



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

RE-INSPECTION OF ROTHERHAM COLLEGE OF ARTS & TECHNOLOGY

Published November 2003

Outcome of Re-Inspection

The overall provision in the curriculum areas of mathematics & science and humanities are now **satisfactory**.

Background

Rotherham College of Arts & Technology was inspected in November 2001. 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 at least satisfactory in all curriculum areas inspected, except maths & science and humanities, where it was found to be unsatisfactory.

Ofsted and the ALI have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or that leadership and management is unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory provision in any curriculum area, or less than satisfactory leadership and management, Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of any unsatisfactory areas.

As a result of monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum area or areas, or leadership and management, are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Such a judgement is likely to be made between 12 and 24 months after the initial inspection. A short report outlining the improvements made will be published on the Ofsted website alongside the original report. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum area(s) or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grades for the areas that continue to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and why.

Dates of Re-Inspection Monitoring Visits

In accordance with the above procedures, monitoring inspections of mathematics & science and humanities took place on 24 and 25 September 2002, 30 and 31 January 2003 and 13 and 14

October 2003.

Mathematics & science

In the November 2001 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be **unsatisfactory**. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- Good pass rates in health science, science access, animal nursing and vocational courses
- Much good teaching of adults
- Well-structured practical sessions
- Extensive support for adults.

Weaknesses

- Poor retention rates across all courses
- Poor pass rates on GCE A-level science courses
- Some teaching not well matched to student abilities.

Following the re-inspection monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that good progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that the overall provision for mathematics & science is now **satisfactory**.

After the 2001 inspection, the college made a decision to close most of its GCE A-level science provision except the advanced subsidiary courses in chemistry and human biology. These are now only studied as additional subjects by students on full time vocational courses. A number of strategies have been successfully introduced which have raised retention on most courses with many now being at or above national averages. The exception to this improving trend has been the

level 2 animal nursing course where there has been a drop in retention from 86% in 2002 to 64% in 2003.

Several improvements have been made to the range of courses offered and their teaching. The entry grade required for 16-18 year olds retaking GCSE mathematics has been raised to grade D and the alternative of 'Level 2 Application of Number' introduced for those without this grade. Improvements in teaching and learning include, greater use of ICT, mentoring for teachers and the introduction of a new approach to aspects of teaching GCSE mathematics. Teachers have also adopted better ways of providing support for students of different abilities. These include improved guidance during induction, early identification of students with basic skills support needs, a homework club for less able students and extension tasks for the more able. Observation of lessons by inspectors during the re-inspection process showed that 60% of teaching is good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and learning observed.

There have been substantial changes in curriculum management. During 2003 the area has been without a manager for a long period. The new curriculum manager has only recently been appointed. Lesson observations are not yet routinely undertaken and further progress is needed in identifying and addressing the development needs of teachers. Not all staff yet ensure that good use is made of ICT in lessons and a suitable variety of learning activities are matched with the needs and abilities of students.

Humanities

In the November 2001 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be **unsatisfactory**. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- Good pass rates on the access course and GCSE history
- Well-designed learning materials
- Effective assessment
- Strong commitment to social inclusion.

Weaknesses

- Low retention rates on GCE A-level and GCSE subjects

- Low achievement for 16-18 year olds at GCE A level compared to their GCSE results
- Unsatisfactory attendance in English lessons
- Failure to motivate less confident learners
- Inappropriate GCSE English provision

Following the re-inspection monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that good progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that the overall provision for humanities is now **satisfactory**.

The college has discontinued its full time GCE A level provision in order to focus on its vocational strengths. Good arrangements have been made to ensure that those students part way through A level courses at the college have been able to complete them. A number of A/S level and GCSE courses are still offered mainly for adults studying part time. A substantial number of full time students take GCSE English.

Of those GCSE and A/S level courses remaining, a substantial improvement has been achieved in the proportion of GCSE English students completing their course. The college reviewed its policy on entry to this course and brought about a better match between students' previous achievements and their learning programme in English. Pre-GCSE provision was introduced for those with more modest grades. In 2002/2003 169 students began the GCSE course. 70% of those beginning their studies in September completed, which is around the national average. Pass rates for these students are good. Further improvement is still needed in retention rates for those adult students who begin GCSE English in January. Teachers take careful action to check the punctuality and attendance of English students. Levels of attendance in English classes have improved and are now around the national average.

Retention rates in some subjects remain poor or subject to unacceptable levels of fluctuation from year to year. The retention rate in A/S Psychology continues to be well below national averages and is declining. The college has acknowledged this and taken steps to make improvements. In modern foreign languages retention rates have fluctuated sharply over the past three years and were well below the national average for two of these years including 2002/2003.

Staff development in approaches to teaching and learning has led to some improvements in classroom practice. Helpful staff guides on differentiation, and planning for learning have been used to support this process. The observation of lessons during the re-inspection process have shown that learning resources are now used more effectively and group work in many classes is well organised. Teaching assessed during monitoring visits identified no unsatisfactory teaching and was 60% good or better. Insufficient use has yet been made of the observation of teaching and learning in this area in order to drive improvements. Students are well supported and improvements in the arrangements for personal tutoring have now become well established.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2003. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated. Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Office for
Standards
in Education

