

Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published June 2007	Provider reference 130823
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Introduction

Guildford College was inspected in April 2005. 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 which was found to be less than satisfactory. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is less than satisfactory within two years of the original inspection. If inadequate areas of learning or aspects of provision remain inadequate following re-inspection, inspectors will continue to monitor progress at annual assessment visits, but the areas will not be re-graded. They will be re-inspected during the full college inspection.

The less than satisfactory construction was re-inspected on 23 and 24 April 2007. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Construction	4	2

Context

The college offers a range of full and part-time construction craft courses from level 1 to level 3 including trowel, wood and decorative occupations, plumbing, and electrical installation. Technician courses are offered at first and national levels. There are 706 students, 281 of whom are aged 16 to 18. There are 164 full time and 542 part-time students. There are 312 apprentices and 57 pupils from local schools on an increased flexibility course.

Strengths

- *high and improving success rates on most courses*
- *much good teaching and learning*
- *very effective actions to improve quality*
- *good leadership and management*

Areas for improvement

- *insufficient focus on meeting students' individual needs in a few lessons.*
- *low key skills success rates on full-time courses*

Achievement and standards

Success rates are high and improving in 2005/06. The most popular courses have success rates well above the national average. The success rates on the foundation and intermediate construction awards are 22% above the national averages. The BTEC national award is 17% above the national average. Work-based learning success rates have improved and are satisfactory at 54%.

Key skills success rates on full-time courses at 4%, 12% and 17% have been very low for the last three years. Success rates across all courses have increased in 2005/06. The standard of students' written and practical work is good.

Quality of provision

There is much good teaching and learning. Most lessons are well planned with clear aims and objectives. Good lessons include a variety of teaching methods and there is good use of specialist teaching aids, including information learning technology (ILT). There is frequent checking of learning and good use is made of students' work experience in these lessons. A minority of lessons lack appropriate variety. They do not involve students enough or meet their individual needs sufficiently.

The curriculum provides appropriate progression opportunities. Additional learning needs are identified and met promptly for most students. Weekly tutorials take place for full-and part-time students and precise targets are set for improvement. The student tracking system monitors student progress effectively.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The new management team ensures sharp focus on student success. Quality assurance is good. Very effective actions have been taken to improve quality. Communication across the sections is very good. Workshop resources are satisfactory. Most teaching rooms are well resourced with support materials and specialist equipment. Course meetings are effective at monitoring improvements.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Guildford College of Further and Higher Education
Date of visit: 23 and 24 April 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

Achievement and standards

How successful were students in 2005/06 including those on work-based learning and 14 to 16 provision? Does trend data show good improvements and is value added data positive?

- There have been good improvements to success rates for students of all ages over the last two years. In 2005/06, the overall success rate for the college was four per cent above the national average for that year.
- National averages for 2005/06 are not currently available at different levels. In 2005/06, college success rates on long courses for students aged 16 to 18 were above the national average for 2004/05 by four per cent and two per cent at levels 1 and 2 respectively. The success rate at level 3 was one per cent below the national average. The pass rate was satisfactory but retention was four per cent below the national average.
- Success rates for adult students in 2005/06 were at the national average for 2004/05 at level 1, five per cent above the national average at level 2 and seven per cent above the national average at level 3. The retention rate at level 3 was high at 11% above the national average.
- Value added data show that overall, students make the progress expected based on their prior attainment.
- Success rates on apprenticeship frameworks increased significantly in 2005/06 but they were four per cent below the national average. Success rates on advanced apprenticeships are much higher at 69% which is 25% above the national average.
- Success rates for key skills were very low. The college has focused attention on improving key skills this year. Pass rates in the external tests so far this year are much improved on pass rates last year.

- The success rate for students aged 14 to 16 following the Increased Flexibility Programme was 78%.
- Success rates for female students aged 16 to 18 are much higher than for male students at all levels.
- Overall success rates for students from minority ethnic heritage are 4% higher than the mean for the college in 2005/06 but there is some variability between different groups.
- Almost 40% of 16 to 18 year old full-time students progressed from level 2 to level 3. Progression from level 1 to level 2 is less impressive at 27%.

Has students' punctuality and attendance improved?

- Students' unauthorised absence is addressed promptly. Current attendance rates have risen by two per cent over the last year to 83%.

Quality of education and training

To what extent are curriculum pathways for 14 to 19-year-olds in place?

- Sixteen different courses are provided for students aged 14 to 16 to study through the Increased Flexibility Programme. Progression pathways to higher level courses are provided in each subject for students to study from the age of 16 to 19. The college is working with two local networks to prepare for specialised diplomas in construction and art and design.

How effectively does the curriculum meet the needs of stakeholders including employers? How successful have actions been to increase student participation in enrichment activities?

