

RE-INSPECTION OF WIRRAL METROPOLITAN COLLEGE

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Outcome of Re-Inspection

The provision in the curriculum area of science and mathematics is now **satisfactory**.

Background

Wirral Metropolitan College was inspected in October 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 science and mathematics, the one area 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 leadership and management, or less than satisfactory provision in solely WBL, inspectors from Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of the less than satisfactory areas. As a result of the re-inspection monitoring visits, inspectors may judge that previously less than satisfactory areas of provision, or leadership and management, are now satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Where leadership and management are satisfactory, but there is curriculum provision that is less than satisfactory, there will be no monitoring visits. All less than satisfactory provision will be re-inspected, normally during one week, within two years of the original inspection.

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

In accordance with the above procedures, the re-inspection of science and mathematics took place on 11- 15 October 2004.

Science and mathematics

In October 2002, 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 and improving pass rates on most GCSE courses
- good standards achieved and good progression for access to HE students
- broad range of academic and vocational courses
- good additional learning support.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on many GCE AS and A-level courses
- too little teaching that is better than satisfactory
- inadequate accommodation and specialist resources at one site
- lack of rigour in assessing the quality of teaching and learning.

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**.

The college has made good progress in addressing weaknesses that were identified in the last inspection. The reorganization of the curriculum area to integrate mathematics, science and applied science has improved curriculum co-ordination and the sharing of good practice. A new manager has been appointed. Quality assurance has improved through new auditing procedures and more extensive use of data to monitor performance. Managers, learning and teaching champions and external consultants now assess the quality of teaching and learning rigorously. However the written reports on lesson observations are not available to managers to consider during the staff appraisal process. Course reviews and self-assessment are now more effective in improving courses. Staff development activities are focused on improving teaching and learning and have been successful in raising the proportion of lessons judged to be better than satisfactory. There has been a large investment in accommodation and a new campus now provides a good learning environment for science. The building that was identified in the last inspection as providing poor accommodation and resources for science is no longer in use. Strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained. The wide range of courses available includes GCSE, GCE advanced level, first diploma, national diploma and certificate in applied science, access to HE and industrial health and safety courses. Enrolments in mathematics and science have increased in 2004.

Retention and pass rates on many courses are still unsatisfactory. In particular the retention for students aged 16-18 is poor. In 2004 the retention rates were 54% at Level 1, 63% at level 2 and 67% at level 3. GCSE grade A-C pass rates are good and improving for all ages. They reached 64% in 2002, 65% in 2003 and 68% in 2004 compared to the latest national benchmark of 46%. Retention on GCE AS level courses is unsatisfactory but pass rates improved in 2004. Retention in GCE A level courses improved to 85% in 2004 but remains below the national benchmark of 92%. Retention rates on first diploma and national diploma applied science courses are poor but pass rates are 100%. Students on access to HE programmes achieve high standards and almost all progress to higher education. Student attendance rates are low in some classes. The average attendance in observed lessons was 77% and in one third of the lessons it was below 75%.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection but some weaknesses remain. Teachers now plan lessons thoroughly with clear learning objectives that are explained to students. A suitable variety of teaching and learning approaches are used in lessons and include group work, PowerPoint presentations, worksheets, and practical work. In most lessons teachers frequently check students' understanding through questions directed to individuals. Assessment and the monitoring of student progress are satisfactory. Practical work is well organised with due attention to safety and there is good technician support for teachers and students. Learning resources and the learning environment meet course requirements and student needs. Most teachers are full time or on fractional permanent contracts. Almost all of them have degrees and appropriate experience. A minority have no teacher training qualification. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities receive good additional support. There is an additional timetabled session

for students who require extra help with course work. In a few lessons the teaching is uninteresting and does not sufficiently challenge students. Key skills are referenced in lesson plans but are not addressed sufficiently in lessons. Adapting of teaching and learning to meet the differing needs of individuals requires further development. Although there is some use of computers, the use of ILT is under-developed. For example, computers are often used to present slides or worksheets rather than exploiting the computer facility for interactivity, simulation, animation and web research. Managers fully understand the remaining weaknesses and have strategies in place to address them.

There will be no further re-inspection of the college because there are no remaining unsatisfactory areas.

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