understanding and to help them reflect on learning.

Learner progress and outcomes

Strengths

- Learners on Oral Health Care Support SVQ programmes achieved vocational competence and proficiency.
- Almost all learners had a positive attitude to learning and were keen to participate in class activities.
- Learners on full-time science programmes developed confidence in their practical skills and academic abilities.
- Learners developed their core skills through a blend of discrete delivery and contextualisation within the main programme.
- Most learners who progressed from the NQ Introduction to Biomedical Science programme to the HNC Biomedical Science attained an award.

Weaknesses

- The progress and attainment of more than a few learners was hampered by their poor attendance.
- Retention rates on particular full-time programmes were low.
- Overall, unit attainment levels were low across HE and FE provision and this contributed to poor programme attainment.
- Attainment rates in NQ Introduction to Biomedical Science and HND Biomedical Science were particularly low.

Other significant factors

- Teaching and support staff were enthusiastic and committed to delivering interesting and effective learning experiences. They updated their specialist knowledge on a regular basis.
- Staff had designed innovative programmes and support materials to suit the specific needs of particular client groups and to encourage wider participation in science.*
- More than a few learners who had been enrolled on HN programmes did not have the necessary background in science to support study at that level. As a result, a significant number of learners did not progress at the pace required to complete their programme successfully.
- In academic year 2004-2005, learners who required academic support did not always receive it timeously. However, recent developments in the approach to guidance used within the section enabled learners and staff to address more readily the barriers to achievement.

* Further details are provided in the section on sector-leading and innovative practice, on page 35.

4.7 Special programmes

Learning and teaching process

Strengths

- Almost all learners were interested and engaged in their learning, making use of staff knowledge and resources effectively.
- Almost all learners were confident in their learning tasks and developed the skills needed to recall and reflect on learning, to make choices, and to generally develop their independence in learning and daily life.
- Learners made good progress in a range of skills through the appropriate use of community facilities.
- Almost all staff applied their professional knowledge effectively and at an appropriate level.
- In most classes teaching staff organised purposeful and relevant activities.
- In almost all cases teaching staff were aware of the varied needs and experience of individual learners within groups and ensured their needs were met.
- In all cases staff gave positive feedback and encouragement which promoted learner confidence and educational progress.
- Teaching staff reviewed previous learning at the start of each lesson, built on the learner's prior knowledge and interests, and used a variety of strategies to keep learners engaged and involved in activities.
- Teaching staff made good use of work placements and community resources to provide relevant and appropriate practical learning environments.
- Very good staff-learner relationships, based on respect and commitment contributed to effective learning and development.
- In almost all cases activities were well planned with learners involved in planning where appropriate. The standards set were suitable and did not underestimate learners' potential.

Weakness

- The use of ICT to support learning and teaching had not been fully developed.

Learner progress and outcomes

Strengths

- Almost all learners made good progress in developing their confidence and consolidating skills including their social skills.
- Almost all learners achieved realistic personal targets which they had negotiated as part of their Personal Learning and Support Plan.
- Learners on relevant full-time programmes made progress in employment skills through a range of activities including work experience.
- Full-time learners gained skills for citizenship through appropriate activities which formed an integral part of their programme.
- Retention across all programmes was high.
- Learners had good attainment in a wide range of SQA certificated courses at Access 1 and 2 levels.

- Most learners were able to progress, where appropriate, through a wide range of internal college provision and a few progressed to employment.

Weaknesses

- No significant weaknesses were identified

Other significant factors

- Very strong relationships with local authority social work departments and other agencies informed and supported well the development of programmes suitable for learners' needs.
- Well-qualified, experienced and committed staff worked cooperatively with each other and partner agencies to support learner development and progress.

5. Findings on leadership and quality management

This section of the report summarises key features of the college, drawing together evidence from all cross-college elements of the quality framework. The grades for individual quality elements are provided in section 2.4.

HMIE is confident that the college is managing well, and improving the quality of, its services for learners. However, the college needs to improve the arrangements for guidance and support and for resources and services to support the learner.

