

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Kensington and Chelsea College

Date of visit: 19 June 2008

Context

Kensington and Chelsea College is a general further education (FE) college in central London. The college provides training in west London with four main centres in Kensington and Chelsea. Separate construction and motorcycle workshops are based in neighbouring boroughs. Most learners are over 19 years of age although an increasing number of learners aged 16-18 are enrolling on vocational courses. Provision for 14-16 year olds was introduced in September 2007. In addition to courses funded by London central Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the college provides a wide range of courses for adults on behalf of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Many programmes are delivered in business and community venues. The college has a small contract for work-based learning and delivers projects funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). Kensington and Chelsea College is the lead provider for offender Learning and Skills service (OLASS) for four prisons in West London.

The college was last inspected in April 2007. The overall effectiveness of the provision was judged to be good, as was capacity to improve, the quality of provision and leadership and management. Achievement and standards were judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made to improve variations in success rates?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

Overall success rates have continued to improve since the last inspection. The college data for 2006/07 indicates an increase from 68% in 2004/05 to 73% in 2006/07. However variations in success rates continue. Adult provision on long courses is around national averages with most progress being made on level 1 and level 2 courses. For students aged 16-18 year olds results have improved at level 2 and 3 but remain below national averages. Overall success rates increased on all short courses but remain below national averages. Good improvement has been made in the achievement rates for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and numeracy while achievement rates in modern foreign languages declined. Retention remains an issue particularly for 16-18 year olds and long level 3 courses.

The college recognises the decline in the success rates for male learners and the low success rates for white British learners and those of mixed ethnicity.

Strategies to improve success rates include: improvements in initial assessment, more accurate recording of learning aims, increased focus in tutorials to support all learners, and improved understanding of reasons for learners not completing courses. The college has implemented more rigorous performance management for courses with low success rates. It is too early to judge the full impact of all these strategies and interventions.

What progress is being made by management to improve the low success rates in work-based learning?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

An increasing number of learners are involved in work-based learning in a growing number of curriculum areas. The number of apprenticeships has increased to 52 in training in childcare and hairdressing. The first full framework in children's care, learning and development has recently been completed. In 2007/08, 68 learners started on Train to Gain on the college's own contract. This is below the targets set, with take-up lower than expected in some curriculum areas. The college works with additional Train to Gain learners in child care and health and social care in collaboration with other London colleges. It is too early to make judgments on the success rates for these programmes. The management and monitoring of learners' progress is very thorough and detailed.

What progress is being made to improve attendance and punctuality?	Insufficient progress
--	-----------------------

Electronic attendance monitoring has been introduced and staff have been trained on strategies to manage students who have poor attendance and are late. These strategies have so far been particularly successful in improving attendance and punctuality, in performing arts and music. However, the average attendance for 2007/08, up to the beginning of May 2008, is no better than in 2006/07. There was some improvement in the first few weeks of the spring term but this improved level of attendance was not maintained and summer term attendance is below that for last year. Late attendance had increased from an average of 3.46% in 2006/07 to 4.59% in 2007/08. Insufficient analysis has been conducted to explore the attendance of different groups of learners. Attendance and punctuality remains an area for improvement for the college as recognised in the self-assessment report.

Quality of provision

What improvements were made in 2006/07 to teaching and learning, including the use of ILT in lessons?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

Well established intranets for both staff and learners are to be integrated later this year. Both are accessible through the internet so students and staff can access them from their home computers. The vast majority of academic teaching rooms now have interactive whiteboards and a further £76,000 is being spent in this academic year to up-grade information and learning technologies (ILT) facilities. Staff have had training in the use of ILT and are increasingly confident in its use. A new initiative is the availability of e-books through the college learning resource centre. These enable students to access information online at a time and place which best suits their needs. As the system develops over the next year the college plans to use it to ensure students have access to all the learning resources they need at community centres. At present the staff intranet is well-developed and forms a valuable resource for teachers. However, the student intranet is at an earlier stage of development and the quality of its content varies by curriculum area.

What progress has been made to develop the curriculum to be more responsive to employers?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

Employer engagement is one of the priorities for the college and there are a wide variety of approaches and initiatives to engage with employers. The strengthening of the cross-college employer solutions team and the introduction of a customer relationship management system has developed a more coordinated approach to working with current employers. The marketing plans are linked closely to building relationships with employers. The range of courses delivered in workplaces is increasing. In health and social care more workplace assessors and expert witnesses have been trained. The number of apprentices, Train to Gain learners and full cost learners continues to increase.

Involvement of employers in the development of the curriculum is increasing along with a focus on the opportunities for progress into employment. This has been particularly successful in millinery, hairdressing and health and social care. A multi-media fellowship is being developed to increase links with small and medium enterprises in the sector. In February 2007/08 the college implemented a project that closely links skills training to employment. Young people and adults who are not in employment, education or training, most of whom are ex-offenders, have been supported to develop construction skills and employability skills required by local employers. The first ten learners have gained jobs and are being mentored to increase the chances of sustained employment. The college is building relationships with Job Centre Plus, the local authority and the youth offending teams across 10 west London boroughs.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made to increase the thoroughness of the teaching observation process?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The college is in the process of re-designing its lesson observation form and is currently piloting a new version. The new paperwork encourages observers to focus more strongly on the quality of learning taking place. A reluctance to feedback more challenging issues identified during observations was an area for improvement at the last inspection. All observers have now had staff training to help them to improve their confidence and skills in giving feedback. There has also been a successful series of training sessions for staff being observed. This year, for the first time, lesson observations have included the work of all teaching staff, including those in prisons and those teaching in the franchised provision. The college acknowledges that despite these improvements there is still too much satisfactory teaching and there is still much to do to increase the proportion of good or better teaching. The results of lesson observations are not analysed thoroughly to identify any links between the quality of teaching and its effect on success rates. However, significant progress has been made in ensuring that equality and diversity are embedded within teaching practice. The new observation paperwork includes a strong focus on equality and diversity and ensures that observers make judgements about teachers' success in raising students' knowledge and understanding during sessions. Under the new arrangements the observation of teaching and learning now has its own equality impact assessment.

What progress has been made to improve the accessibility of some accommodation?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

Planning permission has been granted for a complete re-development of the Hortensia Road site starting in September 2008. The college ensures staff and students are kept aware of developments via the intranet. An external provider has been appointed to update the accommodation strategy for the development and maintenance of the other sites. A second lift has been installed at the Wornington site. Additional accommodation has been leased to provide suitable workshops for training in construction skills and motorcycle maintenance.