

# Manchester International College

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

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.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Preparation for life and work
- Business, administration and law

Inspectors also examined evidence from Train to Gain programmes in health, public services and care, information and communications technology, and retail and commercial enterprise, which were not reported on separately due to low numbers of learners, to support judgements in leadership and management.

## Description of the provider

1. Manchester International College (MIC), also trading as International Learning Centre, was established in 2002. The company's main registered office is based at Withington, but the Train to Gain contract is operated from its centre in Levenshulme. The company initially worked with refugees and asylum seekers who needed to improve their basic skills and, since 2002, has operated as a network or learndirect centre. More recently business has expanded through alternative funding and an increase in fee-paying provision.
2. The Train to Gain contract was secured from the Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in June 2008. The company has worked with 144 employers and engaged 224 learners across five sector subject areas. Currently 37 learners are following preparation for life and work programmes and 33 are following business administration and law programmes. Seven members of staff manage the delivery of these two programmes. Employers are based in Greater Manchester, West Cheshire, Warrington and Merseyside.
3. Manchester ranks fourth in the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation. In July 2008 unemployment as a % age of the working age population in Manchester was 3.7%, compared with 2.8% for Greater Manchester and 2.3% nationally. Recent figures show that 23.1% of Manchester's population belong to minority ethnic groups.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Sector subject areas

Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2
Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards, quality of provision, leadership and management, provision in both sector subject areas, and capacity to improve are good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

### Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

5. MIC demonstrates good capacity to improve. It has carried out detailed and effective improvements in many aspects of the provision including success rates, which are particularly high in all areas. Developments in e-learning have been significant in recent years. Indications are that the information learning technology content already developed within MIC is a very good basis for further developments. Good operational management together with particularly effective management information promotes effective monitoring of staff and learner performance. Staff are highly committed and focused on quality improvement.
6. The self-assessment process relies on contributions from all staff and training in self-assessment has effectively encouraged their participation. The self-assessment report is self-critical but does not always present convincing arguments for the judgements due to insufficient supporting evidence. However, MIC accurately identifies most of the strengths and areas for improvement in the report.

## Key strengths

- Excellent success rates
- Good development of employability skills and confidence
- Highly effective support for learners
- Good strategic direction and management
- Particularly good management of special projects in e-learning

## Key areas for improvement

- Insufficiently detailed planning of training
- Insufficient employer involvement
- Incomplete quality assurance arrangements

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

7. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates in both preparation for life and work and business administration and law are excellent. Timely success rates are excellent also in preparation for life and work but satisfactory in the other sector subject area. All current learners are making satisfactory or better progress. In both subject areas learners are developing good personal and employability skills, which employers acknowledge and value.

### Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

8. The quality of provision is good overall. Training is good in preparation for life and work. Training is well planned, delivered, monitored and supported by a range of useful resource materials. In business administration and law, on- and off-the-job training is satisfactory and complemented well by learning resources. However, the planning of training is not sufficiently detailed or structured. Employer involvement in training is more positive across the business administration and law programmes than in preparation for life and work courses where employer engagement and understanding is insufficient. In both sector subject areas the range of programmes offered to meet the needs of learners and employers is satisfactory. Support for learners across the two sector subject areas is particularly good. MIC staff are very supportive and flexible with both learners and employers. They have a very good understanding of the working environments and contribute effectively to making learning in the workplace meaningful.

### Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. Leadership and management are good. The directors have set a clear strategic direction and communicated the key points to their staff very effectively. MIC has adopted an appropriate strategy of prudent and careful growth in a period of economic uncertainty. Strategies introduced to bring about improvements in success rates have been successful. Managers have coped very well with unexpected and significant changes in funding body priorities. Key staff and managers have the ability to successfully identify future development opportunities at an early stage.
10. Operational management is good and makes a significant contribution to the very high success rates across all programmes. Managers and staff use accurate and timely data to good effect in managing the learning. The intranet and much of the

software used within MIC has been developed in-house to manage specific aspects of the provision and does so very successfully. Performance management is particularly good. A good appraisal system is underpinned by excellent target-setting based on relevant performance indicators for staff. Targets are agreed with staff and carefully monitored. The performance management arrangements are supported effectively by good incentive schemes. Staff development is good and achieves an appropriate balance between training to meet organisational needs and to develop individual skills and qualifications. A number of staff have received funding and support to study and obtain higher qualifications.

