



Mid Kent College

Better
education
and care

Re-inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

Published
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Provider reference
130726

Introduction

Mid Kent College was inspected in March 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 construction and in work-based learning in engineering, hairdressing and business. These 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 provision was re-inspected on 23 and 24 January 2007. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows:

Provision	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Construction	4	3
Construction, work-based learning	4	3
Engineering, work-based learning	4	3
Hairdressing, work-based learning	4	2
Business, work-based learning	4	2

Construction

Context

Construction courses are available in carpentry, brickwork, painting and decorating, plumbing and electrical installation from foundation to advanced level, for full-time and part-time learners. The building and civil engineering section delivers a range of technician programmes. Apprenticeships are available in electrical installation, plumbing and construction crafts. At the time of inspection, there were 1,418 learners enrolled, of whom 438 were full-time and 941 were part-time. There were also 39 apprentices. Most courses are at Levels 1 and 2. An extensive multi-skill construction crafts programme is offered for pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools.

Strengths

- high retention on many programmes
- wide range of courses incorporating good internal progression opportunities
- good support for learners

Areas for improvement

- the completion of work-based learning reviews in plumbing
- workplace assessment in construction crafts

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on most programmes have improved since the last inspection. The rate for the national diploma in construction is above the national average for similar colleges. The retention rate on the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in carpentry and joinery is 8% above national average and for the Intermediate construction award is at the national average. Retention rates for the wood occupations NVQ and the Intermediate construction award were 100% in 2005/06. Timely success rates on work based learning programmes have improved and are around the national average. The quality of learners' work in theory and practical sessions is satisfactory. The attendance rate is 79%. Success rates on the national certificate in civil engineering have declined from 31% to 18% over the last two years. The success rate for the advanced construction award in 2005/06 was also low at 40%.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Many staff are new in post since the last inspection and much work has been carried out to improve theory lessons. Teachers use a range of techniques to engage and motivate learners. Key skills are delivered effectively. Many work-based learners achieve their key skills qualifications early. There is a good range of courses and many learners progress to higher level work within the college. Support for learners is good. Individual tutorials are programmed for all learners, and additional sessions are available for those 'at risk'. Part-time and work-based learners are provided with individual sessions on request. Additional learning support is good. The monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory; progress to date, achievement and future targets are agreed at tutorials. Learners are clear about what they need to do to achieve. Assessment is satisfactory and uses a good range of diverse evidence collected in the workplace. However, the availability of workplace assessments in construction crafts is restricted. Assessors are unable to offer assessment on demand. Some work-based learning reviews in plumbing are incomplete.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of both curriculum and work-based learning are satisfactory. There is an effective focus on improving teaching, learning and achievement. New staff are supported well by subject coaches. Sanctions imposed by accrediting bodies at the time of the last inspection have been lifted. Internal verification and external assessment are satisfactory. Staff have good access to management information to monitor the effectiveness of provision. All programmes are formally reviewed and improvement plans are in place. Resources in practical areas and theory rooms are satisfactory. The self assessment report is broadly accurate.

Engineering, work-based learning

Context

The engineering department runs two main programmes providing courses in motor vehicle mechanical and body repair, and mechanical engineering. There is a range of courses from entry level to level 3 that includes full-time and part-time, work-based learning and short courses. The department also works closely with local schools on link programmes. In work-based learning there were 76 students undertaking apprenticeship frameworks in motor vehicle studies and mechanical engineering, at the time of inspection. They comprised 57 on apprenticeships and 19 on advanced apprenticeships.

Strengths

- good integration of key skills in motor vehicle and engineering
- good learner support
- strong and effective links with local employers
- effective management to improve framework success rates

Areas for improvement

- overall and timely success rates
- further improvements to the quality of teaching
- practical workshops

Achievement and standards

The overall success rates for learners on apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship frameworks have improved since the previous inspection and are satisfactory. There has been continuous steady improvement over the past three years, from 22% in 2003/04 to 50% for 2005/06. Timely success rates for advanced apprentices have improved from 33% to 50% over the same period. Indications are that the rate of improvement has been maintained for learners in 2006/07. Improvements in the overall success rates are more marked in motor vehicle studies than craft engineering.

In motor vehicle, the overall qualification success rate for advanced apprentices improved to 69% in 2005/06. The success rate for advanced apprentices in 2006/07 is currently 80%. The overall qualification success rate for apprentices has improved to 57% in 2005/06 and is currently 66% in 2006/07. In engineering, the overall qualification success rate has increased to 50% for apprenticeship programmes in 2005/06. The overall success rate for apprentices in 2006/07 is currently 38%.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Practical training in the college workshops is effective. Workshop facilities are satisfactory and have been enhanced by additional resources since the last inspection. However, further improvements are needed and bench space is limited in motor vehicle workshops. Teachers set good standards and use a suitable range of tasks. Practical on-the-job training in the workplace is good. Learners are well supported by employers who provide good opportunities for skills development and take a keen interest in the progress of their apprentices. A number of initiatives have been introduced to improve the quality of delivery but more remains to be done to raise the quality of teaching and learning further.