5.1 Educational provision: design, planning and management

Educational leadership, direction and management

The college's clear and comprehensive aims and objectives in the 2005-08 strategic plan provided an appropriate framework for operations. Aims, objectives and targets took due account of current legislative and wider policy imperatives, and the strategic plan specified appropriate partnerships with for example local authorities, schools, support agencies and the business community. Under the principal's committed, enthusiastic and inclusive leadership, the 2005-06 planning processes had involved staff at all levels. This resulted in wide ownership of planning outcomes, empowerment of middle managers, and enhanced ownership by staff of decisions taken. The college's clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities and fairness was demonstrated by an equal opportunities policy that took good account of the six strands of equality and provided focus for directing and monitoring progress. The principal had communicated the college's aims and objectives effectively to staff using the college newsletter, senior lecturer meetings and full-staff meetings to good effect. Associate principals and heads of department were approachable and met regularly with other staff to convey important information and discuss issues. All staff displayed good understanding of the college's aims and objectives, and responded enthusiastically by designing and delivering programmes for a wide range of learners. All academic departments and most support areas had developed operational plans with targets that linked clearly to the college's strategic aims and objectives. However, many targets in more than a few operational plans were not outcome-focused, persons responsible for achieving them were not clearly designated, and timescales for achievement were not specified.

The Board of Management and senior managers worked well together to address all key issues in the planning process and had developed a newly-constituted student affairs sub-committee to enhance learner representation and their contribution to college operations. The college had developed strategies relating to improving internal moderation, information and communication learning technology, and self-evaluation, to encourage staff to focus clearly on learner need. Most promoted staff had responded well to the principal's many initiatives to improve the effectiveness of leadership at all levels, but a few had yet to take advantage of the increased empowerment arising from recent changes. The college had not developed or implemented a unified learning and teaching strategy to bring together the contribution of ICT, staff development planning within subject areas and peer review, to further enhance learning and teaching approaches.

The college had improved its contribution to local economic regeneration in 2005-06 by collaborating effectively with its many key local stakeholders in Lanarkshire, by involving the local authorities, community organisations, LECs and employers in planning processes, and developing provision that met local need. The college had actively sought the views of key partners prior to formulating plans. It had developed a range of stakeholder-supported programmes in new areas such as dentistry. Programme teams and support teams had reviewed their activities systematically in 2004-05, and had built on their self-evaluation to plan improvements in their 2005-06 activity. The college had improved substantially the range and quality of its provision to support the development of school pupils' vocational skills. More than a few departmental planning and evaluation documents, while contributing to capacity building and helping to bring staff up to acceptable levels of engagement, did not provide clear milestones against which to monitor the extent of progress being made during 2005-06.

The college's management structures and supporting committees were not fully effective in supporting the implementation of all targets and objectives or promoting effective cross-college teamwork. The college had raised staff awareness of good practice that existed both internally and within other colleges, and this had led to the adoption of several initiatives that raised the quality of learners' experiences. Early retention rates for FE part-time, HE full-time and HE part-time learners in 2003-04 were very high. Student achievement ratio per assessment credit of learning (SARU) had improved from 2002-03 to 2003-04. However, the college was not sufficiently successful in enabling learners who stayed on to achieve success. Programme attainment was very low in specific programmes, particularly in computing, in care, in engineering and in science. The college had yet to make fully satisfactory progress against action points in HMIE's 2004 follow-up report in respect of staff development and career review, and the evaluation of learning and teaching.

Strengths

- The principal provided committed, enthusiastic and inclusive leadership that had resulted in substantial development in the organisation.
- The college's clear and comprehensive aims and objectives provided an appropriate framework for operational management.
- Staff at all levels were included in the planning processes, resulting in wide ownership of planning outcomes, empowerment of middle managers, and enhanced ownership by staff of decisions taken.
- The newly-constituted student affairs sub-committee was designed to enhance the learner voice and learner representation.
- Staff were responsive to initiatives that had improved the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels.
- Effective collaboration with many key local stakeholders had been effective in informing college plans and curriculum direction.

