

## RE-INSPECTION OF THE SHEFFIELD COLLEGE

Published January 2005

### Outcome of Re-Inspection

The overall provision in work-based learning in construction is now good. The provision in engineering, in literacy and numeracy, and in work-based learning in hairdressing and beauty therapy, are all now satisfactory.

### Background

The Sheffield College was inspected in December 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 the curriculum areas of engineering and literacy and numeracy and in work-based learning in construction, engineering and hairdressing 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

In accordance with the above procedures, the re-inspection of engineering and literacy and numeracy and work-based learning provision in construction, engineering and hairdressing and beauty therapy took place during the week beginning 29 November 2004.

### Construction (work-based learning)

In the December 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 many courses
- high pass rates on the majority of courses
- extensive range of courses
- mostly well-equipped and modern workshops.

### **Weaknesses**

- failure of many modern apprentices to meet the requirements of their apprenticeship framework
- poor teaching of theory in many classes
- poor co-ordination and development of construction provision
- inadequate classroom accommodation.

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

Pass rates for both foundation and advanced modern apprentices are now good. In 1999/2000 no students achieved the advanced framework; by 2002/03, 57% of starters had achieved the framework. This could rise to 71% if the remaining students are successful. There have been improvements in pass rates at foundation level from 40% in 1999/2000 to 46% in 2002/03, with a much higher number of students. If those still in learning are successful this will rise to 76%. Retention in work-based learning in construction is also much improved and currently stands at 96%.

The overall quality of teaching observed during the re-inspection was satisfactory. Students are increasingly actively involved in theory lessons. In one class on health and safety, for example, the students were each asked to discuss one item of personal protection equipment such as safety footwear or hand protection having researched it by accessing the internet and reviewing

manufacturers' literature.

Recent considerable investment in construction accommodation has resulted in well-equipped, good quality classrooms. Good health and safety practices are used with all wood machines to ensure compliance with recent legislation. Plumbing and electrical installation are to benefit from refurbishing a mechanical services centre to meet the requirements of the recently introduced technical certificates in plumbing, heating and ventilation, and electrical installation.

There have been considerable improvements in the management of the work-based learning provision and the quality systems are now mainly good. The regular reviews and assessments are carefully monitored, and all work placements visited are of high quality and offer the full range of competences required by the national vocational qualifications (NVQs). However, assessment opportunities are being missed due to the heavy reliance on teaching staff who have fixed teaching timetables and limited flexibility to respond at short notice to perform assessments off-site. The co-ordination between workplace and college-based practical activities still requires further development.

Links with employers are growing in strength. All employers interviewed had a good understanding of the framework requirements and were able to adjust their work to cover the qualification requirements. A recently introduced pledge, welcomed by employers, emphasises the importance of the partnership between the college, employers, students and their parents. The college is also developing links with employers engaged in the refurbishment of the social housing stock in Sheffield to meet their training and skilled workforce needs from the local population.

## **Engineering**

In the December 2002 inspection, the quality of the overall provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

### **Strengths**

- high pass rates
- good teaching in workshops and in computer-aided engineering lessons
- a broad range of provision.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention rates
- failure of many modern apprentices to complete their apprenticeships successfully
- too many poorly taught lessons

- poor assessment practice
- unsatisfactory curriculum management.

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**.

Overall retention rates have improved, with retention on level 1 courses now above national averages. Low retention continues on GNVQ programmes at levels 2 and 3. In motor vehicle foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes, the full framework completion rate has increased significantly since the last inspection, but in engineering it remains very poor, being persistently low in the advanced modern apprenticeship in engineering. However, in-year retention rates and pass rates in key skills are improving on these engineering programmes, indicating a likely increase in framework completions in the near future.

In theory and practical lessons for full-time and part-time students, much of the teaching is good or better. A good variation in teaching methods was observed. In lessons, care was taken to ensure that students understood the learning objectives to be covered. Well-produced work sheets were used effectively to meet individual learning needs. In many lessons, students were appropriately challenged, well motivated and actively involved in their learning.

The assessment of apprentices' competencies now takes place regularly in the work place by properly qualified assessors who are vocational specialists. Where assessors are also teaching staff, they are not always able to meet requests for assessments because of timetable constraints. Apprentices in the final year of their programme often still have considerable evidence gaps in portfolios and this places unnecessary pressure on the apprentices and assessors to meet end of course deadlines. All full-time students interviewed were clear on how their courses are assessed, the frequency of assessment and the criteria for success. Work is returned quickly with sufficient feedback to enable judgements on quality to be made.