Arrangements for reviewing the progress of students on work-based learning programmes have improved. Progress reviews are satisfactory. There are effective meetings between reviewing officers, assessors, learners and their employers. In motor vehicle, tutors use a locally generated software programme effectively to track the progress of work-based learners through their frameworks. Reviewers do not have occupational knowledge of all areas but work closely with assessors in target setting during reviews. The majority of first year learners complete their key skills tests and portfolios by the end of the second term. They are encouraged to progress their key skills beyond the minimum framework requirements. The tutors have a good understanding of key skills and deliver them confidently in the vocational context.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of work-based learning are good. Teamwork has improved and staff are more clearly focused on framework requirements and the importance to learners of completing all parts of it on time. The weaknesses in the internal verification arrangements for motor vehicle studies have been resolved successfully. Assessment practice has improved and assessors meet regularly to discuss best practices and procedures for the new qualifications. Additional motor vehicle staff have been trained in assessor and verifier qualifications and all motor vehicle staff are qualified assessors. In engineering the department is able to use a number of part-time assessors to provide satisfactory coverage. Learners and assessors make good use of digital cameras for gathering work-place evidence. The self-assessment report is satisfactory and covers the main issues identified during the inspection. Staff are closely involved in the self-assessment process.

Hairdressing, work-based learning

Context

There are currently 3 advanced apprentices and 33 apprentices. All are female. The programmes are delivered at two campuses and at 32 local salons.

Strengths

- good leadership and management
- very good employer engagement
- good achievement

Areas for improvement

- insufficient clients in college practical lessons

Achievement and standards

The achievement of work-based learners is good. Much progress has been made since the last inspection to raise retention and improve achievement. Overall framework success rates for apprentices have improved from 19% in 2003/04 to 62% in 2005/06 which is 10% above the national average for similar colleges. Timely success rates were 49% in 2005/06, 21% above the national average. Current learners are making good progress and 60% of them have achieved the full framework before their expected end date. All learners who started their apprenticeship in 2005/06 have achieved their key skills. Those who started in 2006/07 are making good progress with their NVQ and key skills qualifications. Retention at the time of inspection was 96% and attendance at college is good. Advanced apprentices demonstrate very good skills in the work place.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are good. The standard of learners' work has improved. A number of employers visit the college to provide specialist seminars and workshops for learners. However, too few clients are provided by the college to ensure learners are able to adequately develop skills during day release. Portfolios are completed and assessed early. Those at risk of leaving or falling behind are identified at monthly team meetings where action to support them is discussed and agreed. Support strategies include additional support, individual tutorials and referrals to other agencies.

Key skills delivery has improved. Learners undertake key skills work at the start of their programme and many aspects are integrated into vocational

assignments and workplace activities. Their progress towards key skills is regularly monitored both during reviews and at meetings. Learners, teachers and employers keep good records of progress towards key skills qualifications. Assessment is satisfactory. Learners and employers receive schemes of work and assessment plans and employers and accrediting bodies are satisfied with the standards expected by the assessors. The majority of salons provide an on-site assessor.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of work-based learning are good. College and workplace training is well planned and coordinated. The effective deployment of staff has improved communications, planning and monitoring. Quality assurance measures are rigorous and effective. The self assessment report is accurate. Employers are fully engaged in the delivery and assessment of training. They regularly attend college meetings to discuss quality improvement. The college has worked with employers to introduce an 'Approved Salon' status scheme to ensure the quality of training provided in the workplace.

Business, work-based learning

Context

At the time of inspection, 31 learners were on work-based learning programmes. Of these, six were apprentices, 11 were advanced apprentices and 14 were working towards NVQ level 4 in accounting. Learners can choose off-the-job training on day-release, evening provision, or a combination of part-time daytime and evening courses. This flexibility caters for the differing needs of local employers. The number of work-based learners has reduced significantly since the last inspection.

Strengths

- high success and progression rates
- good off-the-job training
- effective management to improve provision

Areas for improvement

- the standard of some accommodation
- the use of ILT in teaching

Achievement and standards

Overall success rates are good and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Retention rates are high. 90% of learners completed their course in 2005/06 and 86% remain on course so far in 2006/07. Current learners are achieving their frameworks early. Overall success rates for advanced apprentices have risen from 25% to 50% in the past three years. Success rates for the current year are 90% with a few learners still to complete the course. Timely success rates for apprentices rose from 22% to 83% in the same period and 67% of the current cohort have already achieved the framework with some still in learning. Timely success rates are similar to overall success rates. Achievement at NVQ level 4 was well below national averages in 2005/06 at 50%, but is expected to be 88% by the end of 2006/07. The standard of work is good, and learners make good use of the workplace to develop project work. Most learner progress from levels 2 to 4, and some go on to higher-level professional courses. They make good progress in their jobs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are good. Off-the-job training is effective. Well-qualified and experienced teachers incorporate a variety of interactive learning techniques into lessons and provide good individual support to learners. Learners are motivated and engage knowledgeably and enthusiastically in activities and discussion. Work-based learners benefit from sharing commercial experience with others. They utilise ILT to link manual and computerised accounting systems. However, there is insufficient access to smartboards and digital projectors to enhance learning. Classrooms are drab and do not lend themselves easily to working in groups. Key skills support is satisfactory.