Access and inclusion

The college had a clear vision and commitment to promote access and inclusion. The principal and senior managers responsible for external liaison had developed an effective set of strategies to support this vision, and shared these with staff through appropriate policies and procedures. However, the policy for the protection of children and young people, though shared in draft format with staff, was not developed fully and had yet to be approved formally. The college had good collaborative arrangements to provide and improve access and inclusion and promote lifelong learning. The principal and senior managers had made very effective progress in

re-establishing relationships with key external agencies and organisations. The college had hosted a range of events to strengthen relationships with external bodies, and these events had led to better-informed college planning. Collaborative programmes with North Lanarkshire Council's community learning and development department had resulted in a good range of opportunities for learners to access learning within their local communities. Arrangements developed with local secondary schools provided senior pupils with access to a wide range of provision, including pre-vocational training, Higher programmes, taster courses and work-skill events to inform future careers choices. Good links with local employers resulted in responsive and tailored programmes for employees to access training programmes and gain certification that met specific legislative and industry requirements. Managers responsible for business development, flexible learning, community liaison and school links managed their individual areas of responsibility effectively. They had formed appropriate and productive relationships with key staff from relevant external partner agencies. The senior management team set specific targets for college teaching departments to develop provision for community and work-based learners, and departmental staff identified strategies for meeting these targets in their operational plans.

Staff directly involved in services to promote access and inclusion were enthusiastic, and committed to realising the college strategy and helping learners access and sustain learning. A user-friendly college prospectus, available in Braille and alternative formats, provided useful information for prospective learners. The 'earlybird' badging of specific programmes highlighted effectively the opportunities for school pupils to progress from school to full-time vocational programmes. A comprehensive range of events and activities in the college, local secondary schools and community outreach settings promoted effectively the opportunities for potential learners to sample and gain further information on college provision. The college promoted equal opportunities, tolerance and inclusion actively, making good use of noticeboards and wall-mounted photographs in corridors. The equal opportunities policy provided a good basis for reviewing effectiveness of arrangements and the marketing manager provided helpful monitoring information to teaching staff on patterns of learner participation. There were good arrangements for learners with young children. The college nursery provided ready access for learners and good arrangements were in place for providing advice and information on childcare options.

However, the arrangements for evaluating and planning services to promote access and inclusion did not always involve all relevant key staff or take account of broader, relevant college issues. The college had established pre-access provision to encourage hesitant and under-confident learners. *Start Anytime* provided flexible access for part-time learners to develop confidence and undertake learning at their own pace and progress to further programmes. However there was a narrow range of progression options for those learners to allow them to build on their prior learning and experiences. The college core skills policy identified college approaches to developing core skills, but core skills were not promoted consistently, particularly at pre-access level.

Strengths

- The college's clear vision and commitment to promote inclusion, equality and fairness were supported by effective strategies and good collaborative arrangements.
- The college promoted equal opportunities, tolerance and inclusion prominently and effectively.

- The college had developed appropriate and productive relationships with key staff from relevant external bodies and agencies, including local employers, local community groups and secondary schools.
- Information on programmes for learners was readily available through the user-friendly college prospectus, available in Braille and alternative formats.
- A comprehensive range of events and activities in the college, local secondary schools and community outreach settings promoted effectively the opportunities available for potential learners.
- There were good arrangements in place for supporting learners with young children.

