



Milton Keynes College

Better
education
and care

Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published TBC	Provider reference 130609
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Introduction

Milton Keynes College was inspected in March 2004. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory or better in all areas inspected, except in science and mathematics, humanities, ESOL and hairdressing work-based learning which were found to be less than satisfactory. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is less than satisfactory within two years of the original inspection. If inadequate areas of learning or aspects of provision remain inadequate following re-inspection, inspectors will continue to monitor progress at annual assessment visits, but the areas will not be re-graded. They will be re-inspected during the full college inspection.

The less than satisfactory curriculum and WBL areas were re-inspected on 28 February and 1 March 2006. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
ESOL	4	3

Context

The college offers a range of ESOL courses from pre-entry to level 2 at the main site, at employers' premises and in community venues. The area is led by the director of skills for life and operationally managed by the ESOL team leader. There are 807 learners on ESOL courses, the vast majority of whom are adult learners.

Strengths

- improvement in achievements and progression to mainstream courses
- strong student support
- good links with employers and community organisations
- effective monitoring of the area to secure improvements

Areas for improvement

- insufficient use of learner information to plan teaching
- narrow range of teaching strategies
- little use of ILP targets to help learners' achievement of long term goals

Achievement and standards

There have been steady improvements in achievements since the last inspection on most courses. Effective action has been taken to raise achievements on level 1 and 2 courses and alternative accreditation has been introduced. Pass rates for level 1 and 2 speaking and listening in December 2005 improved by 12 percentage points. There is good progression between levels on ESOL courses and on to main stream vocational courses. In year retention is high at 97%. Attendance is regularly monitored and attendance for 2005/06 is 78.2% against a target of 80%.

Quality of provision

Most teaching and learning is satisfactory. Learners are actively engaged in a variety of activities. Most tutors have detailed information about their learners and their needs but this information is not always well used to set different or more challenging tasks for more able learners.

Some teaching is led too much by the tutor, with an over-emphasis on grammar activities. Not enough consideration is given to the context or real lives of learners. For example, many employed students did not get an opportunity to develop reading skills through work related topics but worked on general topics or quizzes which were too easy for them.

Individual learning plans are used to support learners achieve their long term goals. However, insufficient use is made of short term targets to help learners take steps to achieve their long term goals. Short term objectives do not support the long term aims identified by the learners. In some instances, all learners write the same long term goals despite their individual aspirations. There is little room for learners to write about individual learning tasks. The individual learning plan is used as a class record of work.

Tutors are very supportive and committed to their learners. Good guidance procedures and interviews, recently introduced, help learners access the wider vocational curriculum.

There are good links with employers and community organisations. Many off-site courses are delivered on employer premises. The provision is responsive to community and employer needs.

Leadership and management

Strategic and operational management of ESOL is effective and has secured improvements since the last inspection. There are standard procedures and documentation in the community and at the main site. Internal observation of teaching and learning is robust and helps teachers to improve. Staff value

support from experienced tutors in teaching and learning. The mentoring system is useful for new staff. Communication is effective through regular meetings. The self-assessment report is largely accurate and correctly identifies areas for improvements.

WBL area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Hairdressing work based learning	4	3

Context

Modern apprenticeships are offered in hairdressing. There are 62 apprentices and 4 advanced apprentices.

Strengths

- well planned key skills teaching and assessment
- effective management of work-based learning leading to improved progress of learners

Areas for improvement

- low apprenticeship framework achievement

Achievement and standards

Timely and overall success rates for apprenticeships are low and achievement of apprenticeship frameworks is poor. Learners joining the programme in 2005/06 have made good progress towards the achievement of key skills qualifications and have made satisfactory progress towards the NVQ hairdressing.

The development of learners' professional and practical skills is satisfactory. Assignments are well presented and demonstrate appropriate knowledge for level of the course. Improvements in assessment planning and monitoring have resulted in better progress of second year learners although achievement of NVQ units is less than satisfactory for their stage in the course.

Quality of provision

Most theory and key skills lessons are well planned and include a variety of activities to engage and motivate learners. Individual progress towards learning outcomes is planned and reviewed with each learner in key skills lessons. Assessment is well planned and effective in improving progress. Annual assessment plans have been devised to cover practical, theory and key skills assessments. Assignments successfully integrate or contextualise key skills and progress through key skills units is closely monitored.

Individual assessment requirements are discussed with employers during reviews. Employers are encouraged to provide appropriate clients to meet learner's needs. Regular reviews are effective in providing support and setting targets for progress.

