



North West Kent

# Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published May 2008	Provider reference 130725
--------------------------	-----------------------	------------------------------

---

## Introduction

North West Kent College was inspected in November 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 literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) which were found to be inadequate. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is inadequate.

The less than satisfactory literacy, numeracy and ESOL were re-inspected on 13-14 March 2008. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	4	3

## Context

The college provides key skills at levels 1 and 2 in communication and application of number for 2,720 full time students aged 16-18. Literacy and numeracy classes are provided for 82 Entry to Employment (E2E) students, and ESOL programmes from entry level 1 to Level 2 are studied by 88 full-time students. Literacy and numeracy support is provided to 238 students.

## *Strengths*

- good learning support.

## *Areas for improvement*

- low success rates at entry level 1 in ESOL.

## Achievement and standards

Success rates for the achievement of units in reading, writing and speaking and listening in ESOL are high at entry levels 2 and 3. Overall success rates of units at level 1 are high, although they are low in reading. Success rates for units at entry level 1 are low.

At the previous inspection, the college was unable to supply appropriate data to confirm success rates in key skills. Since then, the college has developed and implemented a cross-college data system to record and measure learner progress in the acquisition of key skills. The system currently reflects a partial picture of the key skills that students are working towards. The college has set success rate targets for each department in the region of 50% to 60% for 2007/08. Students make satisfactory progress in lessons.

## Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In vocational areas key skills assignments are relevant and of interest to students. In communications and ESOL lessons students demonstrate confidence in giving presentations and ask relevant questions of their peers. Students and teachers across the area use information learning technology (ILT) effectively to research information, illustrate talks and highlight learning points. Most lessons are well planned and teachers take into account the needs of individual students. Students generally enjoy their lessons. Assessment and the monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory.

The range of programmes and courses are satisfactory. The college is aware of further improvements still to be made in ensuring all students have equal access to key skills. Learners are well supported, and arrangements for additional learning support are good.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Weaknesses found at the last inspection are being appropriately tackled. Quality assurance systems are improving, although slowly. Access for students and teachers to ILT is satisfactory. Accommodation has improved and is now satisfactory. However, the learning centre on one site is used as a classroom and is sometimes noisy. Staff development is appropriately targeted, although it is too soon to judge the full impact of training on the delivery of key skills. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate.

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: North West Kent College

Date of visit: 13 and 14 March 2008

### Context

North West Kent College is a large further education college and is situated on three sites. Two main sites are based in Dartford and Gravesend, with a third site on the bank of the River Thames with specialist maritime facilities. At the previous inspection, an area judged to be in need of improvement was the standard of some accommodation. The Gravesend site is currently in the middle of a major re-development and plans for the whole of the Dartford site are in place.

The inspection monitoring visit and re-inspection of literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) follows the inspection in November 2005. At the previous inspection, capacity to improve and achievement and standards were judged to be good. The effectiveness of the college, quality of provision and leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory. Of the six subject sectors inspected, three were graded as good, two as satisfactory and literacy, numeracy and ESOL was graded as unsatisfactory.

### Achievement and standards

Has the college improved long course success rates at levels 2 and 3?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

Since the previous inspection the college has made significant progress in improving level 2 and 3 long course success rates. Between 2004/05 and 2006/07, level 2 and 3 long courses success rates have improved by 10 percentage points overall. Success rates in 2006/07 for level 2 and 3 are 71% and 73% respectively. The latest national average rates for level 2 and 3 for 2005/06 are 66% and 68% respectively.

At the previous inspection, success rates for GCE AS-level courses were 50%, significantly below the national average. In 2006/07, success rates had improved to 72%. The latest AS national average for 2005/06 is 64%.

Specific subject sector areas have improved significantly. For example, at level 2, construction overall, science and maths for 16-18 year old students and health, public services and care for adult learners at level 3 have all shown a significant improvement in success rates.

How effective is the college at monitoring and improving learners' attendance?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The progress made in monitoring and improving learners' attendance is reasonable. Since the previous inspection, attendance rates have improved. At the time of the monitoring visit, attendance rates are 85%, compared to 84% for the whole of 2006/07.

The college has introduced a new electronic registration system. This is being used effectively by college personnel to monitor attendance trends. Personal tutors are well informed of any absences and some use text messaging as one form of communication to follow up absent learners in a timely way. A section of the new electronic individual learning plan records information on learners' attendance. However, this is not yet fully operational.

