

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Regent College, Leicester

Date of visit: 11 December 2007

Context

Regent College is an atypical sixth form college (SFC). It is one of 11 high widening participation SFCs. About half the learners are on courses below level 3 and 21% are on foundation/entry level courses. Learners' average attainment on entry is well below that of sixth form colleges nationally. In 2006/07, the college had nearly 870 full-time equivalent (FTE) learners aged 16 to 18 and nearly 230 FTE adult learners. It has a small provision of employer dedicated national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in business administration for around 90 employees based in the University Hospitals of Leicester Trust. It runs a re-engagement programme for about 30 additional late starters. About 80% of learners are from a black and minority ethnic background and about 60% are from areas of high deprivation. In 2006/07, 52% of learners aged 16 to 18 were female and 73% of adult learners were female. The quantity and quality of accommodation have improved since the last annual assessment visit (AAV). A new teaching block for mathematics is now in use, as are refurbished teaching areas for several departments, and a single staff work room for every department. The college has also made significant investments in information technology (IT) facilities and has improved the learning resource centre.

Last inspection

Regent college was last inspected in January 2004. At that inspection, leadership and management were judged satisfactory. In curriculum areas, the college was awarded one good, four satisfactory and one unsatisfactory grades. Guidance and support and educational and social inclusion were judged good. In the reinspection of the unsatisfactory area in March 2006, it was judged good.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made to improve students' achievement and standards in 2006/07 compared with 2005/06?	Reasonable progress
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Between 2005/06 and 2006/07, success rates for learners aged 16-18 on level 3 courses and for adult learners on levels 1 and 3 courses improved. The overall long course success rate increased slightly. Success rates declined on courses for learners aged 16-18 at levels 1 and 2, mainly because of lower pass rates rather than lower retention rates. The college identified the main reason for the significant decline in the level 1 success rate as being the poor communication with the significantly large numbers of learners on the certificate in adult numeracy course. The main concern is the decline in success rate on the level 2 courses for learners aged 16-18. All short course success rates declined (but numbers of learners are relatively small).

The proportion of GCSE high grades improved significantly, enabling more learners to progress to level 3 provision. The progress made by GCE AS and A level learners compared with their attainment on entry to the college improved in 2006/07 and is outstanding.

The college has made significant progress in improving success rates since the last inspection.

What improvements have been made since the last (AAV) regarding key skills success rates? How much have success rates in communications improved in 2006/07? Was the rate of communications portfolio completion higher in 2006/07 than in 2005/06?	Reasonable progress
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Key skills success rates increased between 2005/06 and 2006/07, mainly due to the significant increase in the success rate of communications. This was due to the corresponding increase in the completion of communications portfolios. The rise in the overall key skills success rates was reached with approximately 50% more entries. The success rates for application of number and information technology, however, remained about the same. Less than half of entries are successful.

Key skills tutors work with greater cohesion. The rise in the communications success rate is because of increased consistency of delivery and the improved focus on portfolio completion. The documentation to track learners' progress has improved. On-line testing is not yet available.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made with the lesson observation process to ensure accuracy and standardisation? Has the lesson observation profile improved in 2006/07 compared with 2005/06? Are tutorials now graded?	Reasonable progress
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Managers have made improvements to the common lesson observation proforma and have increased the observation focus on learners and learning. All observers have received relevant staff development to improve their lesson observation skills. Managers considered that the previous grading criteria led to over generous outcomes and so modified the satisfactory descriptor from professional induction standard to experienced teacher standard. This change makes it difficult to compare one year's observation profile with another's, but the proportion of good/better lessons effectively increased and the proportion of inadequate outcomes decreased. Managers do not moderate texts against grades sufficiently frequently so that remedial action can be taken. They do not use a systematic and formal process of joint observations to sample a given proportion or type of lesson. The process of reobserving teachers who receive an inadequate lesson observation outcome within a given timescale and after staff development and support is unclear. Observers now grade tutorials.

How much has the college improved its provision for students against the every child matters (ECM) themes since the last AAV? Do tutorials now include the ECM themes? Have advances been made especially with 'being healthy' and 'achieving economic well-being'? What progress has been made with the learner involvement strategy?	Reasonable progress
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This provision has improved, especially for enjoying and achieving, which is now self-assessed as being good. Making a positive contribution is still assessed as good and the other three themes as satisfactory. Tutorials now include more of the ECM themes. Managers have appointed new staff to support several areas of development connected with ECM themes across college.

The college has made advances with all the ECM aspects. Areas for improvement are: being healthy – the canteen menu gives insufficient attention to the overall balance of healthy foods, the college wants to raise the profile of its healthy lifestyle programme and engage more females in sporting activities; staying safe – this is not fully integrated into the tutorial programme; achieving economic well-being – managers want to improve co-ordination of this theme across the different levels of provision.

Learners' involvement with college life, managers and staff is improving. Learners make their views known through their course representatives, the student council and the 'you said – we did' posters. The extended studies programme helps to develop learners as responsible individuals with a wide outlook on life.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made since the last AAV to improve the management of the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision and ESOL success rates? Has the ESOL lesson observation profile improved in 2006/07 compared with 2005/06?	Significant progress
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Managers have self-assessed ESOL as good. They have continued with the process to move to a fully qualified professional core team. The ESOL retention rate has improved to be high compared with the college average retention rate for adults. Reading pass rates at all entry levels increased significantly in 2006/07. Most success rates are above national averages. The leadership and management of the section have improved by increasing communication with and support for part-time teachers. Managers encourage part-time staff to attend ESOL meetings and relevant staff development. While such staff cannot always attend, they do receive agendas and minutes of meetings. ESOL staff have implemented an improved individual leaning plan process. The priorities given to improving curriculum management, staff qualifications and teaching and learning, have improved success rates and have resulted in a smaller but more cohesive team.

The lesson observation profile of the ESOL team has improved. The proportion of good or better lessons has increased and no inadequate lessons were observed. The team is now working to reduce the proportion of satisfactory lessons.

What progress has been made since the last AAV to improve the management of the English provision (GCSE English and GCE English language and literature) and their success rates?	Insufficient progress
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Insufficient progress has been made by managers to improve English provision. Most of the success rates in GCE AS and A level English language and literature declined in 2006/07 and are well below national averages. Learners make poor progress in AS language and literature and A level literature compared with their prior attainment. Attendance at AS and A level language and literature is low.

Success rates in GCSE English are high and have been so for some time. The proportion of learners gaining high grades rose in 2006/07, enabling proportionately more learners to progress to level 3 provision.

The proportion of good or better lessons observed in this section is low compared with the rest of the college and the proportion of lessons judged inadequate is relatively high. The students' survey of satisfaction with teaching and learning also indicates a low rating compared with other parts of the college. The self-assessment report judges level 3 subjects to be inadequate.

In 2007/08, managers have applied level 3 subject entry criteria better. They are supporting new and inexperienced teachers. Teachers have revised the gradings of learners' work to be more realistic. They are now entering learners for January assessments. Managers are using special measures actions (which were very effective in the information and communication technology department) to improve the English section but it is too soon to determine their full impact.