

RE-INSPECTION MONITORING OF STAFFORD COLLEGE

Published December 2003

Outcome of Re-Inspection Monitoring

The overall provision in the work-based learning provision for engineering is now **satisfactory**.

Background

Stafford College was inspected in February 2002. 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 in all areas inspected, except in work-based learning for engineering, which was found to be unsatisfactory.

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

As a result of the monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum or WBL areas, or leadership and management are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum or WBL area or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grade for the area that continues to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection within the cycle. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and the reasons why.

Date of the Re-Inspection Monitoring Visits

In accordance with the above procedures, re-inspection monitoring visits of work-based learning in engineering took place on September 24-25 2002, 1-2 April 2003 and 4-6 November 2003.

Work-based learning in Engineering

In the February 2002 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

- High retention rates on most courses
- Good teaching in practical sessions
- Good learning support for individual students
- Effective links with industry

Weaknesses

- Low and declining pass rates on first and national courses
- Very low and declining pass rates on work-based learning programmes
- Some dull and uninspiring teaching of theory
- Some outdated motor vehicle resources
- Weak management of full-time and part-time courses

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

There has been a significant improvement, and reversal of trend of pass rates in work-based learning, primarily due to an increased focus on the delivery and accreditation of key skills. The achievement rate for advanced and foundation modern apprentices across vehicle engineering, construction plant and engineering is now in line with national averages and increasing. The general trend across all programmes is that retention is also increasing. Historic data, for the college,

indicate that achievements follow retention. However, there are many learners who do not complete within their allocated time period and require extensions to complete their studies. Monitoring visits are made to the work place every 4 weeks. Whilst targets are set at these visits, they are frequently of a general nature and unspecific in vocational content. Some learners are unsure of their progress towards framework completion. Internal verification is taking place although its effectiveness varies across the sections. Assessment is now available on demand for Vehicle Engineering apprentices. Employers take an active interest in the learner's progress and provide good support in the workplace.

Continuing progress is being made in the delivery of key skills. Students' previous level of attainment is diagnosed during induction by the use of an online assessment and recognition of proxy status. Key skills are delivered in year 1 of all student programmes and are delivered by team teaching of vocational specialists and key skill specialists, whose primary role is to prepare students for the generic tests. Vocational and key skill staff, jointly prepare and deliver the sessions and design vocationally relevant thematic activities and assessments. The college is now moving to online assessment of the external tests and plan to do this at monthly intervals commencing in the first term of a students' programme.

Lesson observations during the monitoring visits indicated no unsatisfactory teaching. Most classes were well managed and appropriately paced with all learners being actively involved in the class. Examples were seen of learners developing their communication skills involving topic development with their peers and then presenting their findings individually to the whole group. In workshop sessions tutors give effective support on training activities, always asking questions to establish understanding and to develop the topic further. There has been an increased focus on the introduction of ILT into the delivery of sessions and several examples were observed during the re-inspection monitoring visits of the use of data projectors and data acquisition via a pc. There were a few examples of sessions that lacked pace and challenge and where the individual needs of learners were not recognised or accommodated for.

There has been good investment in a range of new vehicles with appropriate specifications to meet the needs of the awarding bodies and provide learners with valuable relevant practical experience. Computerised engine diagnostic equipment has also been purchased. In addition the college has started to use portable electronic data capture with appropriate software to track progress with NVQ and framework completion. This development in conjunction with the use of digital cameras enables evidence to be easily captured at source.

The take up for additional learning support is now good. 80% of engineering work-based students who are identified during the initial testing as requiring support take-up the offered support. ALS needs and dyslexia are identified during initial assessment and those students requiring additional support are invited to a further interview and assessment with ALS specialist staff. Support is provided either by additional support workers in the classroom or in separately arranged support tutorials. Students who receive support speak highly of the support they receive.

Equality of opportunity and diversity is a key feature of student induction, there is a good questionnaire used to check student understanding. Equality and diversity issues are strongly featured in the quarterly learner progress review. All students interviewed had a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities. The college management has a robust system to monitor and ensure the promotion of equality and diversity issues throughout both the curriculum and in WBL. All materials including teaching and learning, marketing and promotional are monitored within the annual quality assurance audit.

There will be no further monitoring visits to the college as there are no remaining unsatisfactory areas.

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