11. There is considerable expertise in producing innovative e-learning materials within the organisation. The production of these materials is well managed and recent projects have resulted in a comprehensive e-learning package to deliver all the training on a particular NVQ. The package is particularly successful in integrating English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) into NVQ provision. Difficulties with Train to Gain funding resulting in a contraction of the provision have prevented full use of this package in the provision. However, MIC is continuing to share the development with other occupational areas.
12. Internal and external communications are broadly satisfactory. Links with external organisations are particularly helpful in augmenting the support provided for learners by MIC. The staff intranet is a valuable and highly effective means of communication that is useful to managers and staff. The meetings structure for staff and managers is appropriate. Meetings are well attended but minutes are not always available for all meetings and the quality of agendas varies. However, actions and improvements are often identified in discussion and followed up outside the meetings.
13. The arrangements for quality improvement are incomplete. Quality assurance arrangements are broadly satisfactory and fit for purpose in their current state of development. All the basic arrangements are in place including learner and employer surveys, comprehensive audits of paperwork and observations of some key processes. However, inspectors agree with the provider's self-assessment report that further development of observations of teaching and learning is required and that a more detailed quality manual for Train to Gain provision is needed.
14. Involvement of employers in some training programmes is insufficient. Although employers do provide some support for learners on programme, many do not have sufficiently deep knowledge of the Train to Gain programme or the individual NVQs within the programme. MIC has identified this area for improvement in the self-assessment report.
15. Resources are good and accessible to all. Staff are well qualified and experienced and accommodation is spacious, well appointed and managed well. Financial management and value for money are good.
16. MIC has appropriately identified a responsible person to deal with safeguarding issues. Staff have familiarised themselves with relevant information about safeguarding, and further staff training is planned. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)

checks for some staff are current, and for others their status is under renewal. A clear and helpful child and vulnerable persons' protection policy is in place.

17. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. A relevant and appropriate range of policies covers issues such as diversity, disability and complaints. Positive and effective arrangements are in place to protect learners from discrimination and harassment and support them to achieve their potential. Equality and diversity topics are well covered at induction and reinforced with learners during progress reviews. A learner charter and handbooks for both learners and employers help to clarify expectations and responsibilities about learning and work. Staff awareness of equality and diversity is satisfactory, but recent training to develop understanding has not taken place. The range of successful activities that have occurred to help the company be socially inclusive and widen participation with its other programmes has not been extended to promote Train to Gain. The performance of some groups of learners is not analysed, for example, learners completing an NVQ only compared with those learners completing an NVQ and skills for life qualification.

## What learners like:

- Learning in the workplace
- Being able to learn at their own pace
- One-to-one coaching/training
- Supportive staff
- Gaining a better understanding of subjects studied by their children
- Improved confidence in dealing with customers
- Better communication skills
- "My employer is fantastic and helps me with my NVQ"
- "I have all the support I need from my employer and my assessor"

## What learners think could improve:

- Learning centres to stay open later in the evening
- More availability of reference materials at the start
- More forward planning of training

## Sector subject areas

### Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

#### Context

18. Currently 37 learners are working towards literacy, numeracy and ESOL qualifications. Learners are visited in the workplace by staff for assessment and training activities. Learners can also access five learndirect centres across the North West for support and advice. Four learners have an identified disability.

#### Strengths

- Excellent success rates
- Good development of personal and employability skills
- Good training
- Highly effective support for learners

#### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient employer involvement in training

#### Achievement and standards

19. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are excellent. In 2008/09, the success rate for adult literacy and numeracy learners was 85%, and for ESOL learners 89%. The retention rate for literacy and numeracy learners in 2008/09 was 95% and 89% for ESOL. Many learners have achieved the target qualification within the agreed timescale, and current learners are making good progress. In response to tasks set by training staff, learners produce work of a high standard, which they are able to discuss and use as a basis for further learning. Many learners develop good personal and employability skills. Employers have noted improvements in communication skills and confidence when learners are dealing with customers. Learners are prepared to undertake responsibilities in the workplace, meet targets and solve problems.

