

RE-INSPECTION MONITORING OF PRESTON COLLEGE

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Outcome of Re-Inspection Monitoring

The overall provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy, work-based learning (WBL) in hairdressing and beauty therapy, and WBL in business is now **satisfactory**.

Leadership and management are now **satisfactory**.

Background

Preston College was inspected in November 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 hairdressing and beauty therapy, WBL hairdressing and beauty therapy, WBL Business areas and leadership and management which were found to be less than satisfactory.

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 Monitoring Visits

In accordance with the above procedures, the first re-inspection monitoring visits of WBL business, hairdressing and beauty therapy, WBL hairdressing and beauty therapy and leadership and management took place on 19 and 20 May 2004, with subsequent re-inspection monitoring visits in November 2004, and in February and June 2005.

Business WBL

In the November 2003 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses relevant to WBL were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- effective individual support for students in lessons and in the workplace.

Weaknesses

- poor NVQ and framework completion on work-based learning programmes.

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

Completion rates for NVQs and framework have improved since the last inspection. From the 2003/04 cohort of foundation modern apprentices, 35% have already achieved the NVQ and 11% have achieved the full framework. From the same period 27% of advanced modern apprentices have achieved the NVQ and 6% have achieved the framework. Pass rates for the technical certificates are satisfactory. Almost half the apprentices recruited in 2003/04 have either completed their framework or are still in learning. The retention rate for learners recruited in 2004/05 is low, at 70%. Support for students on administration work-based programmes is good. Progress monitoring reviews are regular and thorough. Assessment in the workplace is good. The college encourages the involvement of employers through initial interviews to clarify the co-operation which will be required of them, and through newsletters. The systems for internal verification have been strengthened with the appointment of a lead internal verifier. Internal verification takes place regularly and is well recorded. Students' views are sought through questionnaires and focus groups. The area's self-assessment report is descriptive and makes insufficient use of data on retention and achievement rates. Apprentices on AAT accounting courses are now managed through an independent training provider.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

In the November 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

- good teaching and learning in practical lessons
- wide range of specialist resources
- thorough initial assessment.

Weaknesses

- poor achievement on work-based learning programmes
- low retention rates on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses
- incomplete individual learning plans for modern apprentices
- unsatisfactory teaching and learning in theory and key skills lessons.

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

Retention and pass rates are good on the majority of beauty therapy programmes. For example, in beauty therapy level 1 the retention rate is 100% and the pass rate is 94%. In hairdressing, on the level 2 one-year course, retention has improved to close to the national average. Retention has improved significantly on the level 2, two-year hairdressing course and is now 9% above the national average. Retention for adult students is low on the one

year programme at level 1 due to a lack of appropriate guidance at interview stage. Two-year programmes will not be offered in 2005/06.

Teaching in practical lessons remains good. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory in theory and key skills lessons. Key skills are now integrated effectively into the curriculum, and emphasis is focused on the individual learner. Most students now achieve their key skills portfolio.

Quality assurance is satisfactory. There is an improved focus on analysing ways to improve retention, achievement and the quality of provision for different student cohorts. Lesson observations have been carried out with closer attention to improving teaching and learning. The content of course files has improved. Action points are identified and monitored closely.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy WBL

In the November 2003 inspection, the quality of WBL provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The strengths and weaknesses of hairdressing and beauty therapy as a whole identified in the inspection report are stated above. Following re-inspection monitoring visits, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses. The overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

Framework achievement has improved and is now satisfactory. Of the 2002/03 cohort of foundation modern apprentices (FMAs), 45% achieved the framework and 50% achieved the NVQ at level 2. Of the 2003/04 cohort, so far two students have achieved the framework, and 63 are still in learning. At NVQ level 2, retention rates are high but achievements are more modest. In-year retention rates are high, particularly in beauty therapy.

Key skills are now delivered at the beginning of the programme and most learners complete these well ahead of their end date. Individual learning plans have been improved, and are now monitored effectively and updated after every placement review visit. A comprehensive range of information is used effectively to inform staff and learners. All learners now have unit assessment tracking sheets, which are kept up to date and correspond with the trainers' cumulative records. Inspectors identified a shortage of clients in hairdressing. The college has taken appropriate action and made good progress in attracting additional clients for each of the work-based training centres. The new development of providing 'corporate packages' for business has increased the client base, providing an improved realistic working environment.

Beauty therapy staff and managers have worked effectively as a team in the development of the provision. There has been an increase in the number of modern apprentices in beauty therapy, with the development of two additional courses. There are currently 22 salons participating in WBL.

Leadership and management

Inspectors made the following judgment of leadership and management in the June 2003 inspection, which is recorded in Part A of the inspection report.

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The college has undergone considerable organisational change. The process of management reorganisation has been conducted effectively. However, weaknesses in management and quality assurance which were identified at the last inspection persist. The quality of teaching and the college's retention and pass rates have declined over the period 2001 to 2003. The college has failed to meet some of its key performance targets in each of the last three years. The college's self-assessment procedures are generally reliable, although they failed to identify the significant weaknesses in leadership and management. Unreliable management information has hampered governors and managers in monitoring the college's performance. The college is in a difficult financial position, although it is recovering from its £2 million budget deficit earlier than anticipated. While the college may provide value for money for some adult students, overall, the college does not provide value for money. The college has successfully widened participation and developed effective collaborative arrangements with other providers of education in north-west Lancashire and extended its provision for students aged 14 to 16.

Following re-inspection monitoring visits, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing weaknesses. Leadership and management at Preston College are now **satisfactory**.

At the time of inspection in November 2003, the report noted that weaknesses from the previous inspection in 1998 had not been addressed adequately. These were in quality assurance, monitoring of the college's performance, and inadequate emphasis on retention issues in action plans. The college has made satisfactory progress in all of these areas. The quality files now have evidence of target setting for recruitment, retention and pass rates. The quality of action planning has improved and the corporation is exercising close supervision of the college's finances and core business.

Curriculum inspectors for the areas being re-inspected report that during the period of the monitoring visits, teaching and learning in practical sessions remained good and theory teaching had improved to be satisfactory. The college has made satisfactory progress in the quality of the internal observation of teaching and learning, but acknowledges that it needs to continue with training for this role.

The trend in overall retention and achievement at level 1 is improving to close to national averages, and at levels 2 and 3 remains at or above national averages. At level 2, the pass rate for adult students is significantly above the national average. In key skills, attendance, retention and pass rates have improved.

The use of target-setting to improve students' performance is much improved. At college level, targets for recruitment, retention and pass rates are now routinely set and used to monitor the performance of different cohorts of students. The reliability of MIS data has improved.

The appraisal system is applied across the college and links to development plans and targets are good. Quality assurance is satisfactory. Internal verification is more effective

and quality assurance measures have led to good external verification reports in a number of curriculum areas.

Governance is good. Governors maintain close oversight of the college's financial position and core business. Curriculum planning has improved through the business review process. This has led to a thorough mapping and evaluation of the provision. The college's financial position has improved significantly and has moved from LSC category C up to category B. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

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