

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: City College Coventry

Date of visit: 24 April 2008

Context

City College Coventry was last inspected in May 2007. Effectiveness of provision, achievement and standards and leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory. Capacity to improve and equality of opportunity were judged to be good. Five sector subject areas were judged to be satisfactory and one was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

What progress has the college made in improving success rates for level 3 learners?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection success rates at level 3, for both 16 to 18 year old and adult learners, were significantly below national averages. In 2006/07, level 3 success rates for both 16 to 18 year old and adult learners improved by four and three percentage points respectively. Adult success rates are only slightly below national averages, but success rates for 16 to 18 year old learners are still well below national averages. GCE AS level success rates have declined in the last 3 years and in 2006/07 are over 25 percentage points below national averages. GCE A2 success rates have improved significantly in 2006/07 but are still well below national averages. Access to HE success rates have been consistently low over the past 3 years. Level 3 retention rates for 2006/07 were significantly below national averages whilst achievement rates were slightly below national averages. Value added data suggest that learners achieve in line with expectations based on their prior attainment.

Work-based learning framework completion rates for advanced apprentices have continued to improve and show a marked improvement in 2006/07 to 15 percentage points above the national average.

The college is aware of, and is taking action to address, the underperformance in level 3 provision. GCE A level and Access to HE provision are the focus of targeted improvement plans having been placed under 'special measures'. However, the range of actions has yet to impact on the overall performance of learners on level 3 programmes.

What progress has been made in improving success rates in key skills?	No discernible progress
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Key skills success rates at all levels and for all ages continue to be significantly below national averages. The trend is reflected across the majority of sector subject areas, with success rates ranging from 1% to 43%. Success rates differ slightly by key skills subject. Information and communication technology (ICT) key skills success rates are the highest at 31% and communications the lowest at 19%. The college has a strategy to address the weakness in key skills achievement, with plans to centralise its management and delivery from September 2008. There are also plans to introduce on-line testing across all curriculum areas. An on-line key skills tracker has already been introduced across the college, to enable teachers to better monitor learners' progress. However, it is too early to gauge its impact on achievements. The college also observes a small number of key skills classes but acknowledges the need to undertake more, to better inform improvements in the teaching of key skills.

Quality of provision

What actions have been taken to ensure that the outcomes of teaching and learning observations are used to improve the quality of provision?	Reasonable progress
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In the current year the college has continued to use advanced practitioners to carry out developmental observations and an external agency to observe and grade approximately 40% of lessons delivered by its teaching staff. The use of the outcomes of current lesson observations varies across the college. Training activities in most programme areas are well informed by issues identified through observations. For example, in arts a training session was held on the use of questions. Similarly, some programme area self-assessment reports are well informed by lesson observation data, whilst others are not.

The college is aware of the limitations of the current system and has restructured its teaching and learning observation system to make it a central component of its quality improvement arrangements.

In the past year the college has widened its pool of observers and has trained and accredited approximately 30 observers, to ensure that from September 2008, it can observe and grade all substantial teaching staff. It has also revised the appraisal process to ensure that it is adequately informed by an individual's lesson observation grade. The college is also aware of the need to formally correlate teaching grade profiles with performance outcomes, such as success rates.

What actions have been taken to improve target setting in individual learning plans and reviews?	Insufficient progress
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Since the previous inspection, the college has held a training event on target setting in December 2007 and is planning further training at the end of April 2008. It is too early to assess what impact the staff training will have on learner progress. Poorer performing courses are now more closely monitored by the quality assurance audit team. Close attention is paid to target setting on these courses. Nevertheless, the college is aware that tutors do not take sufficient account of all available information when carrying out progress reviews. The quality of recording in progress reviews continues to vary. Examination of curriculum area files shows some very good recording of progress targets, for instance in creative studies. However, recording of targets in other areas, such as on access programmes, was generally poor.

Leadership and management

What actions have been taken to strengthen curriculum management in some areas?	Reasonable progress
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Senior managers are taking appropriate actions to improve curriculum management across the college. In each curriculum area the job description of the curriculum co-ordinator has been revised and the role enhanced to that of programme manager. Staff training is underway to support the development of staff to these newly re-designated jobs. Some sector subject area head of departments have been given additional staff resources or reduced work-loads to manage their new responsibilities. However, not all new posts have been given additional remission time from teaching. The role of advanced practitioners has also been revised in order to better inform the programme managers about the quality of teaching and learning on their programmes.

What actions have been taken to improve the accuracy and rigour of the self-assessment report?	Reasonable progress
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Since the previous inspection the college has identified and implemented a quality action plan to improve the rigour of the self-assessment report. Much more emphasis is given in the report to the impact of retention and success rates on judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum areas. In the latest self-assessment report nearly half of the graded areas are lower than in the previous report. The grade for capacity to improve has also been lowered. The college is planning further staff training in the self-assessment process. The college acknowledges that both observation of teaching and learning grades and feedback from external stakeholders needs to better inform the next self-assessment report.