#### Quality of provision

20. The quality of provision is good. Training is good. Staff make effective use of initial assessment and contact with learners to develop a learner profile that includes developmental needs. This information is recorded on individual learning plans and is a useful basis to inform training delivery and strategies. All training is delivered on a one-to-one basis, either in the workplace or at a learning centre. Training staff meet with learners every two weeks and carefully plan activities and tasks. These are monitored and reviewed at subsequent meetings. Very effective use is made of a wide range of materials designed to promote learning, including resources available on the internet. Training staff successfully embed learning into

the workplace. An example of this is the effective use of a daily diary to record data relevant to the calculation of averages. Opportunities to provide training are flexible and responsive to learner needs and commitments. Training outcomes are recorded thoroughly on the provider's intranet and also in learner files.

21. The assessment and monitoring of learner progress is satisfactory. Learners complete agreed tasks on line and these are assessed promptly with good feedback provided by assessors. Learner progress is regularly and formally reviewed, and monitoring of progress takes place effectively on the provider's intranet. Staff access the monitoring system and respond quickly to any indications of slow progress or difficulties. As part of progress reviews learners' understanding of health and safety and equality of opportunity issues are explored.
22. Involvement by employers in the learning programme is insufficient. Employers are supportive of training. They participate in reviews of learner progress and welcome the new skills being developed by their employees. However, their understanding of the Train to Gain programme is poor. Not all employers receive the handbook and few are involved in identifying and influencing the content of the provision most appropriate to the needs of their organisation.
23. MIC offers a satisfactory range of programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners. In addition to developing workplace skills, many learners welcome the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of areas of learning being studied by their children. Learners enjoy the flexible pattern of attendance available to them at learning centres, although a small number of learners would welcome later opening hours at the centres.
24. Support for learners is highly effective. This support is an important element in learner success. Training staff have a good relationship with employers, and are welcome visitors to learner workplaces. Training staff have good knowledge of learner workplaces, and enjoy a good rapport with individual learners. Learners are able to contact training staff via telephone or email for support or advice. Employers are supportive of their learners, show interest in their progress and are flexible in meeting requests for study time and use of company information technology (IT) facilities. The provider has employed staff from a mix of ethnic groups which reflects the wider community from which learners are drawn. Staff are sensitive to issues affecting learners from minority communities. Recorded examples of support for learners, including one-to-one advice and referrals to a wider network of support agencies is clearly evident. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. All learners are issued with a helpful handbook at induction. As part of induction, clarification is provided about the requirements of the target qualification, opportunities for progression and legislation relating to health and safety and equal opportunities. A number of learners have progressed to further training programmes.

#### Leadership and management

25. Leadership and management are good. Accommodation is of a good quality and is arranged to create a welcoming and professional environment for learners.

Managers collect feedback from learners and, where appropriate, respond to learner views. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. All staff have an annual appraisal at which personal and company targets are agreed. Effective use is made of the company's intranet to record and monitor staff targets. Staff have appropriate qualifications and experience of commercial and training activities. Support for staff training is good. Staff are undertaking a range of qualifications, for example, assessor awards, IT updating and teacher training. No equality and diversity training has been provided for staff in this sector area. Communication between staff is good, and aided by very effective separate staff and learner intranets. Regular minuted team meetings focus on the learner experience and provide opportunities for sharing good practice. Staff are encouraged to share ideas, work effectively as a team and contribute well to the self-assessment process. Staff are clear about the importance of self-assessment as part of quality improvement.

## Business, administration and law

Good: Grade 2

### Context

26. MIC provides Train to Gain programmes for 33 learners. Six learners are working on administration, fourteen on customer service and four on team leading NVQs at level 2. Nine learners are working towards a management NVQ at level 3. MIC also offers level 3 NVQs in administration and customer service but there are no current learners on these programmes. Four learners are also completing skills for life qualifications. Three assessors, two of whom are also internal verifiers, assess and support learners.