5.2 Learner services, resources and staff

Guidance and support

The college set out clearly its vision for supporting learners through its strategic aim to offer *comprehensive guidance and support services for all students and to enhance the support for disabled learners*. This aim was developed within a number of objectives in the college operational plan and was shared by staff across the college. Staff were committed to improving the range and quality of guidance and support services for learners. The college provided a comprehensive range of central guidance and support services to the majority of learners. A “one-stop-shop” provided learners with access to useful and responsive services in the areas of admissions, initial guidance, student finance and careers guidance. Most learners received effective pre-entry guidance, supported by appropriate information and advice. A consistent and effective induction programme ensured that learners were aware of the college environment, their programme of study and the support available to them to help with academic and pastoral matters. Academic guidance was effective for the majority of learners on full-time non-advanced programmes through planned delivery. Academic and centralised learner support staff provided learners with helpful guidance relating to further study and employment. However, the recently-introduced guidance system for full-time HN learners was not yet operating as intended, partly because of weaknesses in relation to the e-mail communication arrangements. More than a few HN learners were unclear of the nature and operation of the new arrangements and learners were not receiving the full benefits intended.

The principal had recognised the need to develop further some important aspects of the college’s guidance and support arrangements and had appointed new staff in posts in learner services and extended learning support. This had contributed to an improving service in these areas. The need to develop further the resource base for learners with extended learning support needs had also been recognised and was being addressed through *The Horizon Centre*. This well-resourced centre aimed to provide facilities for both learners and academic staff, and help support learners with additional support needs. The recent reconfiguration of learner services had led to more effective deployment of central staff to support learners. In the majority of cases, staff identified extended learning support needs at an early stage and helped to establish comprehensive initial personal learning support plans. The college had a draft policy on developing skills for citizenship. A programme of cross-college activities, some of which were arranged in conjunction with external partners, supported suitable development of learners’ skills in citizenship.

The learner services operational plan did not fully develop operational objectives. Across the various areas of guidance and support, plans did not express targets that were clearly outcome focused. Consequently, staff were not all aware of priorities and as a result, missed opportunities for more effective team work across support teams. A recently-introduced core skills policy setting out appropriate learner entitlements enabled learners to attend drop-in sessions during lunch times to enhance their core skills. However few learners took up this opportunity and few were aware of the college’s initiatives to support their core skills development. Consequently current cross-college arrangements did not support effectively the core skills development needs of learners.

Working with partner organisations, the college was considering how best to deliver the most appropriate ways of supporting learners with additional support needs. However, these negotiations were at early stages and few learners had benefited from the outcome yet. Those learners who were receiving additional support had personal learning support plans in place.

However, under the existing arrangements, learners could complete a full semester before the effectiveness of the arrangements and the outcomes agreed on their plans were reviewed.

Strengths

- The college's "one-stop-shop" provided learners with access to useful and responsive services in the areas of admissions, initial guidance, student finance and careers guidance.
- On-programme academic guidance was effective for the majority of learners on full-time non-advanced programmes, and academic and centralised learner support staff provided learners with appropriate guidance into further study and employment.
- *The Horizon Centre* was well-resourced to provide facilities for both learners and academic staff and help support learners with additional support needs.
- The recent reconfiguration of learner services had led to more effective deployment of central staff to support learners.
- The appointment of staff in new, key roles had contributed to an improving service in guidance and support.

Resources and services to support the learner

The College's well-developed estate strategy included a comprehensive and ambitious campus re-development. The strategy took due account of the need to address the requirements and needs of current learners through a planned programme of upgrading and maintenance of the existing estate. The majority of general purpose learning areas in the college and the public areas were clean and freshly decorated, with fit-for-purpose furnishings and fittings and attractive displays of student activity. Signage, though generally adequate, was unclear on occasions. A programme of replacement and upgrading of ICT hardware and software, with the inclusion of internet-enabled data points in the majority of classrooms, supported the use of ICT for learning and teaching. However, classes timetabled in hatted accommodation experienced poorly decorated surroundings with no access to the college ICT network. Generally, resources to support curriculum delivery were allocated appropriately, following systematic departmental planning based on evaluation of current and future need.

Learner communal space was bright, clean and well maintained. It included a student common room and a refectory which served healthy-choice food. The facilities were popular with learners, who enjoyed opportunities for social interaction with their colleagues and, on occasions, college staff. The library was welcoming and very popular with learners, but could be very busy and noisy. The poor availability of quiet study space compromised learners' attempts to engage in independent learning. The learner services area was attractively furnished and accessible for learners with mobility difficulties, although it was very busy at peak times, for example at the start of term. During these times, the private interview facilities available for learners to discuss financial or other personal matters were particularly restricted.

