



Central Sussex College

Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published December 2006	Provider reference 129383
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Introduction

Central Sussex College was formed in August 2005 from the merger of Crawley College and Haywards Heath College. Crawley 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 hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, visual arts and media, literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and work-based learning (WBL) in 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. The re-inspection focused on the provision at the former Crawley College part of Central Sussex College. 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 17 and 18 October 2006. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	4	3

Context

A range of provision from level 1 to level 3 is offered within the curriculum areas of hospitality and catering, travel, sport and public services. At the time of re-inspection, there were 452 students aged 16 to 18 and 121 adult learners enrolled on a range of full- and part-time courses.

Strengths

- much good teaching and learning
- good access to superb practical resources to support sport and public service courses
- good links with industry and the local community.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on the national diploma in sport
- student access to computers
- low achievement of apprenticeship frameworks.

Achievement and standards

Success rates are satisfactory on most qualifications, and have significantly improved since the last inspection. On the level three national vocational qualification courses in food preparation, success rates are consistently high. Clear strategies are now in place to address those areas of the curriculum where students' achievements need to be improved. Success rates on the national diploma in sport are low, and decisive action is being taken to improve provision on this course. Framework achievements for apprentices are low, with only six learners having achieved a full apprenticeship in the last two years.

Quality of provision

Teaching is now satisfactory or better, as the college's own observations show. Students are clear about what they are learning, and teachers skilfully use personal experiences to illuminate lessons. Sport and public service students have very good access to the local purpose built sports centre, which has superb facilities. Students are well-motivated, and their attendance at classes is good. Links with industry and the local community are productive. Local catering and travel and tourism businesses offer valuable work experience to students. Students receive good personal support from teachers and tutorial sessions are effective. Although resources are generally good, students' access to computers for independent learning is limited.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection there have been several changes in management, but the recent appointment of a new head promises a period of stability. There is a clear focus on improving teaching and learning and students' achievements, and teamwork is good. Regular meetings are effective in prioritising actions to improve provision. Satisfactory progress has been made with the weaknesses identified at the last inspection.

Work-based learning area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Engineering WBL	4	3

Context

There are currently 208 students on work-based engineering programmes, of whom 145 are advanced apprentices, and 63 apprentices. Learners follow a range of programmes in engineering, motor vehicle and electrical installation. Most students attend college one day a week for their technical certificate and key skills, and are assessed in the work place for their national vocational qualification (NVQ).

Strengths

- strong action to remedy the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection
- particularly effective team working and communication.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient use of direct observation for assessment in the workplace
- insufficient use of performance targets to drive quality improvement.

Achievement and standards

The overall achievement of frameworks has significantly improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Over the past two years framework achievement has improved from 20% to 52%, which is in line with the national average. More learners are achieving the full framework within the allocated time. The development of students' practical skills continues to be good. Students work in high quality work placements and are supported by very experienced and knowledgeable workplace supervisors.

Quality of provision

The college has maintained the strengths in teaching and workplace training identified at the last inspection, as is reflected in the recent self-assessment report and outcomes from lesson observations. Teaching resources remain good. Assessment of students' performance is satisfactory. However, there is insufficient use of assessment by direct observation in the workplace. The identification of, and support for, students' additional needs is satisfactory, although a small number of students do not receive the support recommended for them. Most employers are actively engaged in the training of the students and some are present at the progress reviews. This enables them to ensure the students' working pattern provides suitable assessment opportunities. Support for students from college staff and employers continues to be good.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The management of work-based learning has been restructured since the last inspection. There has been a serious and strong commitment from managers to address the weaknesses identified at that inspection. Communication and team working are now very effective and lines of accountability and responsibility are clear. Additional assessors and other key staff have been recruited. However, there is insufficient use of performance targets to drive forward quality improvement.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Visual arts and media	4	2

Context

At the time of the re-inspection around 90 students were studying on a first diploma, a national diploma and a City and Guilds diploma course in media. There is also an AS-level course in film studies. The majority of learners are aged 16 to 18. Provision in visual arts at the former Crawley College has either been discontinued or re-located to the Haywards Heath campus of the merged Central Sussex College

Strengths

- high success rates on most courses
- good standard of students' work in photography, film and video
- good lesson planning for all students' needs
- good operational management.

