



Southampton City College

Better
education
and care

Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published March 2007	Provider reference 130696
--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------------

Introduction

Southampton City College was inspected in December 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 work-based learning (WBL) construction and WBL engineering 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 WBL Construction and WBL Engineering areas were re-inspected on 14/15 November 2006. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

WBL area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Construction	4	3

Context

The college offers a wide range of provision of both craft and technician courses at entry, foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Current programmes include painting and decorating, plumbing, heating and ventilation, carpentry and joinery, brickwork and electrical installation. There are also national certificates in construction, civil engineering and building engineering services. At the time of re-inspection there were 70 advanced apprentices and 32 apprentices.

Strengths

- *Good individual learning plans*
- *Good workshop accommodation for brickwork*

Areas for improvement

- *Poor punctuality*
- *Framework achievement rates for advanced apprentices*
- *Feedback from teachers in portfolios*

Achievement and standards

Framework achievements in work-based learning have improved and are now good for apprentices and satisfactory for advanced apprentices. For

advanced apprentices, the percentage of learners achieving the full framework has increased from 6% in 2004/05 to 37% in 2005/06. For apprentices, the improvement has been more dramatic, rising from 4% in 2003/04 to 67% in 2005/06. There is evidence of further improvement in 2006/07. Most learners achieve key skills at the beginning of their programme. The quality of work observed both on site and in college workshops was satisfactory. Punctuality is poor: in one lesson only a third of learners were present at the start of the lesson.

Quality of provision

Lessons are well planned and learners' individual learning plans are used well. The use of interactive white boards has improved the variety of teaching. Visual aids are effectively used to enable learners to identify components. Most classrooms are new or have been recently re-furnished and provide a stimulating learning environment. Accommodation for brickwork is good and serves teachers and learners well. The teaching of theory has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The quality of practical work produced by learners is satisfactory. The development of portfolios is good although marked work had little in the way of comment from the teacher which would help the learner to improve.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of work-based learning are satisfactory. There is evidence that increasing numbers of learners achieve their framework. There has been a number of appointments of assessors and reviewers which is helping learners achieve on time. Work-based assessors work closely with curriculum staff and training and assessment are well coordinated. Newly appointed staff are well supported. The difficulty in recruiting plumbing staff and the lack of an assessor has prevented plumbing trainees from achieving their qualification. These staff shortages have recently been remedied but learners are not yet able to have their qualifications validated.

WBL area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Engineering	4	3

Context

The college provides a range of courses in marine, motor vehicle, mechanical and electrical/electronic engineering. Courses are provided for apprentices

and advanced apprentices through work-based learning. Courses include national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3 and national certificates and diplomas in engineering. Marine engineering training is undertaken at the college's Woolston site on the river Itchen. At the time of re-inspection there were 98 advanced apprentices and 48 apprentices.

Strengths

- *Good framework success rates on apprenticeships*
- *Good resources for practical work in motor vehicle engineering*

Areas for improvement

- *Low success rates on advanced apprenticeships*

Achievement and standards

Overall success rates for learners on apprenticeship frameworks have improved significantly since the previous inspection. The most marked improvement has been for apprenticeships, where the success rate has increased from zero in 2003/2004 to 55% in 2005/2006, which is above the national average. Improvement in advanced apprenticeships has not been so marked and the success rate for 2005/2006 of 34% is still below the national average. Early indications for the period 2006/2007 show that the rate of improvement is being maintained. Most full-time and part-time learners are progressing well. Students are industrious and demonstrate high levels of practical skill in the workplace.

Quality of education and training

There has been a significant increase in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) which has improved teaching, particularly in motor vehicle studies. Motor vehicle teachers are now making very effective use of two specialist software packages to teach students at all levels. Teachers use the packages imaginatively to support whole-class lessons and individual tutorial sessions.

Since the last inspection the motor vehicle department has moved into new purpose-built workshops. The new workshops provide a very good environment for learning and are well equipped with modern vehicle servicing and repair bays and a good range of light and heavy vehicles and commercial vans. The workshops now provide a safe learning environment for learners. Staff ensure that high standards of health and safety are observed with a strong emphasis on the correct use of personal protective equipment.