The college had developed appropriate health and safety policies. However, in specialist teaching areas, staff were not always clear about their responsibilities in relation to carrying out risk assessments. There were few opportunities for flexible study both for mainstream and off-site learners. A VLE was at a very early stage of development and the college was not pro-active in encouraging learners to access suitable educational websites. The flexible learning centre, though well equipped, was sometimes booked by classes, and did not open in the evening, reducing its availability for independent learning and access for part-time learners. The college's programme of upgrading the campus had improved access to a wide range of college provision for learners with limited mobility. The college had relocated the learner

support area, learning support and assistive technologies centre, flexible learning centre and a few ICT-equipped suites to the ground floor. An adapted lift now afforded access to the refectory and some teaching areas, allowing all learners to participate in greater social interaction. However, a significant area of the campus was still inaccessible to learners with mobility difficulties, adversely affecting their learning experience and sense of inclusion in full college life. The library, one of the huts, the student common room, the main entrance, the Student Association office and several teaching areas were unavailable to these learners.

There were shortcomings in arrangements to support access and safety. For example:

- there were no hearing loops in public reception areas;
- the leading edges of some stairways were not marked clearly; and
- not all of the “fully accessible” toilets had alarm systems.

Strengths

- The college had a well-developed estate strategy which included a comprehensive campus re-development.
- A programme of replacement and upgrading of ICT hardware and software, with the inclusion of internet-enabled data points in the majority of classrooms, supported the use of ICT for learning and teaching.
- Communal space for learners was bright, clean and well maintained. It was popular with learners and included a common room and refectory which served healthy-choice food.
- The college upgrading programme in and around the buildings and the relocation of key functions had improved access to services for all learners.

Staff

The operational planning process contributed effectively to the arrangements that anticipated future staffing requirements. Overall, sufficient teaching staff supported the programmes being delivered. Teaching staff had academic and vocational qualifications appropriate to the level of programmes they taught. The college had sufficient support staff who were appropriately qualified. Most permanent teaching staff held or were working towards a TQ(FE) or equivalent qualification. A majority of temporary teaching staff held a TQ(FE) or other teaching qualification and some had assessor and verifier qualifications. Most job descriptions and remits were clear and there were appropriate arrangements in place for updating as necessary. The procedures relating to recruitment and selection and promotion of equal opportunities were clear and available on the college intranet along with other human resource policies. The college collected data sets on the impact of these arrangements and had plans in place to evaluate and report on their impact.

The college had recently delivered effective training to improve the ICT skills of teaching staff and was using training needs analysis to inform future requirements. The staff development review process, which had been undertaken by a majority of permanent staff, included a helpful meeting where staff could discuss their individual development needs with their manager. The process did not have a clear cycle established to enable all staff to benefit from regular reviews, and in some areas relied on the willingness of individuals to come forward with suggestions for their own training needs. This limited its usefulness in informing staff development planning arrangements and therefore in improving the learner experience.

A specifically-devised induction programme had been beneficial for recently appointed senior lecturers. The half-day induction-training programme and a supporting induction handbook covering college procedures were useful, but managers did not implement the induction arrangements consistently. Generally, the arrangements did not capture staff development and support needs of new staff or staff new to their roles. The head of quality and senior lecturers provided some informal support and guidance for staff new to teaching. However, the formal induction arrangements did not incorporate an introduction to learning and teaching approaches, assessment or classroom management.

Most teaching and support department plans were effective in identifying staff development requirements to support operational objectives and the needs of the curriculum. The recently-developed human resource strategy identified clearly the priorities for staff development to address college and national priorities. The human resources manager implemented a college wide staff-development programme, which addressed specific key college priorities for training and development. The college made available an effective programme of professional qualifications through twilight provision. It included the PDA Introduction to Teaching in FE, a TQ(FE) programme delivered flexibly by the University of Aberdeen and an HN unit in evaluating learning and teaching effectiveness being piloted with a group of staff. Middle managers in support departments were being supported effectively through the provision of management training.