### Strengths

- Excellent overall success rates
- Good development of confidence and skills
- Highly effective support

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently detailed planning of training

### Achievement and standards

27. Achievement and standards are good. Overall success rates are excellent at 97% in 2008/09. Timely success rates are satisfactory at 75%. Learners' progress is mainly satisfactory and some is good. Portfolios are well organised and presented and contain a good range of evidence demonstrating standards appropriate to the level of their NVQ. Learners develop good confidence and skills to support their employability. Learners are increasingly able to work on their own initiative as well as becoming effective team members. They display safe working practices such as when using office equipment. Learners take on increasing responsibility and expand their job roles in line with their learning. For example, administration learners improve their computing skills and are able to work effectively with different software packages to produce a range of business documents. Customer service learners demonstrate the ability able to deal with customer enquiries more independently and effectively. Learners on management and team leading programmes are more reflective and evaluative of their working practices. Employers benefit from learners' increasing knowledge and skills. One management learner has implemented improved health and safety procedures in their workplace and another has developed and implemented an improved induction process for new staff.

### Quality of provision

28. The quality of provision is good overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate on-the-job training and employers are involved effectively in learners' programmes. Assessors provide satisfactory individual off-

the-job coaching to learners when a need is identified at any stage in the programme. They make effective use of informative workbooks, internet and intranet learning materials to underpin individual coaching. However, the planning of training contains insufficient detail. At the start of programmes, assessors discuss training with learners and employers but do not produce a formal training plan. Assessors often simply record that training for a particular unit will be through the use of a workbook, or identify a broad area such as equality of opportunity. This is too general and does not provide sufficient structure to best facilitate co-ordination of on- and off-the job training to ensure a fully coherent and cohesive programme.

29. Initial assessment is satisfactory and good arrangements are in place to support identified needs. Assessors make satisfactory use of targets in individual learning plans and progress reviews to monitor and progress learning, although they do not always clearly record the monitoring and outcomes of actions. Assessment is satisfactory. Planning for assessment is clear. Assessment judgements are fair and effective feedback is provided that supports progress appropriately.
30. The range of programmes offered meets the needs and interests of learners and employers well. Arrangements for workplace visits are very flexible to suit workplace demands.
31. Support for learners is highly effective. Assessors are very knowledgeable and have particularly good awareness of learners' job roles, employers' organisations and the industries in which they are involved. They use this very effectively to support learners and make learning meaningful. Assessors are very readily available and accessible by phone or email often well outside normal working hours. This is very highly valued by learners and employers. Induction is particularly effective in supporting learners to settle into their programmes quickly with confidence. Many employers have themselves completed NVQs. They use this knowledge and experience very well to support learners and facilitate opportunities for learning and the production of evidence. Some learners also benefit from a workplace mentor. Assessors use relevant strategies to sensitively and very effectively support the high proportion of learners who have a disability, learning difficulty or identified literacy, numeracy or language need. The support provided contributes significantly to the excellent success rates. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory.

#### Leadership and management

32. The NVQ is well managed. Staff have a clear understanding of operational procedures which is supported by the comprehensive intranet. Managers make good use of data and targets to monitor performance and success rates. Staff are well qualified and experienced and benefit from relevant staff training that is linked to appraisal and continuous professional development. Internal communications and the sharing of best practice are satisfactory. The self-assessment process is inclusive and the report largely matches inspection findings. Internal verification is satisfactory. While assessors are observed as part of the internal verification process, there are no arrangements to systematically observe all aspects of the learner journey such as coaching, training, induction,

initial assessment, or reviews. The recently introduced quality audits of documentation are satisfactory. A comprehensive quality monitoring system, covering the full range of the learning experience through extended interviews with learners and employers and some observation of activity, was introduced last month but it is too early to see any impact. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Assessors cover equality and diversity during induction and they satisfactorily monitor and reinforce this during learners' progress reviews. Staff and learners have satisfactory awareness of equality and diversity.