



Doncaster College

Better  
education  
and care

# Re-inspection report

Audience  
Post-sixteen

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## Introduction

Doncaster College was inspected in November 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 the provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD) which was 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 area was re-inspected on 31 October and 1 November 2006. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
SLDD	4	3

### Context

There are three main programme routes within Foundation Studies. There is a two-year Skills for Working Life and Life Skills programme at entry level catering for 48 16 to 18 year olds and 5 adults; a youth access programme at level 1 with 40 learners aged 16 to 18; and an adult programme with 25 full-time and 60 part-time learners. Learners on the youth access programme study core and vocational options in discrete and integrated settings.

### *Strengths*

- *Effective collaboration between special schools and the college*
- *Good retention and achievement on some vocational programmes*
- *Effective coaching and mentoring to raise teaching standards*

### *Areas for improvement*

- *Inadequate monitoring of individuals' progress*
- *Insufficient contextualising of individual targets*
- *Insufficient embedding of Skills for Life*

### Achievement and standards

Retention and achievement rates are high on GCSE art, Open College Network (OCN) business administration and law and OCN literacy courses. Retention and achievement rates are low on some non-certificated programmes and the course leading to the Certificate in Skills for Working Life, but there are few learners on these courses. Attendance has improved

from 82 to 85% following the introduction of a register for learners identified as being 'at risk'.

Standards of learning are satisfactory or better in practical lessons but opportunities are missed to record skills development. For example, in a drama lesson, learners displayed highly effective listening skills when sharing their storyboards but this was not recorded.

#### Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is good access to information and communications technology (ICT) in lessons and it is well used but literacy and numeracy development is not sufficiently embedded in subject activities. Learning support assistants are not always deployed well in lessons.

Initial assessment procedures have been revised and improved. Individual learning plans have been re-designed and improved. Target setting has improved but some targets remain imprecise. Progress is still insufficiently monitored. Individual targets are not related to, or reinforced through, lesson activities.

#### Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some good aspects. The area has been re-structured and additional curriculum managers have been appointed. Links with local schools are well-developed and transition arrangements are effective. Coaching and mentoring strategies have been used effectively to improve teaching and learning standards. Self assessment is satisfactory and progress has been made on developing curriculum options at entry and level 1.

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College:           Doncaster  
Date of visit:               31 October and 1 November 2006

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

### Achievement and standards

Has achievement at GCE AS and A level improved in 2006?

- Unvalidated data show that the success rate has dropped from 58% in 2005 to 50% in 2006. This is 15% below the national average. The retention rate has also fallen slightly. Psychology, law and sociology performed particularly badly.

Has the college begun to use value added data to improve learners' performance?

- The college is using an internal system to set minimum target grades but the formula being used for calculating the target grade is out of date (likely to be setting low targets). The system lacks sophistication and does not produce target grades for individual subjects.

Students' progress is being monitored against their target grade. However, the system is not being used to monitor the performance of different staff and subjects, although it has been used in the past.

Is there further evidence of improvement in work-based learning achievement?

- Overall, there is a mixed picture regarding success rates in work-based learning. Using the new measures of success data for period 12, success rates in health, public services and care have declined each year for the last 3 years. Engineering success rates have also declined each year over last 3 years. In 2005/06, construction success rates improved to 50%. Retail success rates have remained steady at between 40 and 50%. In 2005/06, business administration success rates maintained steady at 64%.

Overall, the combined success rates exceed the national averages. Some individual programme areas are achieving high success rates, for

example, accountancy is very good at 86% but others are poor, for example, hospitality is only 17%.

Did retention rates improve last year?

- The overall retention rate has remained at 86 to 87% for the last three years. Retention rates on level 2 courses are above average but rates are below average on GCE AS and A-level programmes for 16 -18 year olds.

Does the latest achievement data indicate an improvement?

- It is too early to draw firm conclusions about achievement rates as not all the data are on the system.

## Quality of provision

Has the lesson observation system been fully embedded?