Staff involvement in cross-college working groups and external bodies such as SQA constituted useful development. Training on equalities was limited to race and disabilities and less than half of the staff had undertaken race equality awareness training.

Strengths

- Overall the college had sufficient teaching and support staff with appropriate qualifications.
- Procedures relating to recruitment and selection and promotion of equal opportunities were clear and available on the college intranet along with other human resource policies.
- The college had delivered effective training to improve the ICT skills of teaching staff recently and was using training needs analysis to inform future requirements.
- An effective programme of professional qualifications was available through twilight provision. It included the PDA Introduction to Teaching in FE, a TQ(FE) programme delivered flexibly by the University of Aberdeen and an HN unit in evaluating learning and teaching effectiveness being piloted with a group of staff.

5.3 Quality assurance, improvement and enhancement

Quality assurance

The college had developed clear and comprehensive policies and procedures for almost all areas of activity that had an impact on the learner experience. The self-evaluation and review arrangements used the *Quality Framework for Scottish FE Colleges* as an appropriate reference point. The college had successfully met the overall quality standards required by SQA, SQMS and Chartermark. It had been recommended for accreditation for the IiP award through a recent assessment visit. Policies and procedures were clearly documented on the college intranet and all staff were aware of how to access up-to-date copies. Almost all staff were clear about their role and their responsibilities for quality assurance and about how college self-evaluation and review arrangements were designed to improve the learner experience.

Internal moderation policies were consistent with the criteria required by SQA and other awarding bodies. Staff were aware of the new moderation arrangements in place in the college. However, more than a few staff were not yet fully confident in implementing them and internal moderation reports were not always effective in providing feedback to assessors. In a few cases, staff had not moderated units prior to delivery. The head of quality provided helpful feedback to teams to develop further the effectiveness of quality assurance activities that impacted on the learner experience. New college self-evaluation and review processes gave suitable direction and guidance to staff to assist them in evaluating learning and teaching approaches.

A pilot staff training and development initiative in evaluating the learning and teaching experience provided further encouragement to staff to reflect on learning and teaching methods. This initiative had been identified and adopted from sector best practice. The college had involved employers and other key stakeholders in the curriculum planning process to inform the development of programmes that suited local needs. The college gave high priority to gathering learner views of their experience of the college and used learner representatives, focus groups, questionnaires and team meetings well to identify and address issues. This had led to, for example, staff changing the sequence of curriculum delivery, integrated summative assessments in specific subjects, and staff providing improved feedback to learners on their progress. In more than a few cases centrally-held PI data did not agree with the information used by programme teams to evaluate retention and attainment.

Strengths

- The college had developed clear and comprehensive policies and procedures for almost all areas of activity that had an impact on the learner experience. These were founded on appropriate external quality standards.
- Almost all staff were clear about their role and their responsibilities for quality assurance and about how college self-evaluation and review arrangements were designed to improve the learner experience.
- The head of quality provided helpful feedback to teams to develop further the effectiveness of quality assurance activities that impacted on the learner experience.

Quality improvement and enhancement

Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the quality of the learning experience. All staff recognised the importance of the increasing emphasis senior managers placed on quality improvement and enhancement. Most staff responded well to encouragement from managers to adopt more systematic approaches to reflective practices and to identify improvement actions with a positive impact on learners. Most staff demonstrated good teamworking, contributed to a purposeful team culture at section and department levels and identified readily with positive developments in the overall college culture.

Staff in the college had been pro-active in identifying good practice from a range of external sources, including external evaluation reports. In some instances they had collaborated with other colleges to identify and disseminate relevant good practice. There were more than a few examples where staff had adopted aspects of good practice to help improve learner experiences. The college had made improvements in methods for capturing learner views formally. In a few subjects staff had also made progress in improving the processes they used to identify early in a programme those learners most at risk of not achieving, with the aim of improving individual achievement and overall programme attainment.

