



Lancaster and Morecambe College

Better
education
and care

Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published March 2007	Provider reference 130737
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Introduction

Lancaster and Morecambe College was inspected in January 2005. 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 information and communications technology (ICT) and work-based learning (WBL) in construction, 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 ICT curriculum area and WBL in construction were re-inspected on the 10 and 11 of January 2007. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum/WBL area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
ICT	4	3
Work-based learning in construction	4	3

ICT

Context

Courses offered include the first and national diplomas for information technology (IT) practitioners, introductory certificate in IT @ work, the European computer driving licence (ECDL), PC hardware and CLAIT Plus. 123 students are currently enrolled on these courses, over two thirds of whom are studying full time.

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on ECDL courses
- good mix of theory and practical work in lessons
- effectively managed curriculum change

Areas for improvement

- low success rates in national diploma for IT practitioners.
- low pass rates in first diploma IT practitioners and certificate in IT @ work

Achievement and standards

Retention and pass rates are low on the national diploma for IT practitioners, however retention has recently improved. Pass rates on the first diploma for IT practitioners and the IT @ Work courses have improved but remain below the national averages. Retention and pass rates are high on ECDL courses. College data indicate significant improvements in in-year retention and attendance across ICT provision this year. Full-time students now take a stand-alone short IT qualification during induction and success rates on these courses are high. The standard of students' work is satisfactory and portfolios reflect good progress in the development of practical IT skills.

Quality of provision

As recognised by the college's own lesson observation system, teaching and learning in this area are broadly satisfactory. During the inspection a good range of teaching and learning methods were observed. A good mix of theory and practical work in lessons is facilitated by the improved classroom layouts and staff development. Students' learning is supported by well written, electronic class presentations which are available on the college's intranet and often incorporate student input, relevant learning activities and good links to assignments. Group tutorials provide valuable skills development opportunities and level 3 students take the commercially recognised Cisco qualification. Learning support tutors are used well and provide useful in-class support. They are involved in interviewing students to help ensure that they are placed on the right course with appropriate support from the start.

Leadership and management

The substantial changes to the management of this curriculum area have been effectively implemented and leadership and management are now good. Performance is closely monitored and targeted action plans are in place to address issues and direct improvement. College data indicate areas where progress has been made. However, measures taken have yet to improve success rates on some courses to the national level. Curriculum delivery has been streamlined and teachers now collaborate closely to share resources and monitor student progress.

Construction work-based-learning

Context

At the time of re-inspection there are 34 advanced apprentices and 67 apprentices on work-based learning programmes in construction. Of these 22 are in brickwork, 43 are in plumbing and 36 are in wood occupations. Off-the-

job training, for learners to gain the required background knowledge and key skills training, is provided by day or block release at the college. Apprentices spend the rest of their time in the workplace working towards their NVO. Training officers visit learners in the workplace every 9 to 12 weeks to carry out progress reviews and assessment on demand.

Strengths

- high success rates for advanced apprentices
- effective recording and monitoring of learners' progress
- good support for learners in the work place
- well-managed delivery of work based learning.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates for plumbers
- insufficient target setting in individual learning plans
- insufficient focus on learner understanding of equality and diversity issues in reviews.

Achievement and standards

The success rate for advanced apprentices is now relatively high, having improved from 11% in 2003/04 to 63% in 2005/06. The success rate for apprentices improved from 11% in 2003/04 to a satisfactory level of 55% in 2005/06. The success rate for plumbers improved in 2005/06 to 37%, which is lower than the national average and that in other trades. The standard of learners work and the progress they are making is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Learner progress is effectively recorded and monitored. Data are well used to monitor progress and plan for continuous improvement. Employers and learners are well informed of their progress. Support for learners in the workplace is good. Communications and support between college staff and employers are good and employers are supportive of training. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Employers provide a wide range of tasks enabling learners to develop good practical skills. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. The range of provision meets the needs of learners and employers. The college recognises that individual learning plans have insufficient milestones and is taking action to address this.

