



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



RE-INSPECTION OF THANET COLLEGE

Published June 2005

Outcome of Re-Inspection

The overall provision in construction is now **satisfactory**.

The overall provision in work-based learning in hairdressing and beauty therapy is now **satisfactory**.

Background

Thanet College was inspected in May 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 and in work-based learning in hairdressing and beauty therapy 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

In accordance with the above procedures, re-inspection of construction and work-based learning in hairdressing and beauty therapy took place during the week of 9-13 May 2005.

CONSTRUCTION

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

Strengths

- good and improving retention and pass rates on NVQ level 2 courses
- good practical teaching
- effective use of self-learning packs to support learning.

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates on the NVQ level 2 brickwork course
- very poor pass rates on the intermediate construction certificate
- poor implementation of health and safety
- ineffective management of the curriculum.

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 retention rate across construction was 82% in 2003/04, above the national average. Retention

rates on most courses offered in 2003/04 were significantly above national averages. For example, the NVQ level 2 retention rate in trowel occupations, identified as a key weakness at the last inspection, is now well above the national average. In decorative occupations, retention is 46% above the national average and in the intermediate construction award 41% above.

Pass rates in key skills have improved over the past three years. In 2002/03, only four students successfully achieved key skills awards. In 2003/04 and 2004/05, however, 65 and 130 students respectively gained these awards. Teachers now strongly promote early key skills achievement. In those classes observed, key skills were fully integrated into the main programme. The pass rates on the intermediate construction certificate show some improvement but remain below national averages. The pass rates on NVQ level 2 brickwork have not yet improved.

The quality of teaching has improved and the standard of practical work observed in carpentry and joinery and painting and decorating meets commercial standards. Many students on these courses also promptly complete high quality portfolios of evidence, ready for internal and external verification. In interior design and decorative techniques, students' work is generally of a very high standard. Five of the students currently on the course have been offered university places. However, in the trowel trades, portfolio development is slow and those portfolios examined showed significant deficiencies in the collection and collation of evidence.

Teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection, especially the teaching of theory. Teachers have appropriate vocational qualifications. Recently appointed teachers have up-to-date industrial experience and are all developing their teaching qualifications. Technological equipment is now available in all classrooms to enable teachers to extend the variety of teaching techniques employed. The improvement in the quality of teaching has resulted in a significant improvement in learning by students. The quality of most students' work is good. The effective use of theory workbooks is widespread. Teachers assess students' work regularly, providing constructive feedback, and record students' progress. However, the awarding body has imposed a sanction on trowel and wood trades courses for failing to address compliance action points. The college has taken appropriate action to address this and the level of sanction has recently been reduced. However, the effect of the sanction has been to delay the certification of students.

The college has taken appropriate steps to improve the leadership and management of construction, which are now effective and have focussed strongly on developing the teaching workforce. Many members of staff, whilst technically competent, need support to become effective teachers. A series of measures has been introduced to support the immediate development of teaching staff. Managers are concerned to develop a high standard of provision by ensuring that quality issues are resolved before growth can take place. The self-assessment report reflects the progress construction has made since inspection and includes details of the proposed expansion of the provision. Since the last inspection, compliance with health and safety standards has improved dramatically. All wood machines are now compliant with current regulations and the college has implemented many of the recommendations contained in the national Approved Code of Practice. Accommodation issues, identified at the last inspection, have been effectively resolved with the relocation of brickwork to a new building off-site.

The curriculum team routinely monitors retention levels and contacts absent students on the first day of any unauthorised absence. Many students now contact the college to advise staff when they are going to be absent. Robust systems have been introduced to challenge and improve habitual lateness.

WORK-BASED LEARNING IN HAIRDRESSING AND BEAUTY THERAPY

In the May 2003 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following weaknesses relating to work-based learning were identified in the inspection report.

Weaknesses

- poor achievement of full framework for modern apprentices
- ineffective management of work-based learning.

Following the re-inspection, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses relating to work-based learning hairdressing and beauty therapy. The overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

College data indicates that student numbers in work-based learning hairdressing and beauty therapy have risen over the past three years from 16 to 63. The completion of foundation modern apprenticeships has also improved from 0% in 2001/02 to 35% in 2003/04. Retention, however, is poor and shows a steady decline.

The quality of teaching and learning in college lessons is satisfactory or better, but is still slightly below the national average. Students have good opportunities to develop practical skills in the realistic working environment salons in the college and their work placements maximise the development of their practical skills in an industrial setting. Students demonstrate high levels of technical skills in colouring, cutting and dressing hair and also in barbering techniques.

Teachers are enthusiastic and display high-level technical skills and subject knowledge. Lessons are generally well planned and all teachers set high professional standards for the students. Teachers create a supportive, friendly learning environment, which enables students to develop their skills with confidence. Most students are making satisfactory progress overall but some weaker students are making slow progress in the development of their skills and portfolios. The placement of students onto inappropriate levels of key skills programmes has resulted in a lack of challenge and added value for the more able students. Key skills are not fully integrated into the main programme.

Assessment of students' work is generally good with helpful written and verbal feedback. Assessments have, however, been delayed in recent months due to staff shortages but the college has now appointed a work-based learning co-ordinator who assesses in the workplace. Good use is made of the technician support to assess reception skills. Internal verification has not met awarding body requirements, but the college has recently put in place new procedures and practices to remedy this. In recent months the monitoring of students' progress has been good. Teachers regularly carry out rigorous progress reviews and set challenging individual targets. Good records of reviews are kept and students and employers both receive a copy of the record.

Following a period of frequent staff changes, the new appointments of a head of section and work-based learning co-ordinator have strengthened the management of this area. The new manager has developed quality assurance systems to address previous weaknesses and lack of processes and procedures but it is too early to measure the impact of these. The college has established good communication with employers. Employers value the support they are now receiving from the college, which keeps them fully informed of students' attendance, punctuality and progress and updates them on assessment practices.

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

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