Areas for improvement

- low success rate on the AS-level film and video course
- insufficient collaboration across sites.

Achievement and standards

Success rates on the first diploma in media, the national diploma in media production, and the City and Guilds diploma in media techniques are now high. For example, in 2005/06, 78% of learners on the national diploma and all of those on the City and Guilds course were successful. Success rates on the AS-level film and video production course are improving, although they remain below the national average. The standard of students' work is good in photography, film and video. Progression from level two to level three courses and to higher education is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Overall teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well-planned and relate to carefully constructed schemes of work. The work set by teachers maintains students' interest and motivation. The different needs of students are met by effective use of individual learning plans and learner profiles. However, there is insufficient focus on ensuring that learning outcomes are met in some lessons. Internal verification procedures and assessment are satisfactory. A few students expressed concern at not getting timely feedback from their teachers. Tutorials give adequate support to learners. Accommodation and specialist resources are satisfactory. Students have opportunities to enrich their experience through visits to studios, newspapers and exhibitions.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good, with sound operational systems. Communication is effective, and teachers and support staff work closely and enthusiastically together. Management information is good and teachers and managers speak positively about the reports they receive. There is insufficient collaboration across sites and no themed or integrated projects. The self-assessment report is good and presents a generally accurate picture of provision. Teachers are appropriately qualified and demonstrate a range of practical experience in media.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	4	2

Context

The college offers a range of full-time and part-time literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses from pre-entry level to level 2. Courses are offered at the main campus in Crawley and at a number of community and business sites in the area. Of the 1,007 learners on discrete courses, there are 92 learners in literacy, 44 learners in numeracy, 783 learners in ESOL, and 88 learners on information and communications technology (ICT) courses that include literacy and numeracy.

Strengths

- high retention rates
- good support for students
- good teaching and learning
- highly effective leadership and management.

Area for improvement

- low success rates on short ESOL courses.

Achievement and standards

Retention rates on all courses are high. Overall success rates have improved substantially from 49% in 2004/05 to 65% in 2005/06. However, success rates on a number of short courses, particularly in ESOL, are unsatisfactory. Managers have already taken appropriate action to remedy this weakness. The college has introduced the new Skills for Life qualifications, and courses focus well on meeting the work and life skills needs of learners. Students successfully develop their confidence and gain useful study skills. Progression

between levels in literacy, numeracy and ESOL is satisfactory. The standard of students' work is good.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has significantly improved since the last inspection, and classroom practice is now good overall. Teachers use a wide range of learning activities to capture students' interest, including increasingly widespread use of ICT resources. Activities are meaningful and relevant to students' needs. Good practice is shared very effectively between teaching team members. The assessment of students' work is thorough and internal verification and moderation procedures are effective. Individual learning plans contain challenging targets. Accommodation and resources are of high quality. Care, advice, guidance and other support for students are good. The tutorial process is very effective in identifying support needs and transition routes.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are highly effective. All teachers are regularly observed, and the outcomes of observations have been used effectively to bring about improvements in teaching and learning. There has been a comprehensive range of useful training undertaken by all staff, including teaching qualifications. Managers have been determined to raise standards, and set challenging targets for students' outcomes on each course.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Central Sussex College
Date of visit: 17 and 18 October

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

Success rates

- Provisional data for 2005/06 demonstrates that the actions the college are taking to improve success rates are effective. Headline success rates for long courses at all levels show significant improvement, and the college expects the final data to show that success rates are above national averages for long courses. Most of this improvement is explained by high retention rates. The college recognises that there is still work to do to raise pass rates further, particularly at level three for adults, and on short courses.
- Students' achievements at the sixth form, Haywards Heath, are very good. Success rates for the bulk of provision, advanced level courses for students aged 16 to 18, are broadly in line with national averages for sixth form colleges. The proportion of students gaining grades A or B at A/AS level is higher than the national average. Value-added data show a dramatic improvement over the last four years in the progress students make, with students overall now doing significantly better than predicted from their prior attainment at GCSE. Managers recognise that scope for improvement lies in tackling weaker performance in a small number of subjects, and improving retention rates in order to raise success rates above national averages.

Success rates in work-based learning (WBL)

- Framework success rates have improved and are now satisfactory overall, although they are low in hospitality. This has been achieved through improving the management of work-based learning. Learners' progress is monitored more thoroughly, and quality assurance procedures are more rigorous. Guidance and support for work-based learners have improved. Scope for improvement lies in setting clear targets for the achievement of apprenticeship frameworks within curriculum areas.