Leadership and management

Work-based learning is well managed. The training co-ordinators are well integrated in the construction curriculum area. Management meetings include all staff with some responsibility for the achievement of every element of the framework. Since the previous inspection, staffing levels are sufficient to meet learner needs and staff development is good. There is insufficient focus on learner understanding of equality and diversity issues at progress reviews.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Lancaster and Morecambe College
Date of visit: 10-11 January 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit (AAV). 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

The college's overall success rates declined in 2005 and were significantly below the national average. Have success rates improved in 2006?

- In 2006 success rates improved significantly and are now at or above the national average at all levels except for adult learners on level 1 courses. The overall success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 improved by 7% and is now equal to the national average. For adult learners, an improvement of 11% has taken the college success rate to above the national average.

Have pass rates, particularly on information technology (IT) courses, improved in 2006?

- Pass rates have improved across the college and most are now at or above national averages. Pass rates on IT courses have improved. In 2006, pass rates on ECDL courses were good. However, despite clear improvement, the pass rates on the first diploma and IT @ work courses are still below the national averages.

Have achievements on level 1 and short courses improved?

- Achievement on level 1 courses improved by over 10% bringing the 2006 rate to above the national average for learners aged 16 to 18 but still below the national average for adult learners. Achievements on short courses have continued to improve and were just below the national average in 2006. The college has reorganised its short course provision and level 1 courses for adults at the Morecambe learning centre and college data indicate further improvements this year.

Have the college's strategies to improve retention been successful?

- A wide range of retention strategies have been implemented and their impact monitored closely by managers at all levels. Retention has steadily improved and is now broadly satisfactory. The college recognises that retention of learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses and of adults on level 1 courses remain key areas for improvement. Attendance is now monitored and followed up very closely. A key change in September 2006

was the introduction of revised entry criteria and enrolment procedures to improve the college's ability to place learners on the right course. College data indicate that this has been successful so far, with further improvements in the in-year retention rate.

Have success rates on GCE AS and A-level courses improved?

- The overall success rate on AS level courses improved significantly from 53% in 2005 to 68% in 2006 and is now above the national average. Across A-level courses, the success rate improved from 68% to 72%, which remains well below the national average. Success rates on the fast track, one-year A level are very good.

What does value added data tell us about learners' performance?

- Value added data indicate that learners achieve broadly in line with expectations based on their grades on entry to the course. A-level psychology and English and AS level philosophy and psychology have good value added and no single subject has significantly negative value added. The college recognises that value added on national diploma courses is an area for improvement.

Quality of education and training

What do the college's lesson observation records say about the quality of teaching and learning?

- The lesson observation system has been revised further for 2006/07 and all teachers were observed by heads of faculty in November 2006. This involved a detailed process of joint observations and moderation with support from an external consultant. Outcomes indicate an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Lesson observation records are now much clearer in justifying the grade awarded and identifying areas for improvement. However, in a minority of individual observation records there is no clear link between the weakness observed in the lesson and the actions it was agreed the teacher will take.

What impact has sharing good practice and staff development had on the quality of teaching and learning? How is the college addressing the less effective teaching observed in the quality assurance (QA) process?

- A new staff development manager and quality improvement manager are working well together to share good practice and improve the quality of teaching and learning across the college. The outcomes of lesson observations have been well used to introduce a comprehensive staff training programme focussed on four key areas for improvement. Teachers and managers welcome this development and are very positive about the impact it has had, for example, on improving the use of information and learning technology (ILT) in the classroom. In addition to

sharing good practice, the new system rigorously follows up less effective teaching with teacher support and further training, close monitoring and re-observations. Where necessary competence procedures have been implemented.

What steps have been taken to further improve the quality and consistency of work-based learning (WBL) provision? What impact has there been on framework achievements of apprentices?