- Detailed analysis of local need, government and Learning Skills Council (LSC) priorities is undertaken each year during the curriculum review. Faculty curriculum plans incorporate key external issues and risks. All curriculum areas identify progression routes through the levels. They also identify courses specifically designed for employers. Employer forums are held twice each year in each vocational curriculum area and students attend course consultative meetings twice each year. Feedback from employers and students influence curriculum decisions. Students speak highly of their courses.
- The take-up of enrichment activities has increased.

How effective is support, advice and guidance for all students?

- Changes to the provision of additional learning support are providing a better focus on meeting the individual needs of students. The recent restructuring of this area is establishing closer links between additional learning support and skills for life provision. Additional learning support staff are each linked to a particular vocational area and are well placed to provide tailored support for students. Most literacy and numeracy support for adult students takes place in the community. Additional learning support staff are readily available to assess students' needs and provide advice to tutors on appropriate support.
- Initial screening for all students is more systematic and the identification of basic skills needs has improved. Initial assessment has been brought forward and takes place during interviews. This is to ensure that students are placed on an appropriate course and support needs are planned for in good time.
- Advice and guidance is now available more widely, with parity of services for careers advice on both college campuses. Services are available more flexibly and there are plans to extend the careers centres' opening times in response to feedback from students. A wide range of vocational and academic careers information, advice and guidance is provided.
- As part of the College's nextstep contract, the careers team are targeting the recruitment of male participants and developing support for ESOL students.

Is tutorial provision effective across the college?

- The consistency and effectiveness of tutorial provision continues to improve. Clear guidelines, with exemplar materials for group tutorials, are provided to tutors. The use and content of these materials are discussed and reinforced through staff training. The tutorial audit process is thorough and used systematically. It identifies any inconsistencies and bolsters the effectiveness of tutorials by identifying actions for development. Aspects of Every Child Matters themes are included in tutorials in most areas of provision and further developments are planned. There is sharp focus on ensuring that tutorials are interesting and worthwhile. Students report that they find these sessions valuable.

- The college has reorganised responsibilities for tutorial provision. New arrangements are enabling the formation of closer and more effective cross-college links. The quality of individual learning plans is variable, particularly target setting, and this has been recognised as a priority area for development in tutorials across the college. All part-time students now have the opportunity for individual tutorials with their personal tutor.

Leadership and management

Is work-based learning managed effectively across the college?

- The management of work-based learning is effective. Framework achievements for both advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships have increased significantly. The proportion of timely completions of frameworks also improved. The apprenticeship programme expanded considerably and almost tripled in size in 2005/06 with an additional 200 apprentices.
- Overall, retention is improving and the tracking of learners' progress on their framework components is more rigorous. In 2005/06 the success rate for key skills increased to 48% from 33% the previous year. Effective monitoring identifies issues around the performance of individual learners and programmes. Issues are followed up promptly with appropriate actions taken.
- Links and communication with employers are effective. Employers are effectively involved in programmes and in learners' progress reviews. There is an effective system for monitoring attendance of off-the-job training.
- The number of positive progressions in E2E increased by 5% from the previous year to 52% in 2005/06.

How effective is skills for life provision?

- The effectiveness of the skills for life provision is developing and its cohesion improving. Following the restructuring of faculty responsibilities, skills for life provision is now linked with supported learning, key and basic skills and ESOL provision. Although at an early stage of implementation, this approach is beginning to support a clear and well managed strategy to improve the effectiveness of skills for life

provision across the college. Clear policies and procedures have been developed to support the three year plan in this area. A key skills recovery plan is being implemented.

- Co-ordination and communication within the skills for life provision is effective. Skills for life tutors have an increasingly integrated role within the vocational areas. A detailed tutor handbook supports consistency and provides guidance for the provision. Effective use is made of the frequent opportunities for staff to share good practice.

How effective and well-managed are actions to improve the quality of provision?

- The college model for prioritising areas requiring quality improvements is applied to teaching and courses. It consists of consolidating good and outstanding aspects, adjusting areas that are satisfactory and transforming areas that are inadequate (CAT). All courses and teaching are categorised by CAT. The college is committed to observing all teachers this academic year and most teachers have been observed on at least one occasion. The college judges that teaching and learning have improved well since the last inspection. Joint observations take place internally in order to moderate judgements. Lesson observations are also moderated by an external consultant. Most lesson observation records sampled clearly support the grade awarded.
- The teaching and learning strategy is a useful, easily understood and well presented document which is provided to all staff. Staff have clear written guidance on lesson grading criteria.
- Curriculum managers meet fortnightly to discuss quality issues and share good practice such as the implementation of the success rate tracker. Good practice is disseminated to staff teams during weekly meeting and training days. Managers all receive training through the college's 'simply brilliant' training scheme.