

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Carlisle College

Date of visit: 26 November 2008

### Context

Carlisle College is a small, general further education (GFE) college, with provision in most sector subject areas. The college campus, located in Carlisle, is the only GFE College within a 35 mile radius of Carlisle. It has cross-border arrangements with Scotland, for learners living within the area.

Currently 1,126 of the college's 3,471 learners are full-time and two thirds of these are learners aged 16 to 18. Of the learners aged 19 and over, 2,073 of the 2,345 are part-time. Some 300 learners are on apprenticeship programmes. In addition the college provides a broad and expanding curriculum for learners aged 14 to 16.

The college was last inspected in May 2006. At that inspection the college was satisfactory for leadership and management, achievement and standards, quality of provision, and effectiveness of provision. Its capacity to improve was good. All sector subject areas were satisfactory, except for engineering and manufacturing technology, which was good.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on long courses?	Significant progress
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Significant progress has been made in improving success rates for all learners aged 16 to 18 on long courses. At the annual assessment visit in January 2007, while success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 had improved, they remained below the national average. In 2006/07 success rates increased by 4% to 63%; current college data for 2007/08 indicates that this trend will continue and success rates will increase by a further 13% to 76%, 4% above the national average for 2006/07. College data indicates that at all levels success rates for this age group increased significantly in 2007/08. At level 1 rates increased by 6%, at level 2 by 12% and at level 3 by 8%. All success rates are now just above or broadly in line with the national benchmarks for 2006/07. Retention of learners aged 16 to 18 improved to 86%, against a national benchmark for 2006/07 of 83.3%.

What progress has been made in improving success rates for learners aged 19+ on long courses?	Reasonable progress
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College data for 2007/08 indicates that the overall long course success rate for learners aged 19+ increased by 2% to 72%, just above the 2006/07 national average of 70%. At level 1 success rates increased from 74% in 2006/07 to 81% in 2007/08 and at level 3 rates increased from 71% to 74%. However, in the same period success rates at level 2 declined to 65% from 67%, 4% below the national benchmark for 2006/07. Retention rates in 2007/08 improved to 87.6% compared with the 2006/07 national average of 80.1%.

How effectively has the college improved the success rates on apprenticeship programmes?	Reasonable progress
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The trend is one of continued improvement. Overall and timely success rates for all apprenticeships have improved over a three year period. Overall success rates for all apprentices have risen from 48% in 2005/06, to 60% in 2007/08, compared with the national rate of 63.8%. Timely success rates also rose in the same period to 43%, and are now just below the national rate of 45.6%. The college has identified that although the success rates are improving they remain below national rates. The college is currently exceeding its overall apprenticeship success rate target for 2008/09 by 20%.

Several developments have supported the rise in success rates since the previous inspection. A new director responsible for employer engagement and adult skills has been appointed. The management and co-ordination of work-based learning across the college has been strengthened and the use of data has improved. Considerable efforts have been made to improve the delivery of key skills; they are now delivered by specialist staff with sessions being timetabled into the apprentices' college programme. Progress and tracking of apprentices has been increased and is now monitored weekly instead of monthly. A change in the Train to Gain contract has enabled the college to provide better initial assessment support for learners in the workplace.

How effective have the actions been in improving success rates and delivery of key skills?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection in 2006, success rates for key skills were too low. The last monitoring visit in September 2007 identified that arrangements for delivering key skills in vocational areas were improving. Key skills outcomes have improved, from 34% in 2005/06 to 49% in 2006/07, and a predicted 50% in 2007/08, which is in line with the very low national average.

New arrangements have been implemented for staff delivering key skills. All staff delivering key skills have individual monthly meetings with the curriculum manager to review and monitor learners' progress. Course tutors monitor attendance at key skills sessions through the electronic individual learning plan process. Intervention by

the new manager is proving to be effective. Students' attendance is good and the quality of their work is improving.

Learners' progress in key skills is now regularly recorded on the new information technology learner tracking system, and issues around attendance and completion of course work are clearly documented and discussed during individual tutorials. Key skills drop-in workshops are offered regularly through the week and attendance is increasing. Sessions are timetabled in the middle of the day and delivery is through key skills experts who are supported, where possible, by vocational experts.

More detailed initial assessment and induction arrangements are proving effective in ensuring that all learners are placed on the correct key skills level. Additional and separate sessions have been introduced for learners working at entry level 3 or below. More learners have achieved their key skills this year compared with the previous two years.