- The system for lesson observations is still under development following the re-structuring of the college and a move to new premises. The focus of attention has been on establishing a sound starting point with realistic observation grades that reflect the last inspection findings. Curriculum areas have identified observers and they have been trained. The observers speak highly of the training that they have been given and they are being supported well by experienced staff. Systems are not yet clear regarding the supporting and monitoring arrangements for staff following an observation that was not good enough.

Is there any evidence to show that the quality of teaching and learning has improved?

- The lesson observation cycle has only just begun so there is no evidence available.

Has there been an increase in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support learning following the move to the new premises?

- There have been technical problems with the ICT systems in the new building; this has limited the use of ICT in teaching and learning. Equipment has been installed in teaching rooms and staff have either been trained or are currently undergoing training in the use of ICT in teaching and learning. There are interactive whiteboards in 55

classrooms and digital projectors in over 200 teaching rooms. In some subject areas students report extensive use of ICT in lessons but on other courses only limited use has been made of ICT.

What has been done to increase the uptake of learning support in vocational areas? Any early signs of improvement?

- Across the college as a whole an increasing proportion of students who have been diagnosed as needing learning support are taking up the offer. The percentage has gone up from 33% in 2004/05 to 45% in 2005/06 but this is still low. It is too early to see an overall increase in the uptake of learning support in vocational areas. In some vocational areas such as hairdressing, where learning support is integrated into the main programme, the rate is high. In other areas such as construction, where help has been offered via discrete workshops, the uptake has been very low. A learning mentor has started working with the construction team and the learning support manager to make learning support more attractive to construction students.

Any further improvements to the tutorial provision for 16-18 year olds?

- On-going plans are in place for further development of the tutorial programme for 16-18 year old students. Induction guidelines provide staff with detailed information in an attempt to standardise the induction process. The Personal Professional Development (PPD) team leaders provide training and mentoring for new tutors. The college makes use of an induction questionnaire (SPOC) to analyse impact and effectiveness.

Specialist software for an electronic ILP has been purchased but not yet implemented. Plans are in place for external consultants to observe 20 tutorials by the end of this term. A review of where and how the tutorial process could be self assessed has been completed.

Has the audit of tutorial provision for adults been completed? Have any changes been made as a result of the audit?

- A general review of tutorials for adult students has been completed. Adults on both part- and full-time programmes report that tutorials are provided and are effective in providing a means to discuss and identify areas for improvement. They say that action is taken as a result.

## Leadership and management

Is the college going to reach its recruitment targets for 16 – 18 year olds? For adults?

- The college has already exceeded the full-time 16-18 recruitment target by 46 students and it is expected that this number will rise by a further 150. The college is confident that it will meet the reduced part-time 16 -18 target when the students enrol for 'additional courses'.

It is too early to say whether the adult targets will be met.

Has the quality system been strengthened since the last AAV?

- The quality assurance system has been strengthened since the last AAV and has been effective in bringing about some improvements. The new system is not yet embedded across the college and is not integrated with other schedules and systems. Not all the service areas are currently included in the quality cycle. There is no formal system or schedule for the monitoring of action plans and target setting is not sufficiently robust.

The college's self-evaluation demonstrates that the college broadly knows what it has to do to improve. However, senior managers do not always hold middle management to account.

Are the current leadership difficulties impacting on the learner's experience?

- The disruption at management level has had no impact on the learners' experience according to the students.

What is the financial position of the college?

- The college remains in financial category C and in the LLSC's risk assessment of the college 'finance' is identified as a high risk. The deficit budget remains a restraining factor.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:  
No

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

- Performance management is not sufficiently robust.

The appraisal system is under-developed and even teachers in the area that is being re-inspected have not been appraised since the last inspection. Available data are not being used to tackle non-compliance and under-performance. For example, value added information highlights differences in performance between teachers and subjects but is not being used as a means of improving performance and two subject teams repeatedly fail to submit registers yet this has not been addressed.