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# Briefing notes

# New College Swindon - FAQs

More information is on our website at [www.newcollege.ac.uk](http://www.newcollege.co.uk) but here is a summary.

New College Swindon is a highly successful and respected Further Education (FE) College.

It has enjoyed tremendous growth without compromising finances or quality.

**Learners**

Learners have risen from 1,700 in 1996 to over 12,000 in 2013/14.

Of these, 3,200 were 16-18s, 140 pre-16s and 8,700 adults (19+) including adult community, workplace and Apprenticeship learners. We welcome all levels of ability from entry to higher education and can cover most sector skills areas with our network of partners.

**High quality**

The overall College success rate was 86.6% in 2013/14. This is 4.4 percentage points above the FE sector national average *for what we do,* an *outstanding* performance. We are committed to continuous quality improvement, listening and acting on what our learners tell us.

In December 2014 OFSTED inspectors reported ‘good with outstanding features’. Grade 1 for Apprenticeships and workplace learning. English, MFL and Business ‘require improvement’.

OFSTED found that ‘the number of learners has increased significantly since the last inspection’ (2009) and that there is ‘a friendly, inclusive and enjoyable learning environment’.

New College holds The *Charter Mark* for customer service, the *matrix* award for information advice and guidance and has won 5 Beacon Awards.

# Serving a diverse learner profile

New College operates nationally for adult and business learners who are mainly part-time.

We are currently developing international links in technical and vocational training.

For most full-time learners, primarily 16-18, the catchment area is a 25 mile radius around Wiltshire and contiguous counties.

Swindon is a relatively wealthy town but there are areas of deprivation including the Park and Walcot wards where the College is based. Swindon suffered in the recession but there are promising signs of recovery. Only 56% of Swindon school leavers achieved 5 A\*-C GCSEs including English and Maths, one of the lowest outcomes in the country.

Youth unemployment (16-24) is falling.

We are committed to equal opportunities and widening participation.

There are 68 nationalities studying through New College and around 2,000 disadvantaged learners. We work closely with many community groups and run special programmes for job seekers, NEETs, vulnerable and disadvantaged adults and troubled families.

**Curriculum**

As an inclusive College we run courses at all learning levels from entry/ level 1 to higher. Most 16-18 work is at level 3; most adult learners are at level 1 and 2.

**Curriculum research & development**

We run over 500 courses in most sector skills areas of learning (not motor vehicle, construction or land-based which others provide locally).

**Learner starts (total 17,171) by OFSTED sector skills areas by age and level**

**2013/14**:

Preparation for Life & Work 21% **16- 18** Level 1 31%

Science & Maths 15% L2 18%

ICT 13% L3 52%

Arts & Media 11%

Business & Law 11%

Language & Literature 8% **19+** L1 51%

Leisure & tourism 6% L2 37%

Social Sciences 6% L3 11%

Health & Social care 5% L4 1%

Animal Care, Engineering,

Retail, Education 4% combined.

We keep our product and service range and modes of delivery under review and track Government priorities eg in apprenticeships, FE loans. Through active marketing research we aim to meet the needs and interests of our learners in the best ways.

**Innovation**

We aim to be innovative in curriculum development and introduce new courses, new modes of delivery and start dates and times to suit the learner.

We also want to keep ahead in **e-learning** to help learners succeed. We have an excellent

e-learning team to source and develop e-learning materials and train teachers and assessors in new technologies.

Our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is moodle. Learning materials can be accessed from home/ anywhere and some courses can be taken on-line eg Personal Finance.

We encourage learners to bring their own device (BYOD). Over a thousand are linked to our system on any working day.

We are (or have been) lead partner for national projects in **e-learning techniques** (Learning Futures), podcasting and Green IT.

**Growth**

We have recently expanded Business & Enterprise, Maths & Science and Creative & Media as part of our new **annexe** development. Hair and Beauty was successfully launched in 2011.

**Effective relationships with a range of stakeholders**

**Partnerships and collaboration**

We work with Government departments, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), the Education Funding Agency (EFA), local authorities, MPs, employers, Chambers of Commerce, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the voluntary sector, schools and private training providers on a wide range of initiatives. We have partnerships with a number of Universities - West of England, Gloucestershire, Bath Spa and RDI (blended learning degrees) and work with other FE Colleges and private providers to share good practice and build capacity and quality. Partnership working has helped us to develop high quality learning and services to learners.