Learners' targets and the monitoring of their progress are effectively managed. Progress reviews are now satisfactory with effective meetings between training officers, learners and employers. Training officers set realistic targets that are agreed and shared with learners and employers. Teachers confidently and efficiently track the progress of work-based learners through their frameworks.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of work-based learning are satisfactory. Since the last inspection managers have made considerable progress in eliminating the weaknesses that had been identified in work-based learning. They have increased staffing levels for assessment and verification and for workplace reviews. Staff now recognise the importance of timely and effective student progress reviews and their impact on framework completion rates.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Southampton City College
Date of visit: November 14/15 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

What are the success rates for 2005/06? What areas/levels/ages in particular have shown improvement or decline and why? Have the new measures to improve work-based learners' full framework completion rates, referred to in the last annual assessment visit feedback letter, borne fruit? Has the college achieved its own target of 35% framework completion for 2005/06?

- In 2004/05 success rates on long courses for students aged 16 to 18 improved to 62%, just below the national average; they were above average for courses at level 1, but below for levels 2 and 3. For adults, of whom there are twice as many full-time equivalent students, success rates rose to 70%, which is well above the national average; they were particularly good at level 1 (15 points above the national average) and average at level 3. For both age groups, retention rates were less secure than pass rates, although for adults they were still above average. There are some significant variations between curriculum areas: success rates are high for courses in information and communications technology, and preparation for life and work, but low for engineering, for both age groups. There are also some areas in which the variation is marked between age groups: in construction, for example, students aged 16 to 18 have a success rate well above the national average, but for adult construction students the rate is just below average; the reverse picture is true for courses in health and social care.
- In 2005/06, for which college data were not yet quite complete at the time of the visit, success rates on long courses for students aged 16 to 18 indicate decline at all three levels, and markedly so at level 2. Retention rates (for which the data for 2005/06 are complete) for these students have risen at level 1 and remained steady at levels 2 and 3. Pass rates (data not yet complete) indicate decline, especially at levels 2 and 3. Success rates for adult students (data not yet complete) have risen at level 1 but indicate decline at level 2. Retention rates (data complete)

have risen at all three levels but pass rates (data not yet complete) indicate decline at all three levels, especially at level 3.

- The college's overall success rates for achievement of the full qualification framework on all apprenticeships have improved over the past three years, from 10% in 2003/04 to 39% in 2005/06, surpassing the target of 35%. This is still eleven percentage points below the national average which has also risen, but less dramatically, since 2003/04. Timely success rates have also improved to 16% but remain well below the national average of 30%. The overall success rate for apprenticeships is better than that for advanced apprenticeships, and is now at the national average. Key skills are now assessed earlier in learners' programmes and they are contextualised within assignments. An efficient tracking system for monitoring learners' progress is now in place.
- The college has monitored its work-based learning achievement using the original methods of calculation and has only adopted the new measures of calculating success for this year. Whilst this has been successful in enabling managers to identify improving trends, it has not provided sufficient information on the progress the college is making relative to national data.

What do value-added and distance-travelled measures show about the relative progress made by students?

- Value-added numbers are too small to provide any meaningful picture of the progress made by students from their levels of attainment on entry to the college. Distance-travelled data, which are also limited in scope, show that overall students make average progress: those who take GCSEs in English and mathematics make less than average progress; those who take national vocational qualifications (NVQ) at level 2 make better than average progress. The college intends to explore both internal and local methods of calculating and measuring the progress made by students from their prior levels of attainment.

Quality of education and training

What does the college's teaching and learning observation programme report for 2005/06?

- In 2004/05 the college reported 85% of lessons seen were good or better, and only 1% were unsatisfactory. The college acknowledged (in the self-assessment report for 2004/05, re-iterated in the annual assessment visit in 2005) that this figure represented substantial over-grading, and a more rigorous scheme was to be introduced in 2005/06.

The new programme for 2005/06 reports that of 234 graded lesson observations, 57% were good or outstanding (grades 1 or 2), 41% were satisfactory (grade 3) and 2% were unsatisfactory (grade 4). The programme is robust in method and realistic in findings. Moderation is effective.