Leadership and management

The change in the management of work-based learning is having a positive impact on framework completion and progress towards the NVQ. Effective action has reduced the number of learners continuing beyond the planned programme end date. Increased assessment opportunities, better planning and monitoring have improved learners' progress towards framework qualifications. Communications within the team and with employers are effective.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Humanities	4	3

Context

The department offers five GCE A-level courses, five AS level courses and two GCSE courses. There is a full-time day time Access course, and one part-time evening course, with alternative start dates. There are 85 learners on full-time GCSE and A level programmes, and 8 part-time learners on fast-track A levels. There are 68 full-time and 39 part-time Access learners.

Strengths

- good and improving pass rates in AS level history
- high pass rates maintained by learners on Access courses with good progression to HE
- effective strategies to engage and motivate learners
- good use of ICT in teaching

Areas for improvement

- declining retention and achievement in AS and A level Sociology
- insufficient planning for individual learning needs

Achievement and standards

Pass rates are excellent on Access programmes, and 95% of learners progress to university. Achievement is mostly satisfactory on GCSE and AS and A-level subjects. Retention and pass rates have improved significantly in AS level history, and pass rates have improved in GCSE sociology. Pass and retention rates are below average in AS and A level sociology and philosophy.

Most A-level pass rates are low. Where pass rates are higher than average, for example, in government and politics, very small numbers of learners take these courses. Recently introduced systems to measure the results of learners against their prior achievement indicate that most learners make the progress expected. Current in-year retention figures show an improvement when compared with a similar point last year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some interesting and varied lessons which engaged the interest of learners and encouraged them to make progress. In a few lessons, however, individual learning needs are not sufficiently considered, which results in learning opportunities being missed and unsatisfactory progress. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) resources and staff development has improved and is now satisfactory. ICT is now used effectively in lessons, both as a teaching aid, and to help learners access a wider range of resources and develop their independent research skills. Learners' marked work shows structured and useful feedback, but does not always include a grade.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Arrangements for the collaborative provision with a local school have improved, with jointly planned timetables and effective liaison between school and college staff. Self-assessment is now satisfactory, with full involvement of all teaching staff, although learners' views are not represented in the humanities review. Regular course meetings now take place. Clear actions arising from with monthly team meetings and termly school liaison meetings are recorded and monitored.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Science and maths	4	4

Context

AS and A level subjects are available in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, psychology, environmental science and GCSE subjects in psychology, mathematics, science and human physiology and health. Subjects may be studied full-time, part-time and by distance learning. At the time of inspection there were 197 learners aged 16 to 18 and 96 adult learners studying courses in science and mathematics.

Strengths

- high success rates for AS mathematics
- learners enjoy and make good progress in their lessons
- good support for learners who need extra help from classroom teachers

Areas for improvement

- low success rates for many AS and A level subjects particularly in AS environmental science
- lack of differentiated activities to stretch the more able learners
- insufficient use of value added data to drive improvement for individual learners
- ineffective monitoring of the impact of improvement strategies
- insufficient breadth of provision to meet all learners' needs in science

Achievement and standards

Students' achievements are generally unsatisfactory. Success rates for GCSE subjects are satisfactory but for many AS and A level subjects they are below the national average for similar colleges. Retention rates for AS and A levels show little sign of improvement over the past three years and they have declined for psychology, environmental science, biology and chemistry. AS mathematics retention and pass rates are good. The small number of students completing the GCE A-level physics and chemistry courses were all successful.

The standard of work in lessons is satisfactory. Students complete tasks set competently and experimental work effectively reinforces theory. Psychology students are keen to ask questions and engage in classroom debate. Mathematics students show a good appreciation of mathematical concepts and use technical terms correctly with confidence.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Science teachers are knowledgeable and communicate their enthusiasm for their subject. Psychology is taught well and a wide range of teaching methods are used to develop understanding and consolidate learning. Most mathematics lessons are enlivened by the use of ILT, interactive white-boards, mini-white boards and well-developed learning material and learners participate enthusiastically in a range of activities. In some science lessons activities are insufficiently varied and the more able students are not challenged adequately. This was a weakness in the previous inspection.

Students' work is marked regularly and helpful comments are generally included to indicate where improvements can be made. The use of individual target setting is under-developed and students are not always clear about their targets. However, support for students from individual teachers is good.

Leadership and management

Managers have introduced a number of improvement strategies but these have had insufficient impact on raising standards. Many learners have benefited from preparatory course to prepare them more adequately for AS-level study in mathematics but this is not offered in science.

The self-assessment process lacks rigour. While subject and course team meetings are held regularly and actions are followed through, the impact of actions is not monitored. Good specialist equipment and resources promote learning. Managers have engaged in effective collaboration to increase the breadth of AS and A level courses available.