



Queen Mary's College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Queen Mary's College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Stephen Sheedy
Address of college:	Cliddesden Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 3HF
Telephone number:	01256 417 500
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Chair of governors:	Andrew Harding
Unique reference number:	130700
Name of lead inspector:	Paul Joyce, HMI
Dates of inspection:	13 – 17 March 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Queen Mary's College is a large sixth form college situated in the town of Basingstoke in north east Hampshire. It is the main provider of full-time general education courses in the area for students aged 16-18. A local further education college is the main provider of vocational programmes. The college recruits learners from the Basingstoke and Deane areas and from the Hart and Test Valley district. Most full-time students are recruited from 15 partner and special schools, nine of which, together with the college, are members of the Basingstoke Consortium of Schools and Colleges. Pass rates in the region for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations are below the national average as are post-16 participation rates in education.
2. The college offers courses in 10 of the 15 sector subject areas with the majority of provision being at level 3, although there is a growing number of courses at level 2. A small number of courses are offered at level 1 and the college also provides education for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. At the time of the inspection there were 2,154 full-time learners and 718 part-time learners attending the college. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is 4.6% which is higher than the proportion in the local population.
3. The college's mission is 'to build a learning community in Basingstoke' and it is committed to widening participation and raising the expectations and aspirations of current and potential learners. A number of courses are delivered at various community venues and the college is engaged with an extensive range of partners and community organisations.

Scope of the inspection

4. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievements and standards	Satisfactory: grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

5. Learners' achievements are satisfactory overall. Pass, retention and hence success rates for courses at levels 2 and 3 are close to national averages, although retention and success rates on General Certificate of Education (GCE) AS level courses are below average. Pass and success rates at level 1 are significantly below average. Learners make at least satisfactory progress and some achieve higher grades than predicted by their GCSE performance.
6. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good and students enjoy their lessons. There is an extensive programme of teaching observations that effectively assures quality. Learners benefit from effective use of good quality teaching and learning resources. Punctuality to lessons is poor.
7. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. Strong links have been formed with local schools and with the local community. The college has been successful in engaging with learners who would not traditionally participate in further education. Curriculum and enrichment activities are well matched to meet the needs and interests of learners. The college have identified that opportunities for engagement with the world of work whilst improved, do not meet the needs of all learners.
8. Learners receive good advice, support and guidance. Personal support and guidance for individuals is very effective and is valued by students. However, group tutorials are less effective and do not always meet the needs of different learners.
9. Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers set a clear strategic direction for the college. Quality assurance arrangements, including self-assessment, are effective. Managers are well supported and have benefited from comprehensive training to undertake their roles. Financial management is outstanding and has enabled the college to improve accommodation and resources. The college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

10. The college's capacity to improve is good. Quality assurance systems are robust and there is an extensive programme of observation to assure the quality of teaching and learning. A thorough self-assessment process is supported by appropriate action plans and targets to further improve. These are effectively monitored by college managers and, in most cases, action plans contain specific and measurable targets to inform improvement. Outcomes from the self-assessment process are accurate and the college has correctly identified its main strengths and areas for improvement. Governors exercise

good stewardship of capital projects to ensure they are completed on time and to budget.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

11. The college has made good efforts to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. A detailed post inspection action plan was produced and these actions have been effectively monitored. Retention and pass rates for the college have improved on some courses although on others rates remain low. Student attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. The use of information learning technology (ILT) by teachers and students is more comprehensive and this has had a positive impact on learning. The tutorial process has been strengthened although the college recognises the need for further improvements to the group tutorial programme. The quality of the estate has improved since the last inspection. Progress has been slower in addressing the punctuality of students.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- effective strategies to widen participation
- good advice, guidance and personal support for learners
- good strategic leadership and management
- comprehensive management training programme

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- low retention and success rates on GCE AS level courses
- low pass and success rates on level 1 courses
- poor student punctuality at lessons

