RE-INSPECTION ESPA COLLEGES

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Outcome of re-Inspection
The overall provision in the foundation curriculum areas (the college's literacy and numeracy curriculum and the ICT curriculum) is now **satisfactory.**

Background
ESPA Colleges were inspected in April 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 literacy and numeracy and ICT 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 the foundation curriculum area (the college's literacy and numeracy curriculum and the ICT curriculum) took place on 18 March 2004.

Literacy and numeracy
In the April 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
- Teaching that motivates students
- Good classroom management by teachers
- Wide range of literacy and numeracy qualifications for students.

Weaknesses
- Ineffective target setting for learning
- Insufficient planning of teaching
- Inappropriate activities for some learners

- Ineffective initial assessment
- Lack of specialist qualifications of staff in literacy and numeracy
- Poor co-ordination of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

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

Target setting is satisfactory. Individual learning plans now successfully include literacy and numeracy goals for all students. Most teachers record effectively how well students are meeting or working towards these targets. The most useful ILPs are very detailed, are regularly reviewed and evaluated and successfully inform future planning. Many students are set realistic educational targets that take into account their future literacy and numeracy needs, prior experience and progress over time. Whilst these targets are used in many areas of the curriculum, they are not sufficiently embedded. In the less successful lessons, targets are not used effectively to inform teaching.

The majority of lessons observed were judged to be satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons adequately, detailing students' activities and learning targets. In a successful literacy and numeracy lesson, a range of activities were well matched to meet students' personal targets, covering use of money, developing reading and writing skills and practising for an attainment test. However, a significant number of lessons do not sufficiently differentiate literacy and numeracy activities for individual students. In a personal, social and health education lesson, there were three students of different abilities trying to complete the same worksheet activity and all were expected to do it at the same pace. Teachers use their detailed knowledge well and respond sensitively to students' behavioural, social and personal support needs. Within the residences, planning for independence takes account of, and develops, practical literacy and numeracy skills well. For example, one young man consolidated his understanding of money by planning and purchasing food for a meal.

There are improved opportunities to extend the learning of more able students. For example, one student is being supported into higher education and will soon begin a degree course in archaeology and French at Lampeter University. He has developed confidence in communication and effective skills of financial management.. Another student has developed improved interpersonal and communication skills so that he is now able to pursue a librarianship course. Others have been enabled to attend local general further education colleges to participate in courses in catering, motor mechanics and agriculture.

There is a thorough pre-admission assessment that involves students, parents and a range of professionals effectively. The information gathered is developed further by baseline assessment. The outcomes are successfully used to inform ILPs. The speech and language therapist successfully provides teachers with strategies to promote students' communication skills.

Co-ordination of literacy and numeracy across the college is underdeveloped. There are too few formal opportunities for staff to meet and embed literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. However, where this has successfully taken place, in North Rye College, good practice is successfully shared amongst the staff team. Overall, the colleges have made limited progress in developing staff's skills in teaching literacy and numeracy. A few staff have undertaken specialist training, but this has yet to significantly influence the quality of teaching and learning.

Information and Communication Technology
In the April 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 achievements of learning goals specific to autism
- Well equipped ICT suite at Tasker College.

Weaknesses
- Some unsatisfactory ICT achievements
- Unsatisfactory teaching
- Insufficient specialist ICT resources
- Poor assessment, target setting and recording of progress
- Many inappropriate learning activities
- Poor co-ordination of ICT.

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

Students' achievements are satisfactory overall. Many gain success in national awards that will be valuable for their next stage of education, including the Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) award and the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). A few more able students do well on higher level courses through links with other colleges, for example, PC maintenance and GNVQ Intermediate ICT. The use of ICT in other lessons gives opportunities for students to extend their achievements. Many students successfully search for information from the internet, use word processing, prepare posters and use digitised images to illustrate what they have learned. However, due to weaknesses in target setting and recording, many of these achievements are not identified effectively.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In the most successful lessons, teachers monitor each student's work effectively. They consistently encourage students to think through any problems, rather than simply giving them the answer. Students work as independently as they can, increasing their self esteem as they gain new skills and knowledge. Where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, teachers tackle topics that are not relevant to the needs of the students. For example, in one lesson, a group of less able students were expected to work with spreadsheets because this was a requirement of a national award, rather than as a result of an appropriate analysis of their future needs.

There has been improvement in the quality and quantity of resources and each of the college's centres now has an ICT room that is adequately equipped. A few issues remain, including a lack of document holders at the North Rye centre and insufficient worktop space for keyboards at South Hill. The quality of baseline assessment, as a basis for setting targets, is too variable. While there is good practice at the North Rye centre, this is not carried out in other parts of the college. As a result, a few students continue with work that they can already do. For example, one student who is highly competent in computing is undertaking a low level course, without a there being a clear reason for doing so.

Staff have different understanding of the use of individual learning plans and this results in important targets not being taught or assessed in all lessons. Assessments are used well to show when students are ready to undertake tests as part of the requirements of the qualification. There is a good choice of courses to meet the broad range of needs and

abilities of students. Most follow courses leading to nationally recognised awards. Effective links have been established with other local colleges, including Washington Business College and Gateshead College, to extend the courses available. These links start with effective liaison between tutors before students begin their course and then include ongoing support to ensure that students are successful. Students receive very good personal support, based on staff's detailed knowledge of their needs.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. A college ICT strategy has been agreed and is starting to be implemented. A broad training programme has extended the skills of many staff to teach ICT and contributes to an effective approach to ensuring equality of opportunity for all students. Most of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been addressed adequately.   However, there is insufficient ongoing quality assurance to ensure that improvements are maintained and built upon. For example, there has been limited observation of the work of new staff to ensure that they know how to use college-wide procedures, such as individual learning plans and the recording of progress. There are also too few meetings between staff at different centres to ensure that good practice is shared and developed.

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