Curriculum team leaders and curriculum teams now meet regularly. Meetings cover standard agenda items include retention, achievement and course viability. Reliance is placed on personal tutors to raise problems associated with retention and achievement at team meetings. Many aspects of the management of apprenticeship programmes have improved since the last inspection. Employers and apprentices are well informed about the framework requirements and of progress on the programme. Apprentices' portfolios are now well organised. Individual learning plans have been improved and are used at each review visit and updated as required. Progress reviews take place at least every eight weeks on employer's premises. In key skills, specialist teachers now work alongside engineering teachers to improve the vocational relevance of the key skills.

### **Hairdressing and beauty therapy (work-based learning)**

In the December 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 pass rates on beauty therapy and short courses

- effective additional support for students in the workplace
- wide range of courses
- well-organised enrichment activities
- careful monitoring of students' progress.

### **Weaknesses**

- low retention rates on many full-time courses
- failure of many modern apprentices to complete their apprenticeships successfully
- inadequate management and implementation of key skills
- poor student attendance and lack of punctuality
- insufficient use of target setting at course level.

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**.

Retention rates on full-time courses are improving. In 2002/03, retention rates on most courses were still below national averages. However, in the current academic year, 97% of full-time students are still retained and retention has improved in work-based learning. In the 2001/02 cohort, achievement was at 29% with a potential for up to 44% to gain the full framework; for 2003/04 the potential is 64%. Students who fail to complete within the normal time for their programme have been given additional support.

Monitoring of student progress in work-based learning is now more rigorous, with an increase in the number of workplace assessors, workplace assessments and more regular reviews to monitor progress. A revised individual learning plan (ILP) enables clearly defined progress and assessment targets to be set, and the tracking of students' progress is more effective. There are now several

examples of students completing early.

The management and implementation of key skills has improved. There is greater focus on key skills at an early stage in schemes of work, better use is made of diagnostic testing to identify individual needs and there are more vocationally relevant activities. Many hairdressing assignments now include opportunities for gathering key skills evidence.

There is a steady increase in attendance year on year. At the time of the inspection, attendance was 63%. This figure improved to 78% in 2003/04 and is currently 86% for full-time courses and 85% for work-based students. Punctuality is good. Students are offered incentives for good attendance and progress.

Targets set are now realistic, measurable and with timescales clearly identified. The re-designed ILP takes account of prior experience and practical ability. Students are aware of the requirements to complete units. Teachers also agree targets to be met at the next lesson. The development plan for hairdressing and beauty therapy includes clear targets for improving retention, achievement and attendance. Course team meetings include discussion on students' progress and the actions necessary to improve the progress of each group.

Improvements in the management of both the hairdressing section and the business development unit ensure closer co-ordination through regular meetings and the setting of clear targets for attendance, retention and speeding up completion of frameworks.

### **Literacy and numeracy**

In the December 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**

- innovative and effective programmes to engage new students
- good support for students on the adult literacy and numeracy programme
- good progress by some adults in developing their literacy and numeracy skills.

#### **Weaknesses**

- too many poorly planned and unstimulating lessons
- ineffective management of literacy and numeracy across the college
- very low pass rates in key skills at level 1

- inadequate individual learning plans
- lack of differentiation in the teaching of literacy and numeracy for vocational students
- some unsuitable accommodation and poor access to resources.

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**.

Overall pass rates for the certificate in adult literacy and numeracy are improving and retention is also improving for level 1 courses. Pass rates for key skills communications at level 1 have improved to above national averages, but the pass rate for application of number at level 1 remains poor at 12%. Retention rates for key skills have deteriorated at level 1 for both communications and application of number, but have been maintained at 78% for communications at level 2 and have increased significantly for application of number. Attendance overall has improved but remains low at 56%.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In most lessons students are appropriately challenged and find the work interesting. The 'Young People Speak Out' literacy programme for students aged 16 to 19 motivates, builds confidence and develops literacy skills. However, numeracy lessons rely heavily on good quality workbooks and do not always use additional, substitute or vocationally relevant materials to match the interests of the students. In lessons for adults, students have individual plans they understand and use, but in a minority of classes for 16-18 year olds this does not happen. There is limited reference to assessment in the schemes of work and lesson plans, although in most lessons teachers use regular checks on progress to reinforce learning.

Initial assessment is effective. Individual learning plans are generally thoroughly completed and shared with adult students. However, in most classes for 16-18 year old students the individual learning plan targets are the same for all students and the plans are not shared with them.

Literacy and numeracy provision is offered across the city. Accommodation in some of the community venues used by, but not owned by, the college is poor. However, the students attending these venues are often drawn from highly deprived communities, value the provision, and would not be in education if the provision was not available locally.

The management of literacy and numeracy has improved significantly. A new management structure is focusing well on areas such as developing participation strategies, improving success rates, training of staff and involving teachers from vocational areas. The strategic importance and development of Skills for Life is understood. Courses are more appropriate to students' needs and new opportunities to attract students, particularly in the workplace, are being identified and developed. Student recruitment targets for adults and young people are being met.

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

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