

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: City of Westminster College

Date of visit: 07 October 2008

### Context

The City of Westminster College is the main provider of post-16 education and training in the borough of Westminster. The college has five sites located in Paddington, Maida Vale and Queen's Park. In 2007/08, the college recruited 6779 students and 62% were aged 19 years or over. The numbers of 16-18 year olds on full time programmes has increased by almost 5% over the last three years. There has also been a significant increase in the number of students from local schools following vocational taster courses. In 2007/08, 73% of the college's students were from minority ethnic communities with Black African learners forming the largest single minority ethnic group.

The college was last inspected in December 2006. Effectiveness of provision was satisfactory, as were achievement and standards, quality of provision, leadership and management, and capacity to improve. The curriculum areas were all graded as satisfactory with the exception of English and social sciences which were good.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving overall success rates?	Reasonable progress
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The college has fully implemented its at-risk strategy to provide co-ordinated support for learners who might drop out or not achieve. The level 1 course offer, in particular for languages, has been reviewed and a best practice policy introduced across the college. Strategies that are having a positive impact include the introduction of a learner management review week, lead tutor support and an increase in the number of learning support assistants (LSA). These have been supplemented with some good initiatives at course level to improve retention rates. Overall success rates in 2007/08 have improved to 71% on long courses and are now close to the previous year's national average. For 16-18 year old learners, there is a significant increase of 7% on the previous year's rates, which were well below national rates. There has been insufficient improvement at level 3 for 16-18 year olds and rates remain below national averages. Last year, some level 3 courses were restructured and others were removed from the courses on offer. As some of these courses are two years duration, these actions are not yet showing an improvement in success rates.

Overall success rates for adults have steadily increased over the last three years and are broadly in line with national rates at levels 2 and 3. However, at level 1 success rates have not improved sufficiently and are 5% below the previous year's national average.

The college recognised in self-assessment that success rates for men were lower than women. The at-risk strategy has been used to address this issue. Overall, success rates have improved, although there is still some lower performance by men at some levels and age groups.

Progression rates on the E2E programme have increased and are above London rates. The college has very few apprentices and overall and timely success rates have increased over the last three years.

What is the impact of the raising achievement action plan on improving success rates for Black African and Black Caribbean learners?	Reasonable progress
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The raising achievement action plan was updated in March 2008 and progress reviewed against the intended outcomes. In carrying out the action plan the college has made improvements to enrichment, introduced learners' awards, increased the number of LSAs and maintained homework clubs. The college has researched what motivates this group of learners to succeed, including the role of work experience and mentoring, and has identified that regular tutor support is the most effective mechanism. This research and the results of focus groups have been used to develop the at-risk policy. Overall success rates have improved for Black African and Black Caribbean learners. Rates for the large numbers of 16-18 year old Black African learners are in line with, or better than, those for all learners at the college in 2007/08. Despite improvement, success rates for Black Caribbean learners remain lower and are very low at level 3.

#### Quality of provision

What progress has been made in improving the proportion of good or better teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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The proportion of good or better lessons is higher than in the previous year and has increased by 6% since 2005/06. The proportion of inadequate lessons has also reduced in 2007/08 and at 2% indicates a steady reduction since 2005/06. Improvements in teaching and learning have resulted from more effective measures to drive up standards which include lecturers developing good practice from visiting outstanding and good colleges, and subject learning coaches assuming a more prominent role in leading on professional development. The results of teaching and learning observations are used to clearly identify and prioritise staff development

within departments. Teachers who receive satisfactory or unsatisfactory lesson observation grades receive effective support.

The use of information learning technology (ILT) to support teaching and learning has become more of a focus within the college and its use is improving. The college reports that 50% of lessons observed in 2007/08 demonstrated an appropriate use of ILT to support learning, much improved on the previous year.

While the college continues to focus its efforts on improving satisfactory lessons and improve its profile overall, a large proportion of teaching and learning is still satisfactory.