- Standardised quality assurance and monitoring systems have been introduced across all areas of WBL. The interviewing and selection arrangements for learners are more robust and they are now placed upon the appropriate level of programme. The college has improved its delivery of key skills across all programmes.
- In 2005/06, framework success rates were above the national averages. The college is in the upper quartile of work-based learning providers in the region. Success rates at both apprentice and advanced apprenticeship level have much improved over the last three years. The largest improvements have been on the much larger apprentice programmes. In 2005/06, advanced apprenticeship success rates were well above national averages in engineering, construction and retail. In retail, health and care and business, apprenticeship success rates are also now well above the national averages. In construction, apprentice success rates are at the national average. Timely success rates in 2005/06 are variable across the college. They are well above the low national average in retail and business but are themselves low in construction.

What steps has the college taken to improve its response to education and social inclusion?

- In its self-assessment report (SAR) the college has raised its grade for educational and social inclusion from satisfactory to good. The college is involved in a wide range of partnerships in the local community to meet the needs of vulnerable groups and employers. Links with local schools have been strengthened and plans are in place to introduce international baccalaureate qualifications in partnership with two local schools. The proportion of learners on level 1 and level 2 courses has increased and the college has a successful entry to employment (E2E) programme.

Have the tutorial support arrangements for part-time learners improved?

- The tutorial support arrangements for part-time learners have improved and are satisfactory. Tutors have received more training in supporting part-time learners in tutorials and reviews. Individual and group tutorials are more structured, informative and supportive to learners. The standard of target setting for learners is more precise and meets their learning needs. The initial assessment arrangement for part-time learners is much improved and effectively informs their additional learning support needs.

How has the college improved the consistency and quality of assessment practices?

- A new assessment policy is in place which is monitored by heads of faculty. Standardised assignment cover sheets have been introduced to improve the quality and consistency of teachers' feedback to learners. Learners comment that they receive prompt and helpful feedback on their written work. External verifier reports are followed up consistently with a clear action plan.

Leadership and management

Have college managers evaluated the impact of strategies introduced in 2005/06?

- New strategies have been carefully evaluated by managers at all levels as an integral aspect of the college's QA system. Underperforming courses are clearly identified in the self-assessment process and monthly meetings are held with between course managers and senior managers to closely monitor performance against targets. Where strategies have been less effective new actions have been introduced to try to secure the improvement needed. The impact of new strategies can be seen in the significant improvement in success rates across the college.

Are college managers clear about the priorities for further improvement?

- Managers are clear about the college's priorities in further raising the quality of teaching and learning. Staff at all levels have recognised the positive impact of better teaching and learning and are keen to further improve student retention and achievement. Curriculum managers have clearly identified priorities for improvement in their areas and are well supported by senior managers and the quality improvement manager. There is a strong emphasis on raising standards throughout the college.

Have the management of WBL continued to improve?

- Management of WBL has continued to improve. Co-ordination between WBL training co-ordinators and curriculum staff is now more effective. Staff have a better understanding of learner achievement data, which is used more effectively in monitoring learners' progress and in the management of provision. The standard of teaching and learning has improved and good practice is shared effectively across teams.

Has the college revised its safeguarding children procedures in line with the new guidelines?

- The college has reviewed its safeguarding children procedures in line with new guidelines. A single central record is being developed which shows the required recruitment and vetting checks. Appropriate checks are undertaken on all new staff who work with young people. If checks raise

concerns then suitable actions and procedures are in place to resolve the issue. Appropriate procedures and additional safeguards cover 14 to 16 year olds and vulnerable adult learners. Students are suitably advised on personal safety and welfare. Arrangements are in place to ensure the safety and welfare of children on long-term work experience or work-based learning programmes. Specialist staff and those with designated responsibility for children receive regular additional child protection training.

What is the impact of the college's strategies to embed equality and diversity in the curriculum? Has progress been made in implementing the Race Relations (Amendment) Act?

- A new equality and diversity manager has been appointed and the cross-college working group includes student representation. Good progress has now been made in implementing the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. A revised policy and action plan is in place. The college analyses data by gender, ethnicity and disability and all staff and governors have been trained in their duties and responsibilities under the Act. A number of new initiatives have been introduced to promote equality and diversity, including a broader range of tutorial activities, an equality and diversity day and the identification of good curriculum practice during lesson observations.