#### Quality of provision

In the previous annual assessment visit it was stated that there were 'plans to support teachers to improve classroom delivery and to raise staff awareness in respect of the grading of lesson observations'. How far has this development impacted on the learner experience?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

The teaching and learning observation scheme has made significant improvements in supporting and developing staff. A formal mentoring scheme has been introduced and is now well established for all new members of staff and those who have an identified development need. Tutors can also self-refer for this support. A professional mentoring policy clearly outlines the purpose of the scheme including expected outcomes from the support. Both tutors and observers have received appropriate training in lesson observations. Critical friend and joint observation activities have been carried out this academic year and have provided staff with further support. Comparative data for 2006/07 and 2007/08 to date indicate that of those tutors mentored, some have improved their teaching and learning observation grades and the majority of staff re-observed have maintained the same grade.

Teaching and learning internal observation data over the past three years shows an improving trend in all those lessons graded good or better, that is 64% in 2005/06; 76% in 2006/07; and at the time of the monitoring visit, 88% for 2007/08. The standardisation and validation of teaching and learning grades is more robust.

How effective is the college at ensuring that the use of individual learning plans is consistent across all curriculum areas?	Insufficient progress
---	-----------------------

There has been insufficient progress in ensuring consistent use of individual learning plans across all curriculum areas. The college has worked hard to develop an on-line individual learning plan for all full-time learners cross college this academic year. It aims to provide easier collation of learners' achievements and recording of targets, as well as making the individual learning plan more easily accessible by staff and learners. Remote access, by both learners and staff, is one of its features. However, it is still in the process of being reviewed and refined and is not yet fully functional in all curriculum areas. Some tutors and learners are not able to access it. Paper-based versions of the individual learning plan and reviews are being used solely or alongside the electronic version by some curriculum areas.

The recording of learners' information and target setting varies greatly in quality. Some individual learning plans are poor. For example, there are few personal targets recorded; some comments recorded in reviews acknowledge actions needed to be taken by the learner, but no targets are set. Staff have received training in target setting and the college undertakes regular quality reviews. However, this has not yet led to sufficient impact in the consistency of the content of individual learning plans and review records.

How effective has the college been in improving the extent to which all learners' needs are met in lessons?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The college has made reasonable progress in ensuring all curriculum staff meet the needs of all learners' in lessons. Following the previous inspection the college recognised the need to improve good and better teaching. An aspect of this improvement was to focus on developing teachers' skills to plan and deliver differentiated learning in lessons.

The college has organised training sessions for curriculum staff on differentiated learning. The revised teaching and learning observation scheme clearly outlines differentiation as a key area for review during observations. For teachers observed with specific training needs, they are effectively supported through the mentor system. Heads of school have recently started formal and unannounced ten minute 'drop-ins' to teaching staff to monitor areas highlighted at formal observation for improvement. The college's internal teaching and learning observation data recognise improvements in

the percentage of staff being awarded good and better teaching and learning grades. However, lesson plans are not sufficiently documenting specific individual learners' needs for planning appropriate differentiation. Of the lesson plans that do, the approach is not detailed enough to know what is required to meet all learners' individual needs.

#### Leadership and management

At the previous inspection, action plans for promoting race equality were in the early stages of implementation. How has the college developed and improved the promotion of race equality?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

There has been significant progress in the arrangements for promoting race equality as part of the college's overall promotion of equality and diversity since the last inspection. Action plans for promoting race equality are now well established, with clearly recorded targets and progress against actions in place. The college is using data very effectively to monitor all aspects of equality and diversity against, for example, recruitment and retention and enrolments by ethnicity. Equality and diversity action plans, which include the promotion of race equality, are developed across all schools. A good range of equality and diversity training has taken place over the last year. All staff were involved in general equality and diversity training that dealt with all aspects of promoting equality and diversity, such as the content and language of promotional materials. A race equality working review group has recently been established and has met twice to date, with clear targets set for actions. Impact assessments have taken place resulting in a new, more easily accessible student survey document being designed. A comprehensive impact assessment of the college's admissions procedure has also been undertaken. An audit of the college's arrangements for equality of opportunity has recently taken place.

How effective is the target setting and monitoring of the college's quality improvement plan?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The college has made reasonable progress in setting and monitoring targets through the quality improvement plan. Since the previous inspection the college has enhanced the quality team with the appointment of an associate director of quality standards. The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) has worked alongside college staff to review and revise quality systems. Quality policies and procedures have been updated. Action plans have been developed, aspects of which have been implemented. Targets for improvement are clear. An annual quality improvement cycle has been introduced and the focus on improving teaching and learning is good.

The college's quality team's involvement with curriculum departments has been extended, for example, through the monitoring of cross college awarding body verification activity. A newsletter that focuses on quality improvement is under construction to regularly inform and update curriculum staff. Phase 2 of the college's quality improvement plan has been developed to be implemented in the near future. Plans include, for example, unannounced internal teaching and learning observations and further developments to the self-assessment process.