- The college is making good use of two half-time advanced practitioners to support and train teachers and to disseminate good practice. Additionally, learning coaches and external consultants are also being used to good effect to improve the range and level of active learning by students, and to develop their questioning, thinking and research skills.

Are there any new curriculum developments and/changes to accommodation/ facilities?

- Plans have been submitted for phases three to five of the building programme. Work is scheduled to start in November 2007, and includes new accommodation for beauty therapy and for hospitality and catering. Recent areas already improved include art and design, health and social care, engineering, and construction.

How successful and well embedded are the college's 'learning centres', which were being developed as a key strategy to help students acquire independent learning skills as they combined theory and practice?

- Significant learning resources (including some information and communications technology, key skills resources and learning support assistants) are now assigned to curriculum areas in order to contextualise learning as far as possible. These arrangements work well. They contribute to the college's clear focus on trying to improve students' independent learning skills. Increased use of the college's virtual learning environment by staff and students and the strong emphasis put upon students' individual learning plans are also key parts of this strategy.

How widespread and successful is the provision of adult and community learning, and learning provided in direct response to employers' requests?

- The college's funding for adult provision has been cut by around 15% as a result of changing government funding priorities. In response, it has reviewed its curriculum offer and is targeting funding at community-based courses designed to widen participation and meet the essential skills needs of learners. For example, it has separated English as a foreign

language (EFL) from English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and now charges learners in full for EFL provision.

- The college has sought to minimise the impact of funding cuts and sustain some community-based learning by working collaboratively with local community and voluntary organisations, and by seeking alternative sources of funding for special projects to help widen participation. It uses links with trades union learning representatives to raise awareness of essential skills provision and has been successful in securing contracts to deliver this training on local employers' premises.

- The college has been working towards 'action for business' accreditation but failed its assessment in July. The assessment report cited weaknesses in the way the college responds to employers' enquiries, its collection and use of labour market information, its promotional strategy for employers, systems for gathering and sharing information on employer engagement and on the collection and use of information and feedback from employers. The report also identifies as strengths employers' views of the college as good value for money, providing good feedback on employees' progress and being flexible and responsive to employers' needs. The college continues to pursue the accreditation. Each school in the college is set targets for employer engagement, based on income, additional business generated, and the size of the employer base. Managers report that pursuit of 'action for business' has proved a helpful tool for developing the college's engagement of employers and for making staff more aware of its importance.

Leadership and management

Does the self-assessment (SAR) process help the college, at all levels of management, to set itself clear objectives and evaluate its progress towards them? How reliable and efficient is the college's use of data to inform evaluation of performance?

- Self assessment is a thorough and well structured process, informed by all levels of activity and management. The final report is updated and reflected on evaluatively, informing the following year's process. There is a good, clear focus on areas to improve. Data used to highlight strengths are, however, sometimes presented at a summary level in ways which might lead readers to interpret outcomes more positively than they merit.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- none

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

Enrolments

- Enrolments of full-time students aged 16 to 18 grew by 24% in 2005/06, particularly on courses at level 1. The college ascribes this growth to its improved local reputation, better relationships with schools, some re-designed aspects of the curriculum and improved facilities and buildings. College analysis shows that these additional students have come from those who would otherwise have been outside formal education, employment or training; from those who would have been in employment without training; or from an increasing number of students who have progressed internally from other courses. Enrolments of adult students have declined, largely as a result of a 15% cut in the budget for adult students as a response to changing funding priorities. In view of this, the college is very concerned about its capacity to meet the broad needs of the local adult community.

Provision for students aged 14 to 16

- By its wide range of courses run in liaison with local schools, the college is contributing significantly to the increasing staying-on rate for school leavers in Southampton: now 77%, against a national average of 74%. There has been a planned reduction of the numbers of students on these courses, from 608 in 2003/04 to 431 in 2005/06, but these students are now being taught for longer. There are many fewer students doing entry level courses, and more at level 1. Comprehensive communications with participating schools, assessment and aptitude tests, taster and selection days all play a much more prominent part than hitherto in ensuring that students enrol on courses in which they are genuinely and realistically interested. Conversion rates from these courses to full-time courses at the college at age 16 are improving, and stand at around 35%. The college acknowledges that it could improve the monitoring of other destinations of these students.