



Hackney Community College

Re-inspection report

Audience	Published	Provider reference
Post-sixteen	April 2008	130407

Introduction

Hackney Community College was inspected in October 2006. Inspectors 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 arts, media and publishing which was found to be inadequate. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is inadequate.

The less than satisfactory arts, media and publishing provision was re-inspected on 12 and 13 March 2008. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Sector subject area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Arts, media and publishing	4	3

Context

The college offers courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 in art, design, media, fashion, textiles and the performing arts. Courses run for either one or two years. During re-inspection there were 459 enrolments, the majority being learners aged 16-18. Around two-thirds of learners are on vocational courses; half of these at level 3.

Strengths

- good learning environments
- good quality systems promoting improvement
- good progression to higher education.

Areas for improvement

- poor punctuality and attendance
- insufficiently broad range of teaching and learning techniques.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates have improved significantly during the past two years. A good proportion of learners are on vocational and A level courses, where pass rates are above national figures. However, there are still too many courses where performance is at or below

national rates. Retention is satisfactory overall, but there is much variance between courses. Some very poorly performing courses are no longer offered.

Learners' work is of a generally good standard but in a minority of lessons they do not exhibit a depth of knowledge consistent with the level and stage of their course.

Poor punctuality and attendance were a feature of many of the lessons observed by inspectors. In some cases, lateness was insufficiently challenged by teachers.

Learners' progression within the college and to higher education is good.

Quality of provision

The quality of provision and teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, a good range of teaching and learning techniques is used but in poorer lessons the range is insufficiently broad to maximise learning. Too much teaching lacks creativity and inspiration.

Learning environments are good. Classroom resources have been improved with recent investment in new learning technologies. The campus is accessible for learners of all physical abilities. Learners are comfortable and secure within the college environment.

The needs and interests of learners are appropriately met. The range of enrichment activities for learners is satisfactory. Learners receive satisfactory guidance and support. The quality of pastoral and academic support is valued by learners.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. Good quality systems have been developed and implemented well and are promoting improvement. Action planning for improvement is good. Data are now used well at all levels. Coherent, clear management and quality processes and procedures are understood by staff and applied with increasing consistency. Mid-term course reviews are thorough. Arrangements for staff development are much improved. The lesson observation system produces some useful feedback, but there is some evidence that the quality of lessons is over-graded.

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Hackney Community College

Date of visit: 12-13 March 2008

Context

Hackney Community College is a large general further education college (FE) in the London Borough of Hackney. It is the only general FE college in the borough. It has its main site, the Shoreditch campus, in the south of the borough, adjacent to the City of London. There is a small site in the centre of Hackney, at London Fields, primarily for commercial activity. The college works in over 40 community venues in the borough. The college's mission is stated as 'unlocking community potential by developing skills for employability and for life'.

The College offers a wide range of programmes from entry to degree level, with provision in all 15 sector subject areas. The college has two full status Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), in business and construction. Learner numbers on programmes in preparation for life and work are significant, constituting over 40% of all adult full-time equivalent (FTE) learners. Outside of this area of learning, the most significant numbers are in health and social care.

In 2006/07, there were just over 10,000 learners, of whom 85% were adults and 60% were female. The majority of learners, around 75%, are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Learners are predominantly drawn from Hackney and its immediate neighbours, particularly Islington, Haringey, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest,

The Borough of Hackney has many of the most economically and socially deprived wards in the country and nearly 95% of learners reside in disadvantaged areas. The Borough has the third highest proportion of workless people in the UK with 43% of the working age population without jobs. Twenty-two per cent of Hackney residents of working age have no qualifications.

Achievement and standards

What progress has the college made with the improvement of learners' success rates in 2006/07?	Significant progress
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Learners' success rates improved significantly in 2006/07 and are much higher than at the last inspection. Overall, they are now at or around recent national averages for similar colleges. On long courses they increased for all levels and ages. For learners aged 16-18, the overall success rate increased by 14 percentage points between 2005/06 and 2006/07 and by 11 percentage points for adults. This extent of improvement is reflected for all levels, but is particularly marked at level 2, for learners aged 16-18. Overall short course success rates have improved less, at 5 percentage points between 2005/06 and 2006/07, but with success rates significantly above recent national averages for many levels.