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

12. The overall success rate for full-time level 3 courses, representing 80% of college provision, is at the national average. Success rates for level 2 courses, representing 9% of provision, have improved year on year and are now at the national average. However, success rates for the smaller provision at level 1 are unsatisfactory. Pass rates for courses at level 2 and 3 are broadly in line with national averages; those at level 1 are below average and declined further during 2004-05. Key skill qualification pass rates are low although they are improving.
13. Value added measures of achievements, which compare students' GCE A and AS level performance with their GCSE grades, present a mixed picture. Overall, learners make at least satisfactory progress with some learners making good progress and achieving well. However, there are considerable variations in individual subject performance.
14. Retention overall at level 2 and 3 remains stable at around the national average. However, retention rates on GCE AS level courses are low. Retention is adversely affected by students who drop AS level subjects during the year. Retention rates for adults on level 1 courses are very low.
15. The college thoroughly analyses the performance of different groups of students and there are no significant variations in achievement between male and female students or learners from different minority ethnic groups. The college has recognised many of the main strengths and areas for development relating to achievement in its self-assessment report.
16. The punctuality of learners to lessons, identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection, remains a cause for concern. Most students enjoy their lessons, and the standard of their work is at least satisfactory with some work being of a good standard.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

17. Teaching and learning are good. The college carries out an extensive number of lesson observations; reports on performance are clear and constructive. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and areas for improvement identified by the college in its self-assessment of teaching and learning.
18. Most teachers are enthusiastic, and have received extensive staff development to help improve performance. Teaching resources are good and are used effectively. Many teachers use questioning techniques productively to check students' learning, and to encourage them to think and develop their

- reasoning further. In some lessons ILT is used to good effect. However, in a few lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and teachers fail to challenge learners sufficiently. Many lessons observed by inspectors had a disjointed or delayed start due to the late arrival of a significant proportion of students. Teachers did not always challenge this lateness. Despite this, most students contribute well in class and the majority of lessons are well planned with a variety of teaching methods used. Students enjoy these lessons and good progress is made.
19. Key skills are effectively developed in information technology (IT) and in communication. In IT key skill lessons students make satisfactory progress in completing portfolio and examination requirements. However, in communication, whilst examination results are satisfactory, students make slow progress in completing the coursework requirements. Students are set regular homework. It is well marked in most cases, with helpful feedback for improvement. Moderation and standardisation is completed appropriately. Staff make very effective use of an electronic database for monitoring and recording information including the progress of learners and the results of assessment. Arrangements for identifying students who have additional learning needs are effective and the support provided is good. Assessment is well planned, frequent and fair.
 20. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. Strategies to increase participation and raise young people's aspirations have been successful. Students value the welcoming and friendly atmosphere. A growing number of learners are drawn from more disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities play a full part in college life.
 21. A wide range of courses meets the needs and interests of learners. Whilst the majority of students study at level 3, there is increasing provision at level 1 and 2. This has improved opportunities for young people who have not traditionally remained in learning after school. Flexible programmes of study allow students to combine vocational and academic subjects and follow courses at different levels. Progression from one level to the next is improving and many students enter higher education after completing their studies at the college.
 22. Through the Basingstoke Consortium there is extensive collaboration with local schools and education partners. The college's Science Centre provides a diverse range of activities for school pupils across all key stages. The college has a good understanding of the area and is responsive to the needs of the local community. For example, essential skills provision has been enhanced through new courses in family learning and adult literacy, although this work is at an early stage of development.
 23. Students participate in a wide range of enrichment activities. They have good access to high quality recreation and leisure facilities. However, social areas are restricted and sometimes crowded. An active students' union makes a

positive contribution to cross-college events and young people are represented on the governing body. Safe and healthy life-styles are promoted well throughout the college. The programme and range of work experience is increasing although opportunities for engagement with the world of work are not fully developed in all curriculum areas. This has been recognised in the self-assessment report.