Across the campus there were numerous examples of the college identifying and taking action to improve arrangements, equipment and facilities in order to address weaknesses and to further enhance the learner experience. Generally, staff engaged well with the college self-evaluation and review processes. However, across the college, there were more than a few examples of self-evaluation review reports which were not evaluative. Many targets were not expressed explicitly or did not incorporate suitable actions to address identified weaknesses. In subject area review and other evaluation reports there was little effective monitoring of progress on the achievement of targets for improvement. In a few cases specific actions for improvement, identified through external audit had not been progressed timeously.

Strengths

- Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the quality of the student learning experience and had engaged well in more formal approaches to reflective practice.
- The college had identified good practice from a range of external sources and had adopted appropriate aspects to inform improvement in a range of activities.
- The college had implemented significant improvements to address weaknesses and to enhance the learner experience.

6. Main points for action

Educational provision: design, planning and management

- The college should ensure that all academic department, teaching section and support area operational plans contain outcome-focused targets with clearly designated responsibilities and timescales for achievement.
- The college should develop and implement a learning and teaching strategy that brings together staff development plans, peer review and ICT to further enhance learning and teaching approaches.
- The college should ensure its policy for the protection of children and young people is developed fully and approved as a matter of urgency.
- The college should ensure that arrangements for evaluating and planning services to promote access and inclusion involve all relevant key staff and take account of all relevant issues.
- The college should improve the range of progression options for learners from pre-access and flexible learning programmes, to allow them to build on their prior learning and experience.

Learner services, resources and staff

- The college should address the weaknesses in academic guidance for full-time HN learners to enable learners to benefit fully from the arrangements.
- Managers should ensure that cross-college arrangements for core skills development support effectively the needs of learners.
- Staff should review personal learning support plans on a regular basis to ensure arrangements are effective.
- The college should ensure that suitable facilities are available for learners to have private interviews when discussing financial or personal matters.
- Managers should ensure that staff in all specialist teaching areas are clear about their responsibilities for risk assessment.
- The college should adopt a more pro-active approach to publicising suitable educational websites to encourage independent learning and promote access for part-time learners.
- The college should rectify shortcomings in access and safety arrangements.
- Managers should ensure that the staff induction arrangements, including where necessary an introduction to learning and teaching, assessment and classroom management, are implemented consistently.
- The college should ensure that all staff engage in comprehensive equalities training.

Quality assurance, improvement and enhancement

- The college should ensure that all staff implement fully its internal moderation procedures.
- The college should ensure that PI data held centrally agrees with information used by programme teams in order to provide a consistent picture of student retention and attainment.
- The college should ensure that all self-evaluation review reports are evaluative, identify explicit improvement targets and are used to monitor progress against action points.

7. Examples of sector-leading and innovative practice

7.1 Examples of sector-leading and innovative practice in subject areas

Learning and teaching process

Skills development by beauty therapy learners

Teaching staff had introduced innovative ways of developing learners' personal skills and skills for citizenship. Staff on the NQ Beauty Therapy programme challenged learners to identify an activity which would add value to their practical skills and also allow these skills to be used to enhance the lives of others. The beauty therapy learners responded to the challenge by undertaking a short programme of beauty therapy sessions with a group of special programme learners within the college community. Staff supported the learners in the planning and implementation of the project, and guided them in reviewing and evaluating the project at the end. Learners were involved actively with project planning and implementation of practical activities. Learners managed the project largely by themselves. They developed their skills in oral and written communication, team working and problem solving. Improvements were also noted in learner self-confidence within both the beauty therapy and the special programme learner groups. Staff planned to use the lessons learned from the project to underpin other community-based projects within the department and to help support the further development of college certification in active citizenship. Learner and staff evaluation of the project pointed to a highly successful experience for all participants. Importantly, the beauty therapy learners experienced directly the holistic aspects of their chosen specialisation. This led them to reflect on a range of social issues they may not have otherwise considered as they learned to relate to groups of people different to themselves.

