

RE-INSPECTION OF THE LAKES COLLEGE

Published February 2005

OUTCOME OF RE-INSPECTION

The overall provision in construction is now **satisfactory**, with a contributory grade of **good** for construction work-based learning; in business work-based learning it is now **satisfactory**; and in computing and information and communication technology it is now **satisfactory**.

BACKGROUND

The Lakes College was inspected in January 2003. 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 construction, construction work-based learning, business work-based learning, and computing and information and communication technology, 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 where 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 construction, construction work-based learning, business administration work-based learning, and computing and information and communication technology took place on 17 to 21 January 2005.

CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDING WORK-BASED LEARNING)

In the January 2003 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 and pass rates on NVQ level 2 bricklaying
- particularly thorough induction programme for work-based students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on City and Guilds 2360 electrical installation course
- low retention rates on NVQ level 2 carpentry and joinery course
- low retention and pass rates for work-based students
- inadequate development of students' practical skills in carpentry and joinery
- much unsatisfactory teaching
- inadequate planning of training for work-based students.

Pass rates on the City and Guilds 2360 electrical installation courses have declined further since the last inspection. In 2003, there was a slight improvement in the retention rate on the NVQ level 2 carpentry and joinery course, but in 2004 it fell to below the national average. The college has put in place strategies to address these weaknesses. The foundation construction award is now a stepping-stone to the more advanced courses and the electrical installation courses are being replaced with the new technical certificate and the related NVQ qualification. The development of students' practical skills in all areas of the provision is now good. Students work well, particularly in practical lessons. They develop a range of hand skills and produce good practical work that meets industrial standards.

Standards of teaching are now at least satisfactory. In the lessons inspected, the proportion of good and better teaching was average for the area of learning. Lesson planning is effective. Learning outcomes are specific and shared with students. A variety of teaching methods are effectively used.

There is good integration of theory and practice in many lessons. The teaching of key skills is satisfactory. Practical activities are well organised, carried out safely and are realistic. Very little specialist computer software is used to support teaching and learning. There is insufficient checking on students' progress and understanding in theory lessons. Teachers, in some lessons, fail to extend the skills of the more able students.

Some workshops have been redesigned to create more space and additional workshops for bricklaying and plumbing have been established. New hand tools, power tools and textbooks have been purchased. The assessment and monitoring of progress is now satisfactory, but feedback to students is inconsistent. Internal verification is satisfactory, but is not carried out consistently in all areas of the provision. The range of provision is narrow, mainly confined to traditional craft courses at levels 1 and 2, and this restricts students' progression. Leadership and management of the area are now satisfactory. There is now a focus on quality assurance as a means to improve students' experience.

CONSTRUCTION WORK-BASED LEARNING

The number of work-based students has decreased from 40 at the time of the original inspection to 19 at the time of the re-inspection. The provision comprises only carpentry and joinery.

Retention rates for work-based learning students have improved significantly during the last two years and are now good. Pass rates have also increased and are well above the national average for this area of work-based learning. In the last four years only one completer has failed to achieve the training plan.

There are high quality work placements for employed and non-employed students. This enables students to develop their practical skills in an industrial setting and on a range of construction projects. Students have good assessment opportunities in the workplace and assessment evidence includes photographs of completed work. There is good evidence of students' acquisition of NVQ competences. Standards of teaching in college lessons are now satisfactory or better. There is effective monitoring of students' progress to ensure that they achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales. Progress reviews are carried out regularly. Good records of progress are maintained by tutors and assessors, and students and their employers both receive a copy of the records. Some short-term targets are not effective and some also fail to challenge all students sufficiently. There remains some unsatisfactory practice in the standard of feedback to students on their portfolio evidence. The development of students' key skills is now satisfactory.

There is now effective management of the work-based training. This results in well-planned training programmes, including work experience and workplace assessment, for all students. There is no formal coordination of additional support within the programme. There is now a progression route for successful completers, but the college was slow to respond to this weakness identified during the original inspection.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION WORK-BASED LEARNING

In the January 2003 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses for business and administration as a whole were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- high pass rates on call centre techniques and word processing courses
- rigorous system for monitoring and reviewing student progress

- effective arrangements for assessing full-time students' work through the use of ICT
- high success rate of work-based learners in progressing to employment.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on some full-time courses
- inadequate provision at level 1 in business
- failure of some teachers to meet students' differing needs in lessons
- failure of many learners to meet the requirements of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- ineffective use of individual learning plans on work-based learning programmes.

The number of work-based students has decreased from 56 at the time of the original inspection to 22 at the time of the re-inspection. The provision comprises business administration.

Between 2001 and 2003 the overall achievement on the apprenticeship programme was low at 25%. The college is addressing this, but during the last two years few students have met all of the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. Students' portfolios inspected during workplace visits now demonstrate good progress in the completion of qualifications within planned timescales. The standard of students' work and development of skills is now satisfactory and in line with awarding body requirements. A good range of diverse evidence is used for assessments. Students are integrated well into work teams and are developing employability skills such as time management and working as a team member. The retention rate for apprenticeships has improved and for the advanced apprenticeships in 2004 was very good at 100%. A high proportion of students progress to full-time employment.

There is effective use of individual learning plans. The recording of individual learning plans are generally complete. Students have their own copies of these plans and also have a record of progress made on programme. All individual learning plans demonstrate good practice in recording varied dates for the different elements of the framework, so that students can plan and monitor their own progress. Long-term targets in the plans are challenging and motivating for students. They reflect students' personal circumstances. Recording of short-term target dates and recording of completed work on action plans is less consistent and some is unsatisfactory.

There is good use of management information to monitor the recruitment, retention, and progress of students. Tutors identify 'at risk' students and take appropriate action to support them. There is clear evidence that improvement strategies are beginning to have a positive effect in areas such as the development of wider assessment methods. Since the original inspection, the internal verification process has been improved to include observations of assessors. Quality assurance procedures have been strengthened.

COMPUTING AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

In the January 2003 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
- excellent specialist resources
- high rate of students' progression from one course level to the next.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on foundation and intermediate level courses
- slow progress of many students
- poor attendance on intermediate and advanced level courses
- much unsatisfactory teaching
- insufficient recording of individual students' learning in workshops
- some unsatisfactory course management

- failure of some learning materials to meet individual students' needs.

The foundation and the GNVQ intermediate IT courses have been discontinued and replaced by a First Diploma IT Practitioner course. Pass rates have improved. Pass rates are good on level 1 part-time courses, and are at least satisfactory on key skills IT at levels 1, 2 and 3. On the only full-time course, the National Diploma, both pass rates and retention rates are low. There is poor retention on the ECDL one-year course. Student attendance at inspected lessons was satisfactory. The level of students' attainment is good on key skills IT and on part-time courses.

All teaching is at least satisfactory and the proportion of lessons judged to be good or better is above the average for the area of learning. Some lessons are inspiring. Teachers use a range of materials to ensure that all students achieve. A minority of lessons is dull, and these are often too teacher-led. The recording of students' progress is satisfactory, and tutors keep accurate and detailed records. The standard of marking of assignments is satisfactory. Work is sometimes late being returned to students. Teachers share good quality teaching material on the virtual learning environment, and students can access this from college or at home.

There is now effective management of the ICT programmes and there are clear lines of communication. The course teams meet regularly. The four-monthly course review process is rigorous and is succeeding in improving course management. The range of programmes is small but satisfactory.

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