**Engaging employers**

The College has a strong national presence and good links with major local employers including Intel, Nationwide, Sodexo and the Army.

New College worked with over 400 employers in 2013/14. Business training is delivered through ***Fast Forward***, our business services division and with over 20 training partners, managed by our Partnership team. Provision includes apprenticeships, tailored training, Trades Union studies and professional and management programmes.

We are a centre of excellence in functional skills in Maths and English with over 2,000 learners last year.

We host the **Trades Union Studies** centre for Wiltshire and Gloucestershire and the TU unionlearn regional functional skills centre.

**Adult and Community Learning (ACL) (**courses *not* leading to a recognised qualification).

A vibrant programme with over 1600 learners at College and in community centres. Runs on a cost-recovery basis with a small subsidy from Swindon Borough Council and bid funding.

**Jobseekers**

We have an **Employability team** and **job club** to help learners gain work skills and find jobs. We work closely with Job Centre Plus accessing European Social Fund (ESF) where possible to upskill (or reskill) job seekers. We have led 5 major ESF projects in the last 3 years and currently work on the ESF’s *Skills for the South West,* *troubled families* and *Flexible fund for the unemployed* projects.

# Progression to Higher Education (HE) – over 550 learners won HE places in 2014, the highest in the area and the best ever for the College. Over 100 Oxbridge entrants in the last 10 years.

**Higher Education (HE)** includes professional qualifications (eg CIPD, AAT), Foundation Degrees, HND/Cs and full degrees via HE partners. Our aim is to increase HE provision with competitive fees.

**Pre-16 provision**

Cooperate with local schools and Swindon Borough Council to support:

* full-time and part-time learners
* Gifted and Talented learners (eg twilight classes, Villiers Park scheme)
* GCSE revision classes for schools
* schools with ESOL students
* widening participation and Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) programmes
* Raising Participation Age (RPA)
* National Citizenship Scheme – a summer residential programme for year 11s

**Learner voice**

**Customer service is our focus**. We have a ‘customer first’ strategy and culture. We welcome feedback from all customers. Learners are actively involved in giving feedback through (eg) quality circles, student executive, course evaluation, student surveys, facebook and twitter to drive improvement.

# Personnel

# Over 600 staff (c 370 permanent). Excellent diverse, high performing workforce, who are well-paid, well-qualified, adaptable and motivated, able to respond to changing priorities and needs and proud to work at New College. Private sector (low) absentee level, low staff turnover; excellent professional development programme.

Staff have a strong commitment to personal development and work hard to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment

# In 2011 we were successful in achieving ‘*Sunday Times Best 100 Best Places to work in the public sector*’ at our first attempt.

# Property strategy - new buildings

We have some of the best FE facilities in the country. All facilities are modern and are for student, business and community use. There are state of the art ICT facilities with 1700 on-site PCs, a learning resource centre, a theatre, TV, radio and art & design studios, 2 dance studios, hair & beauty studios and Science labs for Chemistry, Biology, Physics and Electronics.

The main College opened in January 2003 and a sports centre in October 2003. Annexe 1 opened in August 2005. All were 25% funded by the Government. A new annexe opened in September 2011 as part of our growth strategy. This increased capacity by 35%, an exciting £8m self-fundedproject. A second dance studio opened in September 2013.

New College also operates from community sites in Swindon and from many work-based locations including Army camps. This helps to engage with local community groups, jobseekers and employers around the country.

**Finance**

£18m turnover; *outstanding* financial health and debt-free (after four major building projects). Government funding will continue to be limited over the next few years as the public sector cuts bite. We will manage this effectively and efficiently without compromising on quality.

**Strategy and growth prospects**

Strategy – three-pronged (14)16-18, adult (engaging individuals and local communities) and business services (engaging employers nationally).

Growth prospects – good, but tempered by economic conditions and public sector cuts. Government will demand annual efficiency gains and it is vital that we diversify income and find entrepreneurial and innovative ways of earning our own income and cutting costs.

Population growth - planned housing development slowed in the recession but is picking up. Swindon’s population is likely to increase by around 25,000 by 2025.

We are hoping to open an 11-18 **free school in North Swindon** in 2016 to meet demand.

New College has a good reputation for high quality learning and our great learning facilities, learning materials and excellent staff will help to sustain this. But competition has increased (eg from new 11-18 schools and the UTC) so we have to keep working hard to be the best.

Graham Taylor, Principal & Chief Executive January 2015