24. Guidance and support for students is good. Guidance on entry is effective, based on good links with local schools. Full-time learners are very well supported by their personal tutors. There is a wide range of support services provided centrally by the college. Students have high regard for the support they receive. However, the systems of support have yet to impact significantly on some key performance indicators such as pass rates and punctuality.
25. Initial assessment procedures are satisfactory and additional learning support is well used and appreciated by students. In 2004-05, more than three quarters of students receiving this support met or exceeded their target minimum grades. Support is tailored to individual needs and is arranged promptly. However, the setting of targets and the recording of support and progress lacks sufficient detail in some instances.
26. A high priority is given to promoting the 'Every Child Matters' themes embodied in the Children Act 2004. There is a strong focus in the college on being healthy. Issues such as drug awareness, smoking and managing anxiety are covered in the tutorial programme. A drop-in sexual health clinic is available. Sporting facilities and opportunities for team sports are very good. The college café offers a range of healthy eating options.
27. Advice and guidance on progression to higher education is extensive. There is less emphasis on job seeking skills in the tutorial system, although the Connexions adviser provides advice for a diverse range of careers. The college recognise in their self-assessment report the need to further improve the group tutorial programme and to extend links with employers and the world of work.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

28. Leadership and management are good. Governors, the principal and the senior management team work closely together to develop the strategic direction of the college. There are very effective links with a wide range of strategic and curriculum partners. Staff are aware of the college's mission and are committed to it.
29. Arrangements to improve quality are good. The college sets targets at all levels from individual teachers to the principal. Data shows that in many of the key areas, performance has been maintained whilst the number of students and the breadth of provision have increased. Progress against targets is monitored regularly. A robust and accurate self-assessment process is

underpinned by comprehensive lesson observations and reviews of each course.

30. The promotion of equality and diversity issues are satisfactory. However, there is insufficient reference to diversity in many schemes of work, lesson plans or self-assessment reports. It is not clear how the curriculum is being used to prepare students for life in a multicultural society.
31. Staff are sufficient in number and many teachers are very well qualified and experienced in their subject area. Senior and middle managers have benefited from a very effective leadership and management training programme. Resources are good. The college has built a number of new buildings that are of high quality.
32. Governors play a significant part in the life of the college and discharge their responsibilities effectively. The college complies with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act and has clear policies on equal opportunities, race relations, bullying and harassment. There is an appropriate child protection policy and staff and governors are aware of their particular responsibilities. Financial management is outstanding and the college provides good value for money.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	02/03	137	60	60	0	374	49	55	-6
	03/04	257	64	67	-3	211	47	57	-10
	04/05	397	56	*	*	150	35	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	6	67	66	1	1	100	*	*
	03/04	12	92	70	22	0			
	04/05	9	67	*	*	0			
NVQs	02/03	0				0			
	03/04	0				0			
	04/05	0				0			
Other	02/03	131	60	59	1	373	49	55	-7
	03/04	245	63	66	-3	211	47	58	-11
	04/05	387	56	*	*	147	35	*	*

* Information not available at time of publication.

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	02/03	811	56	70	-14	238	55	52	3
	03/04	752	67	74	-7	268	55	55	0
	04/05	553	74	*	*	247	57	*	*
GCSEs	02/03	406	69	74	-5	155	51	58	-7
	03/04	429	71	77	-6	165	54	62	-8
	04/05	405	74	*	*	117	56	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	100	62	68	-6	0			
	03/04	98	83	73	10	0			
	04/05	115	78	*	*	0			
NVQs	02/03	0				0			
	03/04	0				0			
	04/05	4	25	*	*	7	86	*	*
Other	02/03	305	36	58	-22	83	61	49	12
	03/04	225	54	68	-14	103	57	52	5
	04/05	59	71	*	*	122	57	*	*

* Information not available at time of publication.

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	02/03	5454	73	79	-7	349	50	57	-7
	03/04	6180	74	80	-6	266	45	56	-11
	04/05	6785	75	*	*	341	55	*	*
A/A2 Levels	02/03	1799	87	89	-3	106	60	73	-13
	03/04	1764	89	91	-2	79	65	75	-10
	04/05	2007	89	*	*	91	76	*	*
AS Levels	02/03	3412	67	75	-8	207	50	55	-5
	03/04	4179	69	76	-7	145	46	52	-6
	04/05	4475	69	*	*	179	50	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	224	56	63	-7	10	50	*	*
	03/04	158	52	68	-16	1	0	*	*
	04/05	293	67	*	*	1	0	*	*
NVQs	02/03	0				0			
	03/04	0				0			
	04/05	0				10	60	*	*
Other	02/03	19	5	63	-57	26	8	55	-47
	03/04	79	67	63	4	41	7	52	-45
	04/05	7	14	*	*	68	46	*	*

* Information not available at time of publication.