Data continue to show that the college performs better in retention than in pass rates, but that pass rates in 2006/07 also improved for all levels and ages and are all at, or around, recent national averages. The college has not neglected efforts to further improve retention. In-year retention at mid-year 2007/08 was 95%.

Key skills success has improved markedly, from 25% in 2005/06 to 43% in 2006/07, as the college has improved its approaches to teaching, supporting and testing learners for key skills.

What is the extent of progress with improving the attendance and punctuality of learners?	Insufficient progress
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The college is tackling the improvement of attendance and punctuality with vigour, but there is insufficient improvement so far. Attendance and punctuality each increased by one percentage point in 2006/07 and attendance to date in 2007/08 is two percentage points higher than at the same time last year. Inspectors noted unpunctuality and some poor attendance in lessons during the concurrent re-inspection of arts, media and publishing.

A new college-wide policy and procedure for addressing the issue is being implemented this academic year, including improving the monitoring of attendance, enhancing the role of curriculum administrators, attendance incentives for learners and the piloting of electronic registers. The latter is a crucial element of the college's strategy, with the intention to fully introduce electronic registration in September 2008. At the moment it is difficult for managers to readily know what learners' attendance figures are.

The college embraces these initiatives within a coherent overall strategy to improve attendance and punctuality, engaging all areas of the college's work. For example, there is work to raise the profile of attendance and punctuality in learners' induction, work to develop the virtual learning environment (VLE) embraces consideration of how it can support attendance and punctuality, and the learner voice is being used to engage learners in debate about the issue.

The overall college approach for improvement allows for, and encourages, 'local solutions', within college schools and areas of learning and good practice is shared across areas.

Quality of provision

What is the extent of progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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Based on the outcomes of the college's increasingly rigorous scheme of lesson observation, the quality of teaching and learning is improving. The amount of teaching that is inadequate is much reduced and the amount of teaching that is better than satisfactory is increasing. However, there are still a significant proportion of lessons where teaching is no better than satisfactory.

The college compares its observation profile with wider college observation data, for London and nationally. On this measure, for the 200 or so observations in 2006/07, the college profile of around 50% of lessons no better than satisfactory placed the college below these comparators. For the observations carried out so far in 2007/08 (50% of the planned total), the college's percentage of lessons judged to be good or better, at 68%, places them at around the average.

Analysis of overall observation data show that in a very limited number of areas, the proportion of teaching which is no better than satisfactory is high, for example, in science and mathematics.

The work to improve teaching and the rigour of the scheme of lesson observations, noted at the last annual assessment visit (AAV), has continued. Inadequate teachers are effectively dealt with and there is increased focus on developing teaching across the college. Priorities for improvement have been identified and are actively being worked on, including the greater, and more effective, use of information learning technologies (ILT) in lessons and the further enhancement of teachers' capacity to teach key skills.

Leadership and management

How successful are college strategies to support quality improvements?	Significant progress
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College strategies are supporting and promoting quality improvements, particularly in learners' success rates and in the quality of teaching and learning. Inadequate provision in arts, media and publishing is now satisfactory.

The last inspection noted the need to improve the rigour of aspects of the quality improvement system. The improvements noted at the AAV have continued, including the very effective use of success rate action plans (SRAPS), improvements to the lesson observation scheme and improved professional development opportunities.

The principal and senior managers take the lead in promoting quality improvement. Structures and processes to ensure accountability are in place. The annual curriculum review provides a comprehensive scrutiny of the performance of all courses. Underperformance is rigorously addressed. Mid-year reviews are strengthening the process.

Course managers now make better use of performance data in monitoring their courses and in planning for improvement. New management arrangements for management information have improved the quality of the service provided to course managers. This is an essential element of the college's work to improve the quality of course reviews and the extent of evaluation in area self-assessment reports. The college is on target with its own plans to further develop the quality improvement system.