

## RE-INSPECTION MONITORING OF ST HELENS COLLEGE

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### Outcome of Re-Inspection Monitoring

The overall provision of work-based learning in business administration, management and professional, and in information and communication technology (ICT), is now **satisfactory**.

### Background

St Helens 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 work-based learning (WBL) in business administration, management and professional, ICT, and hairdressing and beauty therapy, 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.

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 WBL in business administration, management and professional, ICT, and hairdressing and beauty therapy took place on 12 and 13 May 2003, 28, 29 and 30 April 2004 and 15, 16 and 17 June 2004.

### Business administration, management and professional (WBL)

In the October 2002 inspection, the quality of the WBL provision in this area was judged to be

unsatisfactory. The following weaknesses were identified for WBL in the inspection report:

### **Weaknesses**

- inadequate integration of key skills into vocational training
- unsatisfactory achievement on work-based learning.

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 integrating key skills into vocational training, particularly since July 2003. The completion of key skills units is now timed to coincide with the completion of the national vocational qualification (NVQ). Organisational and managerial changes have had a beneficial impact on students' progress. The management of key skills was devolved to curriculum areas in July 2003, although two central staff have been retained to oversee the assessment process and to standardise procedures. The central staff provide a good service to curriculum areas. The curriculum area has a key skills steering group and a WBL sub-group. Senior tutors are responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring the delivery of key skills and for ensuring the integration of key skills with vocational training. Programme teams identify where evidence from the NVQs, technical certificates and enhancements can be integrated with key skills, especially communication and application of number. A key skills manual has been produced for staff, which has streamlined and simplified procedures and documentation. Key skills staff development events have been run throughout the year to up-date and familiarise staff with the management, implementation and integration of key skills. Examination of portfolio evidence, and observation of teaching and learning, also indicate progress in the integration of key skills into vocational training.

Achievement on work-based learning programmes is now satisfactory. Retention rates for the foundation modern apprenticeship (FMA) in business administration have improved over the last three years, from 27% in 2000/01, to 52% in 2001/02 and 55% in 2002/03. In 2003/04, it is currently 68%. Although NVQ and framework achievements are low, they are improving. In 2000/01, 11 students enrolled on this programme. There were no framework achievements but 55% achieved the NVQ. In 2001/02, 29 students started the programme, 21% completed the framework and 59% achieved the NVQ. In 2002/03, 20 students started the programme, 15% have completed the framework and 55% achieved the NVQ. However, there are seven students still in learning, which could increase framework achievement to 50%. A similar trend is apparent in the FMA in accounting. In 2000/01 8 students enrolled on the programme, 25% achieved the framework and 50% achieved the NVQ. In 2001/02, 1 student started the programme and achieved the framework. In 2002/03, 5 students started the programme, 60% achieved the framework. Retention has improved from 38% in 2000/01, to 75% in 2003/04. During 2003/04, one student enrolled on the advanced modern apprenticeship (AMA) in business administration and one in accounting. They are both still on programme.

### **Information and communication technology (ICT) (WBL)**

In the October 2002 inspection, the quality of the WBL provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following weakness was identified for WBL in the inspection report:

### **Weaknesses**

- a poor retention rate of modern apprentices.

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**.

The retention rate on modern apprentice programmes is now satisfactory. The retention rate for 2000/01 was 50%, for 2001/02 it was 42% with one student still on programme, and for 2002/03 it is 54% with 13 students still on programme. In the current year, 2003/04, the retention rate is 93% with 14 students still on programme. The positive improvement in modern apprenticeship retention rates has been achieved in the main through the introduction of, and improvements to, the following developments. There is more employer involvement. The college is involving employers in the learning process through the issue of schemes of work and awarding body standards. College staff involve employers in the progress review process where they contribute to discussions on students' progress, further training and target-setting. Employers are also encouraged to identify assessment opportunities in their workplace. Work placements are carefully selected by college staff to ensure they provide the right environment and opportunity for the student to put into practice what they learn during their off-the-job learning. Key skills have been integrated by college staff into the NVQ with evidence generated in the workplace used as the basis for the students' key skills portfolio. Learners often complete their key skills before they complete their NVQ. Completed NVQ units are quickly assessed and internally verified by college staff to motivate students and give them the incentive to progress towards full NVQ completion. Students take greater responsibility for their own learning. The rate of progress of current students, including earlier completion of key skills, has improved significantly. College staff make greater use of action-planning and target-setting during workplace assessments and progress reviews. Students have access to the college's web site that provides information on their individual progress to date, and workplace supervisors are encouraged by college staff to view this information alongside their students.

The re-inspection of WBL in hairdressing and beauty therapy is incomplete and an overall judgement stating that it is now satisfactory cannot be given. This area will receive a further re-inspection monitoring visit in October 2004.