Programme design

Encouraging participation in science

Staff recognised the importance of encouraging learners to develop an interest in science and their physical environment at an early age. Teaching staff had been involved in several initiatives that had encouraged greater participation in science by young learners and had improved the levels of interest in science in the local community. In one example, discussions with staff from a local children's nursery led to college staff developing a programme of learning based on an interactive and easy-to-use resource pack designed to capture the imagination of very young learners. The college's science department had drawn together, in one booklet, 20 activities suitable for nursery staff to use with pre-school children. The booklet identified a range of simple household materials as a resource base. The science activities, as well as being fun and safe, were effective in developing young learners' knowledge and understanding of the physical world. The activities were well laid out with titles such as *plants drink water*, *shiny money* and *jumping frogs*, which instantly captured staff and learners' attention.

The college had also organised a support programme of in-service training to enhance the confidence of nursery staff in dealing with science topics. This popular programme helped nursery staff to improve their knowledge and understanding of scientific principles and concepts and to improve their confidence in sharing them with young children. It also helped them to consider the wider role of science in understanding the environment and the contribution of science to improving human health.

The initiative had been successful in raising the profile of science in the local community and other groups had expressed keen interest in having a similar involvement with the college.

8. What happens next?

The college should address weaknesses in subject areas and the main points for action associated with the findings on leadership and quality management in this report. SFC will consider the report and write to the college indicating the scope and nature of further engagement by the college with SFC and HMIE.

9. How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the principal and college staff, the Chair of the Board of Management and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA or by telephoning 01506 600273. Copies are also available on our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you wish to comment about further education reviews

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of further education reviews, you should write in the first instance to Dr Wray Bodys, HMCI, at the above address.

Our complaints procedure

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600265 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk.

Angus Allan
HM Inspector

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Appendix 1

Glossary of terms

FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
HMIE	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
HN	Higher National
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IiP	Investors in People
IT	Information Technology
LEC	Local Enterprise Company
NC	National Certificate
NQ	National Qualification
PDA	Professional Development Award
PI	Performance Indicator
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SFC	Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council
SARU	Student achievement ratio by unit of learning
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SQMS	Scottish Quality Management System
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
TQ(FE)	Teaching Qualification Further Education
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
VQ	Vocational Qualification

Appendix 2

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF levels	SQA National Units, courses and group awards	Higher Education (HE) qualifications	SVQs	SCQF levels
12		Doctorate		12
11		Masters	SVQ 5	11
10		Honours degree		10
9		Ordinary degree		9
8		HND Diploma of HE	SVQ 4	8
7	Advanced Higher	HNC Certificate of HE		7
6	Higher		SVQ 3	6
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit S Grade		SVQ 2	5
4	Intermediate 1/ General S Grade		SVQ 1	4
3	Access 3/ Foundation S Grade			3
2	Access 2			2
1	Access 1			1

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework brings together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework. The framework includes: degree provision, HNC and HND, SQA National Qualifications, and SVQs. There are 12 levels ranging from Access 1 at SCQF level 1 to Doctorate at SCQF level 12. Each qualification whether a unit, group of units or larger group award has also been allocated a number of SCQF credits. Each credit represents 10 notional hours of required learning. Doctorates based on a thesis are an exception to this.

Other learning may be credit rated and included in the framework provided it leads to a clear set of learning outcomes and has quality assured learner assessment.

The positioning of SVQ in the table gives an indication of their place in the framework. Work is ongoing to allocate SCQF credits to them.

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) works to improve education in Scotland. HM Inspectors review the quality of education in further education colleges under a memorandum of understanding with the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC). HM Inspectors also inspect pre-school centres, primary and secondary schools, special schools, community learning, initial teacher education, local authorities, and the care and welfare of learners in both day and residential schools. We publish the findings of our reviews in short, clear reports and put them on our website. We identify and promote the good practice we find. We draw on our overall knowledge to provide independent advice to Scottish Ministers, SFEFC, relevant departments of the Scottish Executive and others.

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