

RE-INSPECTION OF CITY OF WESTMINSTER COLLEGE

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Outcome of Re-Inspection

The overall provision in the engineering, humanities and literacy and numeracy curriculum areas is now **satisfactory**.

Background

City of Westminster College was inspected in January 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 or better in all areas inspected, except in engineering, humanities and basic skills (literacy and numeracy) which were 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 re-inspection monitoring visits, inspectors may judge that the curriculum or WBL areas, or leadership and management are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Where leadership and management are satisfactory, all unsatisfactory provision will be re-inspected normally during one week.

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 Visit

In accordance with the above procedures, re-inspection of engineering, humanities and literacy and numeracy took place on 26-30 January 2004.

ENGINEERING

In the January 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

- good retention rates on sound engineering and motor vehicle courses
- high pass rates on sound engineering courses
- good rate of progression into employment in the sound and theatre industry.

Weaknesses

- much unsatisfactory teaching
- poor pass rates on the first diploma in engineering and motor vehicle courses
- poor assessment practice and inadequate feedback to students
- unsatisfactory standards of work completed by students
- poor attendance and punctuality on some programmes.

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

Since the inspection in January 2002, overall pass and retention rates on engineering courses have improved, notably on the first diploma course, where pass rates in 2002/03 were well above the national average. The pass rate on the level 1 City and Guilds motor vehicle progression course has also improved and in 2002/03 was significantly above the national average. However, the retention on the national diploma course has declined, and in 2002/03 was well below the national average. The standard of students' work has improved. During workshop sessions, most students are able to develop practical skills of at least a satisfactory standard. In some motor vehicle theory lesson, the high standards set by the teachers encourage students to produce written work of a high quality. On sound engineering courses, students work diligently and achieve high standards in their written and practical work.

There have been notable improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Staff development programmes aimed at raising the quality of teaching have had a positive impact. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. In engineering theory lessons, teachers use an effective variety of teaching and learning methods and cater for the needs of all students: students are keen to learn and make

good progress. In motor vehicle practical lessons, most students tackle the practical tasks enthusiastically, although teachers rarely reinforce the principles covered in the theory lessons. In some motor vehicle workshop lessons, teachers pay insufficient attention to the ability of the more able students when directing them to practical tasks.

Assessment outcomes are well recorded and are used effectively by teachers during individual progress reviews. Teachers provide helpful comments on students' work. Students speak highly about the help given to them by their tutors. Progress has been made in implementing individual learning plans to help review students' progress. Initial assessment and target setting are undertaken for learners on entry to their programmes. Learning support needs are identified and recorded. Progress reviews are undertaken termly, where tutors hold productive meetings with individual students to discuss their progress, attendance and punctuality with them. However, tutors often fail to set sufficiently challenging and measurable targets to help students to achieve their full potential.

Procedures to improve attendance have been implemented and these are having a positive effect; overall attendance at the January 2002 inspection was 65%, and during this re-inspection was 74%. However, punctuality remains poor in a few lessons.

Management and co-ordination of the area have improved. Both heads of division work well together in overseeing implementation of quality assurance procedures. Structures now in place provide the capacity for improvement. Good practice is being shared between division and school managers, although there is insufficient sharing of good practice between the course teams across the two divisions. Quality assurance is contributing to improvements in overall standards across all engineering provision. Overarching self-assessment for the area as a whole is now undertaken. It is comprehensive and evaluative. The rigour of the lesson observation scheme has been improved, although it remains slightly over-generous. Outcomes of lesson observations are effectively linked to performance management. The strengths identified in the January 2002 inspection have been maintained.

HUMANITIES

In the January 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

- carefully planned teaching

- good handouts.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates

- students' poor achievements

- insufficient written work
- insufficient attention given to developing students' capacity to study effectively
- inadequate systems for monitoring and improving students' progress
- poor attendance.

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

There have been significant improvements in the pass rates on most courses since the January 2002 inspection, and on most courses these are now in line with or above the national averages. Retention rates on the GCE AS and A2 psychology courses are high. Pass rates on the GCE AS sociology, psychology, law and government and politics courses and the GCE A2 history, law and government and politics are above the national averages. However, pass rates remain low on the access to social science, humanities and teaching courses, and on the GCE AS philosophy and GCE A2 sociology courses. Too few students achieve key skills qualifications. In most subjects, students are achieving higher standards than predicted from their GCSE grades. Students' written work is mostly of a good standard and students demonstrate effective communication, note taking and study skills. In some subjects, a number of students are not regularly completing their written homework. Attendance rates have improved since the January 2002 inspection but are still poor in some lessons.