Progress reviews are comprehensive and target-setting has improved since the last inspection. Projects for learners studying at NVQ level 4 are closely monitored and regular individual support is helping them to complete projects on time. Good systems are in place for recording the progress of learners and to enable them to access resources on-line via the college intranet. Assessment and internal verification are thorough, although there is limited use of work-based evidence.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. Roles and responsibilities have been clarified. Teaching has improved and success rates have risen significantly. The tracking of learners' progress and attendance has improved. Learner feedback has been used well to improve timetabling and schemes of work. New teachers are well supported through shadowing, mentoring and training. Working relationships with employers are good, and the college responds quickly to any issues raised by employers. Learners are well-protected against bullying and harassment, and equality and diversity are reinforced in

induction and progress reviews. The self-assessment process involves staff and is broadly accurate.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Mid Kent College
Date of visit: 23 and 24 January 2007

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

Achievement and standards

Strategies to improve the achievement of work-based learners.

- Work-based learning success rates have improved, many of them significantly. For example, success rates in construction have improved from very low figures to around the national average. Timely success rates in hair and beauty have improved and are now above the national average. Early indications show that success rates are continuing to rise in 2006/07.

Strategies to improve success rates for 16-18 and adult learners.

- Overall success rates for long courses improved significantly in 2005/06 both for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults. They are around the national average for similar colleges for students aged 16 to 18, but remain below the national average for adults. Retention in the current year is higher than at the same time last year.

Quality of provision

The effectiveness of provision for work-based learners.

- The college has made major changes to the management of work-based learning. In particular, the accountability for learners has been clarified and curriculum areas take responsibility for all aspects of work-based learning provision. Good use has been made of 'champions' in work-based learning. College staff work well with learners, particularly those at risk of not completing and those working on key skills. Skills are effectively set in context. The college also made good use of LSC funded consultancy to focus on work-based learning and to address issues identified at the last inspection.

The effectiveness of provision for learners aged 14 to 16.

- Around 1,000 pupils from local schools are enrolled on a wide range of vocational provision provided by the college. Some 150 pupils are on increased flexibility programmes and others follow apprenticeships and taster courses for pupils in year 10. The college has also worked in partnership with schools to open vocational centres based at the schools, focusing on those schools that have difficulties engaging some pupils. Arrangements to enrol and support these students are comprehensive. Attendance is well monitored; issues are raised with the schools and subsequent actions are recorded. Reports are written but are not yet integrated into schools' processes. There are good communications through a range of partnership groups and through management arrangements. Progression rates for students on the increased flexibility programme to courses at the college increased by 13% to 44% in 2005/06. Overall achievement rates for students aged 14 to 16 improved by 9% in the same year.

Leadership and management

The impact of changes to the monitoring and evaluation of equality and diversity.

- The promotion of equality and diversity has improved significantly since the last inspection. Equality and diversity 'champions' work effectively with curriculum areas to actively promote equality and diversity. Staff have been trained and good use is made of a web-based equality and diversity service to raise awareness amongst staff and governors. Documents are clear and comprehensive. Detailed analysis of data provides the college with a range of information that is used effectively. The college held an employment fair recently aimed at increasing the number of job applications from minority ethnic groups.

The impact of quality reviews.

- All areas of the college will have been subject to a quality review by the end of 2007. The process is rigorous and provides valuable information in a coherent form to support quality improvement. There is evidence that the process has had a positive impact in areas such as construction. Teacher coaches have been introduced this year to support the drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Their work so far has been shown to have improved the performance of new

teachers in the college. It is too early to assess the overall impact of this initiative.

The rigour of self-assessment in identifying under-performing courses.

- Self-assessment is founded on clear and comprehensive performance data that is generally well used. It builds from programme level reports and staff feel they have ownership of the process. Analysis at programme and school level feeds into a 'school improvement plan' that encompasses issues identified across the spectrum of quality procedures. Most weaknesses are clearly identified. However, in a minority of cases, issues are not clear and/or not followed through in self-assessment and the improvement plan. Full cost recovery programmes are not included in the overall college self-assessment report, although there are plans to include them next year.

The collection and use of feedback from learners.

- Arrangements to gain and use student feedback are thorough and effective. Student feedback is gained in many and diverse ways. Highly effective use is made of on-line surveys. These are both cross-college thematic and specific to curriculum areas. The college successfully encourages a high response rate. Students also have the opportunity to make suggestions in more traditional ways such as end of course feedback. Students are represented on all major college bodies. They are particularly well represented on divisional boards of study. Feedback is analysed well and used effectively to improve the students' experiences.