

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Uxbridge College

Date of visit: 14 September 2007

Context

The last full inspection of Uxbridge College was in February 2004. The college's leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory, whilst the college's response to educational and social inclusion, and its guidance and support, were seen as good. Seven curriculum areas were judged to be satisfactory or good. Four areas that were graded as unsatisfactory were reinspected in February 2006 when they were judged to be satisfactory. In 2006-07 the college had some 7,500 enrolments, equivalent to approximately 4,800 full-time equivalent learners. Around 60% of the enrolments are in the 16-18 year old age group. The College is based at two sites, four miles apart. The Uxbridge site is in mainly modern, purpose built premises with an Academy for 16-19 year old students. The new Hayes Community Campus features more of the practical based leisure and art disciplines. A new principal, previously a vice-principal at the College, was appointed in August 2007.

Achievement and standards

<p>What progress has been made in improving learners' outcomes at all levels, and specifically in respect of A-B grades at A level, timely success rates for work-based learning and outcomes for 14-16 year old students?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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The College's 2005/06 data was reviewed at the last monitoring visit, when improvements in most areas were noted. Validated data confirms that analysis. Full college data for 2006/07 was not available for this visit. However, outcomes for GCE A level for 2006/07, which were available, had an overall success rate of 94%, similar to the previous year and around 9% above national rates. The Academy has recently focussed on improving high grade (A-B) achievement, with specific staff development, more detailed feedback to students on their progress, and higher entry qualifications. The 2006/07 A level high grades showed a good improvement from a previous rate of 22%, to 31%, just above national averages. Six of the main subject areas had high grade results above national averages, seven were below. English Language, which has had a disappointing run of results, has now been dropped from the college programme. GCE AS overall results continue to show an improvement, and are now 12 percentage

points above national rates. The proportion of high grades has stayed approximately the same at 21% which is just below national rates. In work-based learning there have also been changes to the college's approach, with more management oversight and involvement, increased on-line tracking, and clarification of staff roles. Unvalidated end-of-year data indicates that overall success rates, and specifically timely success rates have both improved, and are both now at national averages. The outcomes for 14-16 year old learners have also improved. The anticipated success rate for 2006-07 is 63%, up from 51% in the previous year. The college has paid particular attention to improving retention, both in-year and between years. This includes changes in communication with partner schools and learners, an emphasis on intermediate achievements and improved selection. Retention has improved from 69% to 84% in 2006/07.

<p>What further improvements have been made in the business administration area, specifically to improve the low pass rates for full-time students?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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The reinspection in early 2006 still noted specific concerns about low-pass rates on full-time business administration courses, and low added value on GCE business studies. There has been reasonable progress in these aspects. Within the school there has been a significant effort to make courses more work orientated, an emphasis on differentiation in lessons, and improvements in assessment. Since the reinspection validated 2005/06 data, and unvalidated 2006/07 data, show improvements in most courses. GCE results in business study courses are generally showing a trend of improvement over the past 2 years to or above national rates, with A level business studies having a 100% pass rate with high grades above national rates. Retention at all levels remains just above national rates. NVQ accounting results at Levels 3 and 4 are still weak, although some further successes are anticipated. The college has implemented a range of initiatives to improve this programme. NVQ accounting level 3 results have improved. Other programmes in the area, such as the National Diploma and certificate in bookkeeping also show signs of embedded improvement to 2005/06 to good levels of performance. There is a trend of improvement in the value added results in this area; the outcomes are now within the national norm.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in improving the rigour and consistency of assessment practices and internal verification?	Reasonable progress
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Previous annual assessment visits, inspections and the college's SAR noted improvements in assessment and internal verification (IV), which were seen as a key weakness in 2004. However in most cases there were still specific concerns. The college continues to make reasonable progress in improving the rigour of assessment and IV across the college. The on-line system is being continually developed to allow management of the process by staff and provide increasingly detailed feedback to students. Staff and students appear to be very familiar with and properly use the system. Some individual comments on the system are limited, though students have further comments on their returned work. IV requirements and planning is now more carefully outlined in this system, and in the associated schemes of work. This allows better management checking, though that element is not yet subject to the rigours of automated reports or deadlines. Routine 'health checks' across the college properly highlight areas for improvement in assessment work. External validation, which is subject to appropriate management review, is indicating improvements in assessment and IV. Work continues in maintaining or improving standards, with such things as new, carefully introduced policies on submission of work. There is some sharing of good practice, and appropriate initial staff training and mentoring.

How has initial assessment been improved to benefit students, teachers and managers?	Reasonable progress
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The college has continued to improve the way in which it assesses the literacy and numeracy skills of students. Students on full-time programmes undertake assessments on-line at the start of their courses. If these assessments indicate that students need support, 'learning advocates' work with them on a one-to-one or group basis. The process appears to work well and there are examples of good practice, particularly where the support is contextualised so that it is relevant to the students' main subject area. Results from the initial assessment and, if relevant, from learning support are transferred to electronic individual learning plans (ILPs). This information helps teachers and students to negotiate and record targets. The quality of target-setting is improving but college managers recognise that this remains an area for further development. Teachers

are increasingly using the results of initial assessment to inform their lesson planning but this is not yet consistent across all curriculum areas.

What progress has been made in increasing the proportion of good or better teaching?	Reasonable progress
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The percentage of good or better teaching and learning continues to gradually improve, across all curriculum areas. College managers judge around 72% of teaching to be consistently good or better and the remaining 28% satisfactory. The lesson observation system appears to work effectively. Those staff who are new in post, are teacher trainees or whose teaching is judged be satisfactory, rather than good or better, are supported and monitored by advanced practitioners. Grades for teaching are linked to appraisal. A new teaching and learning strategy outlines the college's intention to establish 'good' as the minimum standard for teaching and learning across all subject and vocational areas. The strategy includes ambitious targets for 2011/12, aiming for at least 50% of curriculum areas to achieve an outstanding lesson grade profile.

Leadership and management

To what extent have there been enhancements to the way employer partnerships meet the needs of both learners and employers?	Reasonable progress
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The college is successfully working with employers in a range of different ways, including a substantial Train to Gain provision, customised training on company premises and on-line training. The employer services team continue to extend and improve this aspect of the college's provision, working with a range of partners, as well as the LSC and local authority. The number of full-time students who benefit from work experience opportunities increased from around 450 in 2005/06 to nearly 800 in 2006/07. The college has yet to gain feedback systematically from students and employers to inform the future planning of work experience. Working with local schools, the college is involved in two of the new 14-19 diplomas in ICT and engineering. The college's work with employers is subject to the same quality assurance arrangements as other aspects of provision.