Most teaching is good or better. Teachers use a variety of activities and well-produced learning materials to engage students' interest. Students are generally well-motivated and attentive and there are productive, respectful relationships between teachers and students. Students communicate fluently and clearly, although inappropriate seating arrangements in some rooms can impede group interaction.

Teachers are well qualified. Since the January 2002 inspection they have received effective training on how to broaden their teaching methods. The teaching site at Maida Vale is safe and welcoming and has adequate resources and good access to computers in its learning centre. In some classrooms there is little subject identity, with few relevant learning materials displayed. Teachers often have to change rooms to access information and learning technology (ILT). There is poor access for students with restricted mobility.

Homework is now regularly set, and students' progress is monitored and recorded effectively. Students receive good feedback indicating what they need to do to improve. Spelling and grammatical errors are usually corrected and students are given guidance as to an appropriate academic style. However, there are too few examples of imaginative assignments.

There is a good range of enrichment activities for students. Key Skills are not integrated into main provision, and students do not see the relevance of taking these qualifications.

Academic support for students is good. There are effective procedures for identifying individual needs and monitoring students' take-up of support. Regular subject reviews with students assess

attendance and punctuality, and agree targets for improvement in subject work. These are reinforced by regular individual tutorials. In most subjects, homework clubs offer individual support with assignments. Careers, counselling and financial advice are also very accessible.

Leadership and management of the area are good. Strategies to improving students' achievements, implemented since the January 2002 inspection, are proving to be successful. Recently appointed subject co-ordinators have been effective in ensuring consistency of record keeping and in sharing good practice. There are good communications between staff, and shared values and priorities for improvement. Appropriate action is being taken to address remaining weaknesses.

LITERACY AND NUMERACY (BASIC SKILLS)

In the January 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

- good learning support in language and communication workshops in learning centres
- effective collaboration with external agencies.

Weaknesses

- much unsatisfactory teaching
- insufficient co-ordination of basic skills work across the college
- lack of attention to individual learning needs
- low retention and pass rates on level 1 key skills courses
- insufficient staff with appropriate qualifications.

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

In 2002/03, the pass rates on the level 1 key skills application of number and communication courses were well above the national averages. The retention rates on most literacy and numeracy courses have improved and are close to the national averages. Attendance to lessons has much improved since the January 2002 inspection. Information supplied by the college shows that a

significant number of students who were on key skills level 1 literacy and numeracy courses in 2001/02 have progressed to other courses at the college.

Teaching in the majority of lessons is now good. During lessons, students develop sufficient confidence to apply what they have learned to new situations. Most students make satisfactory progress and a few produce excellent standards of work. In a small minority of lessons, teachers pay insufficient attention to the learning needs of all students. The work set for the more able students is often insufficiently demanding. Students are unable to access computers in some lessons.

Since the January 2002 inspection, the college has implemented an extensive staff development programme covering the Skills for Life agenda. The programme has been successful in improving teaching practice. A significant number of teachers are now pursuing or have achieved specialist basic skills teaching qualifications. There are effective procedures for the initial assessment of all students enrolling at the college. However, some of the subsequent literacy and numeracy targets set for individual students are poorly formulated and insufficiently challenging. Progress reviews for some students are insufficiently frequent.

Participation by under-represented groups of students at the college's main sites and at centres in the community is good. Students are well motivated, hard working and most make good progress. Students attending lessons at the community centres, many of whom have significant personal problems, generally achieve well. There is good support for students in the college from their teachers. Effective links exist with a range of agencies to help students in challenging circumstances study at the college.

Management of literacy and numeracy is now satisfactory. A cross-college co-ordinator has been appointed to drive forward the provision in all departments. There are now regular team meetings of managers and teachers to standardise practice. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Self-assessment of the area is comprehensive and thorough.

There will be no further re-inspection of the college because the stipulated 24 months from the January 2002 inspection has expired.