What progress has there been in improving the consistency of tutorials and individual learning plans?	Reasonable progress
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The introduction of lead tutors has enabled the college to monitor more closely the standard of tutorials and individual learning plans (ILP) within faculties. Tutors have access to centrally devised materials on a range of subjects such as healthy lifestyles, dealing with conflict and HIV and Aids, to enable them to plan and develop more effective tutorials. They have also received training to support them in their role of tutor. These measures are starting to have a positive impact on the quality of tutorials in some curriculum areas, but it is too early to assess the full impact.

A new electronic system to enable managers, tutors and learners to improve the monitoring of ILPs has been put in place by college managers. Tutors have been trained to develop their skills in target-setting with students. The college has begun to analyse the impact of the new system on improving the standard of target setting, but is not yet in a position to assess whether consistency has improved in ILPs.

What action has the college taken to evaluate the effectiveness of additional learning support?	Reasonable progress
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The college has successfully increased the use of LSAs across the college. In 2007/08, in-class support was extended to included entry and level 1 and 2 lessons to good effect. Some course success rates have improved and on a few courses the increase has been considerable. Where the use of LSAs was already established, it has enabled faculties within the college to support learners with more profound learning disabilities who would not have otherwise had full access to courses. For example, an LSA has been used to successfully support a learner with visual and physical impairment. Learners with literacy and numeracy support needs receive individual and small group support which is proving effective, the college reports an increase in the achievement rates of these learners in 2007/08. Individual support for learners identified as having a disability has also improved. Of the 24 learners with disabilities on mainstream courses, who had in-class LSA support, 21 successfully achieved their learning goal. The college has the capacity to evaluate the

effectiveness of additional learning support, but is not yet routinely doing this in all areas of its work.

### Leadership and management

<p>What improvements has the college made in ensuring the implementation of quality assurance arrangements and subsequent action plans have sufficient impact?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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The college has refined and developed quality assurance systems. Quality monitoring meetings were introduced in 2007/08 within each faculty to review poorly performing courses, observe teaching and learning and review courses and evaluations. Poor performance and remedial actions are now identified in a timely way. The quality monitoring meetings are designed to follow a standard format, but this is not always consistently applied. For example, in December 2007 some faculties reviewed their self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans, whilst others did not. The college has introduced a process for improving poorly performing courses which has shown improvement in most cases. Where improvement is not evident, support from external colleagues has been provided and a few courses have since been removed from the curriculum. Audits have been introduced to assure the quality of aspects like schemes of work, assessment year plans, individual learning plans and targets on poorly performing courses. It is planned that these audits will be introduced across the college this year.

The college has continued to improve the use of data and has provided training and newsletters for staff and managers. Managers use data well to set and monitor appropriate targets. Last year, they started to predict course success rates based on each student's early performance. The college is not yet in a position to compare these predicted success rates with actual rates. The college has set realistic success rate targets to effect steady improvement for the next five years at each level. Targets for 2007/08 have mainly been met and in some areas exceeded.

<p>What progress has the college made in equality and diversity issues, including setting and monitoring impact measures?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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The college has set equality and diversity impact targets for specific groups of learners. These are routinely monitored, including at board level. There have been some positive results in success rates by learners with a disability, men and Black African 16-18 year olds. Various initiatives, including using ex-learners as positive role models and developing external industry links, have been successful.

The college's equality scheme is in draft format. Some impact assessments of human resource and staffing policies have been carried out, but not yet for policies affecting

learners directly. All sites have been assessed for their suitability for learners with a disability. The college has carried out an equality and diversity “health check” questionnaire and identified where action is needed. At the last annual assessment visit, the college had identified the need to increase learners’ understanding of the broader aspects of equality and diversity. In response to this, the tutorial programme has been reviewed and activities introduced to increase learners’ awareness of equality and diversity, including disability awareness and their rights and responsibilities. This has been too recent to have sufficient impact. The college’s self-assessment report and quality improvement plan have insufficient reference to equality of opportunity within the leadership and management section.