

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Calderdale College

Date of visit: 19 June 2008

Context

This monitoring visit follows the full inspection in November 2007. At that inspection, the effectiveness of provision, achievement and standards and leadership and management were satisfactory, and the college's quality of provision and capacity to improve were good. The key areas for improvement were the low retention for learners aged 16-18, low success rates for adult learners at level 1, the inconsistent delivery of key skills provision and uneven performance across the college.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in the strategy to raise achievement and standards, particularly in relation to the low retention for some groups and low success rates for adults at level 1?	Reasonable progress
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The college has put in place a number of measures to improve retention since the inspection in November 2007. In-year retention figures for 2007/08 show good progress has been made at level 1. At this level retention rates show an increase of 6%, for learners aged 16-18 and for adult learners. In-year retention rates for learners aged 16-18 at levels 2 and 3 have improved by about 3%, which is in line with increases in the national rates. Current in-year retention by minority ethnic groups shows improvement to around the college average.

Current trends indicate a further improvement in overall and timely success rates for work-based learners and progression to positive outcomes by entry to employment (E2E) learners. To date, outcomes for Train to Gain learners are good.

The college's strategies for key skills are proving effective. Strong evidence exists of marked improvements in success rates since the previous inspection when key skills success rates were satisfactory on work-based learning courses, but low on other courses. In-year college data shows that the college is likely to successfully meet their high key skills success rate targets for 2007/08. The number of learners taking wider key skills, delivered through the tutorial framework, has increased by nearly 30% in 2007/08.

Quality of provision

What actions have been put into place to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in E2E, level 1 and Train to Gain provision? What improvements have they promoted?	Reasonable progress
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The college has set up a forum to share good practice and to improve weaker aspects of teaching. The inspection report noted that much of the teaching was good but that some aspects should be improved. The team of advanced skills practitioners has been allocated particular responsibilities to enhance expertise in areas such as assessment practice, the use of information and learning technology, learner support and work with learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Subject-learning coaches are in place in nearly all the subject areas offered by the college. Good teaching practice is shared throughout the college. The quality of teaching and learning for E2E learners has been strengthened by the appointment of new teachers. College quality and support systems are applied well to support Train to Gain learners, following a change in management arrangements for the programme.

How effectively has the college addressed the national curriculum changes at level 1?	Reasonable progress
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The college is responsive to learners with low levels of prior attainment, by for example, providing some of its entry and level 1 provision in more deprived areas such as parts of North Halifax. Strengthened admissions procedures ensure that learners are on the right vocational and key skills course and at the right level. Induction procedures, diagnostic assessment and tutorials are sharply focused on the particular needs of more vulnerable learners. A team of four staff provide dedicated support for individual learners who are at risk of leaving early and act as advocates for them when additional support is needed. All level 1 programmes are externally accredited. The college has modified its curriculum offer appropriately to meet the changing priorities of the Learning and Skills Council and the needs of employers.

What progress has been made in the integration of delivery and assessment of key skills?	Significant progress
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At the previous inspection the college had made significant progress in integrating the delivery and assessment of key skills in vocational courses, but this was not equally effective across the college. The progress has been consolidated and has resulted in improved key skills outcomes across the college. Targets are set and thoroughly monitored. Key skills delivery and portfolio completion are taken much earlier in courses than previously. The college places a strong emphasis on effective test preparation and attendance. Teachers have a good understanding about their individual responsibilities in the delivery of key skills provision. Staff development has helped raise the skills and confidence of teachers and support staff in embedding

contextualised key skills into lessons. There are good examples of imaginative projects that support key skills achievement in ways that learners enjoy and find interesting. Learners are well aware of the importance of key skills in their courses and future working life.

Leadership and management

How have quality assurance and improvement arrangements supported better consistency in performance across the curriculum areas?	Reasonable progress
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The previous inspection report identified inconsistencies in performance. Quality assurance was satisfactory overall, but some aspects were insufficiently thorough. There wasn't a sharp enough focus on priorities in action plans, and whilst the college's system to identify and improve inadequate teaching was judged effective, too many of its lessons were over graded.

The college has worked well to resolve issues of inconsistency. Quality improvement has a high profile in the college and is reported at principalship level. The college has developed thorough monitoring and reporting systems. Sharply focused performance indicators are set. Overall college targets are linked to targets for programme areas and individual courses and for individual learners. As part of its strategy to raise achievement, the college has strengthened internal monitoring arrangements for reviewing learners' performance. Challenging but appropriate minimum targets have been set for retention and success rates, for attendance and for key skills success in all courses and programme areas. The college has a sharper focus on the monitoring of attendance, retention and pass rates. The quality of analysis in these reviews has improved. Good use is made of accurate and reliable data to monitor performance trends and to identify risks by faculty heads and curriculum managers. Progress against targets is systematically monitored and reported. Courses where performance is poor are risk banded. Prompt action is taken to resolve any identified concerns that place courses or learners 'at risk'.

The college has received support from the Quality Improvement Agency to enhance the ability of managers to manage performance. Improved arrangements are in place to ensure that assessments are carried out promptly and that achievements are processed more quickly. Well developed plans are in place to introduce a management development programme, beginning in July 2008, again with Quality Improvement Agency support. The college intends that this development will support succession planning and promote continuity of best practice.

A strengthened observation of teaching and learning process and improvements made to the team of observers has led to many individual examples of action to improve teaching. External consultant support and peer reviews have been used effectively to benchmark and moderate grades. Identified themes of good practice

and areas for improvement contribute to planning appropriate arrangements for staff development and mentor support for individual teachers appropriately.

<p>What progress has been made in establishing a single equality scheme and reporting systems? What is its impact?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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The college has raised the profile of equality and diversity and improved the measures used to promote them. Senior managers have conducted careful research and analysis of good practice. A single equality scheme has been produced to resolve areas of concern from the inspection of November 2007. Consultation with stakeholders is due to be completed in July 2008. Full implementation is to follow this consultation process. A high profile is given to additional learning support and the promotion of skills for life as an integral part of the vocational curriculum. Equality and diversity impact measures are being introduced more widely at all levels of college activity. Overall participation rates by minority ethnic groups are much higher than the borough profile. The college is taking action to resolve the low participation rates by minority ethnic learners in construction, hairdressing and on apprenticeships. Success rates for learners of Pakistani heritage were low in 2006/07 but their current in-year retention rate has improved and is broadly in line with the college average. The college is working towards achieving the award of investors in diversity. There is some good practice in using successful learners as ambassadors. The 'one project' has helped strengthen the sense of belonging and of feeling safe amongst learners throughout the college.