

## RE-INSPECTION MONITORING OF WEST SUFFOLK COLLEGE

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### Outcome of Re-Inspection Monitoring

The overall provision in work-based learning in construction is now **satisfactory**.

### Background

West Suffolk College was 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 work-based learning in hospitality and construction, which was found to be unsatisfactory. Work-based learning in hospitality was regraded to satisfactory in the autumn term of 2003.

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 Monitoring Visits

In accordance with the above procedures, re-inspection monitoring visits of work-based learning in construction took place on 24 to 25 February 2003, 7 to 9 October 2003 and 27 to 29 April 2004.

### Work-based learning in construction

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 retention rates on most courses
- Good pass rates on most courses
- Effective teaching
- Good support for individual students
- Successful introduction of new courses
- Well-managed curriculum area

## Weaknesses

- Poor achievements of modern apprenticeships
- Low pass rates on bricklaying courses
- Insufficient space in some workshops
- Insufficient use of work-based assessment and evidence

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

Good progress has been made in addressing low achievements in modern apprenticeships. Effective action is being taken by the work-based learning co-ordinators and course tutors who are now tracking, monitoring and reviewing learners' progress regularly and frequently. Targets are set and monitored and both staff and students are clear about progress towards completion of frameworks. This is effectively established for the majority of learners. Retention rates continue to be good and framework completions show significant improvement. There is effective integration and

an early start for key skills, and learners are making good progress towards achieving their complete modern apprenticeship framework. Some on target to complete ahead of the planned completion dates. New learners now engage in gathering workplace evidence much earlier in their programme.

Newly appointed vocationally competent staff are working closely with the workplace supervisors, and there is a much improved focus on the nature and appropriateness of work-place activities. Workplace supervisors are more aware of the NVQ assessment requirements. Targets are set during learner progress reviews and focus on the progress of the learners' achievement of their qualifications. Learners now actively seek opportunities for gathering more work-based evidence.

Effective teaching in construction programmes was identified as a strength in the original inspection report and confirmed during the re-inspection. No unsatisfactory sessions were observed during the re-inspection monitoring visits. Theory sessions are well planned and well delivered. Practical sessions are effective in developing competent trade skills in the learners although some feel they are insufficiently challenged and do not have the opportunity incorporate the skills they acquire in the workplace. The college has developed good working relationships with employers who provide high quality work placements, together with good training and assessment opportunities relevant to the learners needs. Most learners attain good practical skills and produce a standard of work that exceeds the expectations of their supervisors and the industrial standards required for the NVQ.

Senior managers and college governors have developed a clear strategic direction to improve the provision of work-based learning. There are frequent and regular reports at senior management and governing body meetings on the performance and progress of the work-based learning provision. There is a greater understanding of issues raised by an improved use of management information. Performance against key indicators is published monthly. Investment in new premises continues and new staff have been appointed. They have provided a step change and an extra beneficial dimension to the provision. They bring recent industrial experience and a greater awareness of the needs of employers. New policies and procedures have been developed, for example, for improved tracking and monitoring, new information packs for employers and new health and safety documentation. High quality facilities for plumbing and electrical installation are now located in new premises on an industrial estate a few miles from the main college campus. The recent acquisition of an adjacent unit on the industrial estate provides scope for further expansion.

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