

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
Textphone 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

8 June 2012

Malcolm Cowgill
The Principal
South Nottingham College
Greythorn Drive
West Bridgford
Nottingham
Nottinghamshire
NG2 7GA

Dear Mr Cowgill

Ofsted inspection of ITE provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications in the lifelong learning/further education sector

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your provision between 30 April and 3 May 2012, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and to a published national overview report. This report will identify the overall quality of provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications and identify the overall strengths and areas for development. However, in line with previous practice, inspectors will not make graded judgements of the quality of the provision in each centre; they will evaluate and feed back identified strengths and any points for further development. These are outlined below for your centre.

The published overview report will list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

Outcomes for trainees

Overall success rates on Certificate in teaching in the lifelong learning sector (CTLLS) programmes have declined over the last three years, due mainly to declining retention rates, as achievement rates have been 100% over the period. Success rates on the Diploma in teaching in the lifelong learning sector (DTLLS) programme have fluctuated over the past three years rising to 90% in 2009/10 but declining to 68% in 2010/11. In 2010/11 low success rates were due to both low retention and



achievement rates and were strongly affected by the specialist DTLLS numeracy programme. Current in-year retention data suggests some improvements.

Trainees' teaching is generally good. Trainees have a good rapport with learners and create a relaxed and productive environment, which facilitates learning well. Lessons have a good pace and learners are well engaged in discussions through the skilful use of questioning. Trainees' have sound specialist knowledge and generally make good progress in incorporating course theories to enhance their practice.

Trainees' work is generally marked well with good levels of detailed notes in the text and an overview, which makes useful developmental points. However, for some trainees, the academic support available on the programme was underdeveloped.

The programme offers good flexibility for trainees and effectively widens participation. Seventy-five percent of trainees are from training providers, community organisations and commercial enterprises. Trainees receive sound advice and guidance at recruitment and the programme is tailored well to their needs. In the same class, there were examples of trainees re-taking Preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector (PTLLS) after a long break from teaching and of others being accredited for their prior qualifications and entering the second year of the DTLLS course.

The college also provides good support for external trainees who do not have the minimum hours in their workplace by arranging for them to teach on college programmes on a voluntary basis. Currently half of CTLLS trainees, and a significant minority of DTLLS trainees, benefit from the arrangement.

Trainees' individual learning plans (ILP) vary considerably in how well they are used to note and monitor their development targets. Some use their reflective journal to highlight targets and reflect on their progress, but the programme does not strongly promote the benefits of using the ILP to consolidate trainees' targets.

Equality and diversity is promoted appropriately in the programme, and literacy and numeracy is embedded well. The college provides the specialist diplomas in literacy, ESOL and numeracy, which is highly valued by trainees on the programmes. However, retention, particularly on the numeracy programme, has previously been low.

Mentors are highly valued by the majority of trainees for the specialist support and knowledge they provide. Nevertheless, they receive minimal training and do not have good access to course resources or a forum to discuss practice. The college does not utilise sufficiently the experience of mentors, or other stakeholders, in evaluating the course. A recent merger and major restructuring has had an impact on the implementation of quality improvement actions on the course. Nevertheless, managers and staff are committed to maintaining and improving the quality of provision.



The programme's virtual learning environment (VLE) is underdeveloped. It is mostly a repository for course materials and is not well used by trainees. The college VLE is undergoing major developments, which will enable the programme to use it as its main communication tool.

The key strengths are:

- the flexible programme to meet the needs of individual trainees, which also provides a number of options in gaining a specialist diploma in literacy, ESOL or numeracy
- good promotion of the programme to widen participation to those groups underrepresented in the lifelong learning sector
- good support for trainees, particularly by helping some trainees to meet the required teaching hours demanded by the programme, to enable them to complete the programme successfully
- trainees with good subject specialist knowledge, which they use effectively in their teaching to engage learners
- well-marked work, with clear feedback on assignments indicating how criteria are met and how improvements can be made
- well-qualified and committed staff and managers, who following a major restructuring are working hard to maintain and improve the quality of provision.

The key areas for improvement are:

- Continue to improve retention on the programme, particularly in the specialist diplomas, by providing the study skills support to enable all trainees to complete the course successfully
- improve the use of the VLE as a forum for the sharing of good practice for teachers and mentors so that trainees, and their learners, can benefit from interactive activities to enhance their learning
- strongly promote the use of the ILP as a means of closely monitoring individual trainee's progress in meeting the course requirements and improving their teaching
- strengthen mentor arrangements by ensuring that mentors receive training in the role and by giving clear guidance on how trainees can best receive subject specialist observations and support
- improve the use of the views of trainees, mentors and employers in evaluating the programme to inform self-assessment and quality improvement planning.



As explained in the inspection guidance, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next inspection.

Yours sincerely

William Baidoe-Ansah
Her Majesty's Inspector

