

# Aylesbury College

## Reinspection monitoring visit report

---

**Unique reference number:** 130607

**Name of lead inspector:** Alex Falconer HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 4 November 2010

**Type of provider:** General further education college

**Address:** Oxford Road  
Aylesbury  
Bucks, HP21 8PD

**Telephone number:** 01296 588588

## REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

Aylesbury College is a medium-sized general further education college. Over 4,000 learners attend to college, of whom just over half are aged 16 to 18. Approximately three quarters of the full-time learners are in this age group. Over 40% of full-time equivalent learners study advanced programmes and just over one third are on intermediate courses. The college offers programmes in all 15 subject areas. The largest numbers of enrolments are in health, public services and care; retail and commercial enterprise; languages, literature and culture; preparation for life and work; and, arts and media. The college's mission is to 'deliver high quality skills at all levels to sustain a competitive economy and serve the community'.

Many students join the college with lower than average prior attainment. Two thirds of learners are female and one quarter is from minority ethnic backgrounds, well above the proportion in the local area population. Most local schools have sixth form provision. Although most of Buckinghamshire is affluent, three areas in Aylesbury have considerable deprivation. At the previous inspection the college was found to be satisfactory overall with good capacity to improve. Outcomes for students were found to be satisfactory, as was the quality of provision. Leadership and management were judged to be good. The provision in science and mathematics was found to be inadequate.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

**What progress has been made in improving quality assurance systems to bring about improvements? What is the evidence to show that improvements have been made across the college?**

**Reasonable progress**

Managers have completed a thorough curriculum review. A number of poorly performing and under-recruiting courses, mainly GCE A level and GCSE programmes, have been discontinued. This was carried out in consultation with local schools to ensure continuity of provision. New and recent staff appointments have strengthened teaching and learning in psychology and the creative arts. The lesson observation system has been improved. In addition, curriculum managers have more non-teaching time for performance management and monitoring of standards. In-service training for middle managers is focused successfully on data analysis, preparing for enrolment and developing more consistent approaches to quality assurance.

Management information is now better organized and is a key factor in setting curriculum team targets for retention, achievement and success. Data analysis at team level has been improved substantially by the annual data census. Attendance data are well managed and followed up and attendance rates have improved.

Improvements have been made to timetables for work based learners and trainees. More assessment in the work place takes place and apprentices have up-to-date technology with which to record their progress. Quality assurance has been strengthened and targets at curriculum level are now subject to greater scrutiny.

### **Outcomes for learners**

**What actions have been taken to improve learners' outcomes since the last inspection? Reasonable progress**

At the time of the monitoring visit, the predicted 2009/10 overall success rate was 79%, broadly in line with the recent national average. Although success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on GCSE and AS level programmes were poor, most other success rates were at or around national averages. Outcomes for work based learning and Train to Gain improved in 2009/10, but timely success rates remain below average. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on key skills were good. Current retention is satisfactory and attendance has improved. Learners progress best on advanced vocational courses, but progress on GCE A and AS levels remains below national averages. Success rates in the creative arts improved significantly in 2009/10 and the recent introduction of fashion based courses has proved popular with learners. The appointment of a creative director for the arts has brought new focus and direction to improvements in this curriculum area.

GCE A level history, religious studies, business studies, human biology, mathematics, fine art and photography have all been removed from the curriculum. Psychology, sociology, law, film studies, communication studies, English literature and English language are still offered. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes on outcomes.

### **Outcomes for learners**

**What actions have been taken to improve outcomes in science and mathematics, which were judged to be inadequate at the last inspection? Reasonable progress**

As mentioned above, the college has taken action to remove poorly performing and recruiting subjects from its GCE A level and GCSE provision. In addition, teachers in science and mathematics have been supported to develop their practice and to introduce more short and interesting activities into lessons. Lesson observations are more rigorous and there is renewed emphasis on learning rather than on teachers' performance. In addition, there have been improvements in examination preparation and intensive revision sessions for students were held in the summer term.

Managers of the sixth form centre, in which the science and mathematics provision lies, now concentrate more on monitoring staff performance, communication and making sure that an ethos of support for students brings about improvements in students' outcomes. Students on science and mathematics courses said the teachers

were organised, supportive and enthusiastic. They felt that teaching was better than the previous year and they appreciated the support and guidance they received for their UCAS applications.

### Quality of provision

**What progress has been made in supporting teachers to develop stimulating and consistently good teaching? Does the lesson observation system now focus more explicitly on the impact of teaching on learning?**

**Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection the college has provided extra training to managers to improve the quality of lesson observations. Observers now focus more on the effects of teaching on students' learning. Observations result in detailed action plans which include satisfactory elements observed as well as weaker aspects. Senior managers moderate all observation records, focusing particularly on whether learning has been observed, and to standardise judgements. However, teachers are still given too much notice of when they will be observed.

Managers have changed and clarified the role and responsibilities of advanced practitioners who they allocate to all staff whose lessons are judged satisfactory or inadequate. For these staff, advanced practitioners set a detailed action plan for improvement and provide effective support by arranging further training, peer observations, as well as conducting 'developmental' observations. Advanced practitioners are developing the new 'Spotlight' programme of regular brief training sessions on detailed aspects of effective teaching and learning. They are open to all staff, but mandatory for those where the need for improvement has been identified through their lesson observations. The college is also piloting a more formal peer observation system. These initiatives are comparatively recent and it is therefore too early to judge their impact.

### Quality of provision

**What progress has been made in improving the quality and consistency of learning targets and progress monitoring for students to help them improve and achieve higher grades?**

**Reasonable progress**

The college has introduced an electronic student target-setting and tracking system to enable greater consistency and availability of individual learning plans (ILP). Students are encouraged to develop their own targets in consultation with staff and, in a few areas, to enter them into the ILP. The quality of targets has begun to improve in the current year. Teachers set more detailed compliance targets and many teachers have begun to set targets relating specifically to course topics, albeit at a superficial level. The college has introduced the use of commercial software to enable staff to identify individual students' minimum expected outcome grades. In a few areas, however, these grades are used inappropriately as students' long term targets.

The college has also provided much staff training on developing effective short and medium term targets with students, and for encouraging students to develop their own. Although in many curriculum areas teachers are now formally recording areas for improvement from students' work, they do not convert these to sufficiently detailed targets to ensure that students know exactly what they need to do to improve at each stage of their course. Nevertheless, the college recognises this and is currently providing further training for staff.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2010