Students' outcomes in health, public services and care

- In 2004/05, overall success rates in health, public services and care were unsatisfactory. There has been a significant improvement in 2005/06, although managers recognise that further work needs to be done to ensure that students taking national vocational qualifications pass the qualification within the duration of their course. Steps are being taken to make sure this happens; it is too early yet to assess the impact of managers' actions.

Quality of education and training

Teaching and learning

- There is a systematic, college-wide determination led by senior leaders to improve teaching and learning. A combination of effective lesson observations complemented by extensive professional development has succeeded in moving teaching and learning towards the heart of the college culture. The lesson observation scheme is effective in identifying the quality of teaching in different areas, and weaknesses are clearly identified and followed-up. As a consequence, the college is confident that there is very little unsatisfactory teaching in the college. Managers recognise that the task ahead is to improve the large amount of teaching that is currently judged as satisfactory on the Crawley campus and at outreach centres. Staff development focused on teaching and learning has been particularly effective in Skills for Life provision. At the sixth form, Haywards Heath, the use of peer observation combined with campus-wide training to share good practice has the potential to further improve the quality of teaching, which is already at least good.

The college's response to the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda

- The college has made good progress in integrating the five ECM outcomes into self-assessment. A useful audit of the outcomes on both main sites has helped to identify where evidence may be found, and where there are gaps in provision. The ECM outcomes have been integrated into schemes of work for the college's tutorial programme, although the impact of this in practice was not observed. Team level self-assessment reports now include an expectation that evidence towards meeting ECM objectives will be used. There is considerable potential to develop the work that has been started into a strategy that will improve students' broader achievements at college by focusing on the five outcomes. It is recognised that further training will be needed for the ECM agenda to be prioritised throughout the college. The college is not yet in a position to

make evaluative, evidence-based judgements on the practical implementation of its work on the ECM outcomes.

Partnerships and employer engagement

- Partnership working is particularly good, and employer links have been improved. The college has continued to develop good working relationships with other training providers through its centres of vocational excellence and through European Social Fund projects. Major contracts have been won with national employers, and the college has been successful in gaining a substantial Train to Gain contract. Action for Business College status has had a positive effect on the college's work. The college is well-placed to have a substantial impact on the development of 14-19 provision in West Sussex through its strong links with local schools and its role in partnership work with the local authority.

Adult and community learning (ACL)

- The college has a clear strategy to ensure that it provides a good range of adult provision that meets the needs of learners, and works closely with the local authority in pursuing this strategy. Quality assurance of ACL is improving, with closer monitoring of teaching and learning, and appropriate training being provided on developments such as the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA) initiative.

Leadership and management

Progress since the last annual assessment visit

- The college has made very good progress since the last annual assessment visit. The outcomes of the re-inspection, particularly in respect of the two areas that have improved in two years from unsatisfactory to good, indicate effective leadership and management at all levels. Overall success rates on long courses have continued to improve, although much is still to be done to improve pass rates. The college knows itself well, and difficult decisions that are necessary to tackle weaknesses are not shirked. Steady progress has been made in re-organising middle management following merger, although some staff are still uncertain about their future roles. Despite this, in general morale is good and the degree of uncertainty following merger has diminished.

Improvements in quality assurance

- Since the last visit, the college has introduced clearer lines of responsibility for quality assurance and self-assessment. The decision to aggregate upwards from team level self-assessment to whole college self-assessment reports by sector subject area should provide clearer

judgements on the college's performance and, equally importantly, improve collaboration and teamwork as managers and their teams from different areas of the college will need to work together to compile evidence and reach judgements.

Equality and diversity

- The colleges' approach to equal opportunities was judged to be satisfactory at both predecessor colleges in their last inspection. In the new college, equality and diversity have been given a high profile, with responsibility lying with senior managers. Training has been provided to all staff in their responsibilities under changes to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Data on students' outcomes are used to identify and address under-performance by different groups. Good practice on equal opportunities is evident in some curriculum areas. There are no apparent tensions between different groups of students within the college. However, senior leaders recognise that there is more to do to raise the profile of equality issues throughout the college and encourage a climate in which diversity is respected and celebrated.