

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Kingston College

Date of visit: 20 March 2008

Context

The most recent inspection report on Kingston College was published in March 2007. The college was graded satisfactory, grade 3, in the headline grades of effectiveness, capacity to improve, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management. Five out of the six curriculum areas that were inspected were graded satisfactory and one curriculum area - Visual and performing arts, and media – was graded good.

Achievement and standards

<p>What success has the college achieved in the improvement in success rates; particularly at level 1 for adult learners, learners' progress on AS and A2 courses, low framework achievement in apprenticeships and poor key skills success rates?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
--	----------------------------

The college has recognised many of the key issues relating to low success rates and has taken appropriate action to rectify these. Effective improvements have been made to some of the ESOL courses with stronger links being made between language and the vocational content of the programmes. The overall success rates at level 1 have continued to improve for all learners since the last inspection. The overall rate for adult learners has increase significantly from 40% in 2005/06 to 54% in 2006/07. Key Skills success rates have also improved to 37% in 2006/07. However, these rates remain below the national averages. The success rates for 16-18 year olds on A2 courses improved from 76% in 2004/05 to 88% in 2006/07 and are now in line with national averages. Insufficient improvements have been made on AS courses. The success rate declined from 63% in 2005/06 to 60% in 2006/07 for 16-18 year olds and remained static at 55% for adults.

The overall qualification success rate data for apprenticeships indicates that framework success rates remain low, particularly for advanced apprentices at

18% in 2006/07. The number of learners counted as advanced apprentices on electrotechnical services programmes appears to be significantly higher than the number of learners who attended the course. The overall success rate for these learners appears lower than expected. The success rates for apprentices improved from 44% in 2005/06 to 56% in 2006/07, in line with national averages. The management of work-based learning is now well-established in the curriculum areas and the managers have a good understanding of the expected achievement rates.

How successful has the college been in remedying learners' poor attendance and punctuality? And in monitoring student attendance and punctuality?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The college has introduced a new attendance, punctuality and behaviour policy for learners following a wide process of consultation. There is now a more professional approach to the management of learner attendance across the college, where previously an ad hoc approach in some areas had led to an inconsistent overall picture. A pilot approach to electronic registration has been producing active attendance data since November 2006. The pilot has now been extended to cover 80% of learners in the college. The remaining learners study at alternative sites and these will be incorporated into the electronic registration system in the next 14 weeks. The reports now available from the system have enabled better identification of the structure of absences and have enabled more constructive discussions on determining solutions in individual cases and in managing attendance in general. For example in AS English Language – an area of some concern at the time of the 2007 inspection – attendance has improved from 76.2% to 82.3% over the past 12 months.

Staff training has taken place to improve the quality of learners experience in lessons. The college has created a specialist tutor team to undertake specific interventions with learners who have poor attendance and punctuality. Staff have been trained to use a motivational dialogue technique in developing a short term partnership contract to improve learners' attendance and punctuality. Further developments are planned to improve attendance which include a small informal pilot to contact parents through email rather than traditional letters. In some faculties, there has been a review of timetables to ensure they support easier movement between classes and to reduce

incidents of lateness. Attendance, punctuality and behaviour are reported as part of individual class and programme management information.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made to address the significant proportion of teaching that failed to meet the needs of individual learners?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

Reasonable progress has been made to improve teaching and learning. Improvements include additional training and development for lesson observers, regular review of the clear guidance booklet issued to all staff and effective use of subject learning coaches to support staff development. Heads of school review and follow up actions identified during the lesson observations. Lesson observation reports are used to identify common college themes and to address reviews of teaching and learning during the college's staff development days. New subject learning coaches have been appointed to ensure that staff are fully updated in their vocational specialisms during induction and staff development days. Particular attention has been given to creating more specific and targeted actions for tutors following an observation; and of providing specific coaching for those staff in need of support. The quality of the lesson observation process is regularly reviewed and includes the gathering of learner comments on staff performance. External consultants are used to support the process at college, team and individual tutor levels. Lesson observation grades are regularly compared with information and data on retention and success rates as well as results from student surveys.

What is the impact of any steps taken to remedy the inconsistent approaches to target setting and review and the variable quality of Individual Learning Plans?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The addition of new user friendly software to the college management information system has enabled staff to access and manage student information more readily than in the past. Tutors are now better informed of learners' personal and progress data. All learners have diagnostic testing on entry to the college, details of which are held in the on-line database. A new electronic registration system is in place for 80 per cent of college learners. College staff have further developed written individual learning plans and have commenced the pilot of an electronic individual learning plan in one

faculty of the college. Better access to student information by staff at all levels has led to more meaningful use of learning plans. This development has been supported with staff training in setting and using targets effectively. Learners have well informed target minimum grades based on introductory and review meetings with tutors in their first college term. Learners' progress is monitored through well focussed discussions with tutors. The college is embarking upon full Matrix accreditation and has introduced a new tutorial policy to support this aim. Better information sharing and targeting in tutorials has enabled college staff to engage more effectively with the student body in general, to identify those learners at risk and to reduce the number of disciplinary incidents in the college by 60 per cent. A research study into teacher empathy has supported the improvements in the reviews of learner progress.

Leadership and management

How much progress has been made to address the insufficient promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

Staff awareness on the need to promote equality and diversity has been increased through the 'Empathy Project' and other initiatives. An external consultant spoke at a staff development day and worked closely with small groups of staff. Staff appreciate the opportunity of visiting other sites for meetings and events. An action team has been established to develop an on-line toolkit of materials and case studies for tutors. The college is actively involved in several community initiatives to create a better understanding between students and local residents. These include open days at the school of art, visits to local schools, weekend events and quick response to any concerns raised by local shops and amenities. A marketing manager has been appointed and this has increased the volume of positive press coverage in the local papers.

The standard format for lesson plans has been amended to incorporate how equality and diversity is being taken into account. However, several of the lesson plans seen provide simple generic actions and do not explain well how the topic for the lesson is used to promote equal opportunities. Insufficient use is made of data to review success rates for different groups of learners at

course level. Tutors currently can request specific reports and plans are in place to promote better use of data.

<p>How effectively has the college remedied the slow progress in addressing areas for improvement from the previous inspection, and the insufficient sharing of good practice across the college?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
---	----------------------------

The college has concentrated on improving the impact of its investment in learning technology, coupled with the use of lesson observation information, to promote the sharing of good practice. Since February 2008 the college has installed wireless access points throughout the main college buildings and has linked these with the use of mini laptops for both staff and students. For learners the system is used to provide streamed video teaching information and is also used to capture assessment evidence. It has enabled and encouraged more staff to access an information technology qualification as well as supporting flexible and blended learning capability. College staff and managers are capturing good practice through the use of information from lesson observations and from surveys of staff to identify good practice. Five action research groups have been set up to examine themes from previous inspection reports, self assessment activity and tasks set by the management board. These developments are further supported by improved networking with external contacts and by links with teacher education and registration activity in the college. Kingston College has established links with a network of other colleges in London to share good practice through initiatives such as peer referencing and reviews of self assessment reports. The college has improved the rigour of its planning, performance and quality meetings involving deans of faculties and has plans prepared to enlarge the process to encompass individual curriculum areas.