#### Quality of provision

<p>How has the procedure for observation of teaching and learning improved since the previous inspection? What arrangements have been made to further improve the quality of teaching and learning?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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At the last monitoring visit in September 2007 the college needed to further improve provision of constructive feedback to staff by college observers. New procedures have been implemented to ensure that all tutors understand what they need to do to improve. All staff are now provided with detailed written feedback following their observation, combined with a feedback meeting with the observer. All tutors are positive about the new process and feel it helps them to improve their teaching. Tutors' attitude towards lesson observation has changed; the process is now seen as supportive and as a means of sharing good practice. To support observers in this process a series of staff development events have taken place to ensure that feedback is useful and relevant. In addition all feedback and outcomes of observations are discussed at rigorous moderation meetings. Actions from previous observations are routinely carried forward to future observations and are used to plan staff training.

Results from the observation of teaching and learning show an increase in the number of good or better sessions observed from 64% in 2006/07 to 70% in 2007/08. The college has a clear mission to improve this further to 80% of all sessions observed. Tutors who are graded as unsatisfactory for their sessions receive mentor support. As the volume of unsatisfactory teaching decreases, the college is placing a greater focus on improving the grade 3 provision as a key target.

The college has a strong focus on the improvement in teaching and learning through the use of the initial teacher training team to provide support, coaching and mentoring for staff who are graded unsatisfactory and also for any member of staff

who wants to improve their teaching skills. Small group workshops provide regular opportunities for staff to discuss teaching and learning strategies. Staff are encouraged to observe other sessions to develop skills, and good opportunities are provided to support the sharing of best practice through peer observation and cross-college conferences.

Tutors are provided with good opportunities to develop expertise in the use of information and communication technology through workshops, a dedicated resource room and through the use of advanced teaching practitioners. The use of subject learning coaches and advanced teaching practitioners is increasingly being used to develop tutors' competence and skills.

<p>Progress in improving the consistency of tutorials was judged to be significant at the last monitoring visit. To what extent has this been sustained and developed? What actions have been implemented to further improve group and individual tutorials?</p>	<p>Significant progress</p>
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The improvements in the consistency of group tutorials identified at the January 2007 annual assessment visit and the November 2007 monitoring visit have become firmly embedded. The cross-college senior tutorial team supports the delivery of a standardised system that ensures that there is breadth and depth to the delivery of tutorials. Increased use is made of outside speakers to improve the validity and reliability of information given and to meet specific requests from learners. All group tutorials effectively integrate *Every Child Matters* themes, with a particular focus on issues specific to learners in Cumbria, such as road safety. Timetabling of tutorials has been changed to improve attendance. Tutors share the resources they develop and those staff with specialist skills support others in the delivery of particular topics. Tutors are very positive about the process and the impact that it is having on learners' engagement and interest. Effective use is beginning to be made of tutorial activities for key skills evidence.

The IT-based learner tracking system is now established and being used effectively to track and monitor the targets, attendance and progress of learners. The system is used particularly well by staff and learners during the new individual tutorial process to set and monitor targets. It is also used effectively at parents evenings to demonstrate the progress that learners are making.

Tutors are beginning to make effective use of both value added and distance travelled measures to share with learners during tutorials. Where no value added instruments are in place the college has developed a distance travelled tool that demonstrates to the learner where they should be at given points in their course. Staff report that this has proved particularly effective in motivating second year learners.

What improvements have been made in the management of literacy and numeracy support for mainstream learners?	Reasonable progress
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Support in sessions for learners with identified learning support needs has been significantly increased. At least one support worker is allocated to every level 1 class. The college intranet advertises the support available for learners without an identified need. Four drop-in support workshops are offered weekly for all learners. In the learner evaluation 95% of learners said they had benefited from the improved support arrangements.

Initial assessment is now used more effectively to plan the support for learners and to ensure that they are on the correct level of course. The initial assessment takes place at interview or during induction week and 'case conferences' are held during induction to plan support requirements. Initial assessment for Train to Gain learners is now carried out more systematically. A new member of staff has recently been appointed to focus on improving the success rate of adult learners. Effective use has been made of consultants to further develop the use of learning support in the classroom. Learning support staff are encouraged to develop their own literacy and numeracy skills from level 2 to level 3. The senior management team and governors have shown commitment to learning support staff by recently making many of their posts permanent.

#### Leadership and management

How effective has the college been in improving the promotion of diversity across the college?	Significant progress
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Following the previous inspection the college changed its arrangements for promoting equality and diversity across the college and they have now become the lead college on equality and diversity in Cumbria. They have arranged a celebrating diversity competition within the college and organise a county-wide event where each college puts forward an activity developed by its learners that promotes equality and diversity awareness.

Carlisle College has significantly increased promotion of the awareness of cultural differences. Posters promote a series of events across the year, which include sessions on migrant workers and mental health in the community. There is now an increased programme of outside visiting speakers available to learners. Equality and diversity is now included as a one day event during induction. An anti-bullying week has been established. A student focus group and magazine focusing on celebrating diversity have been developed. Learners are increasingly taking part in work within the community as part of a community cohesion initiative. The programme of tutorials now includes equalities and diversity issues. A series of staff training events is planned for March 2009.

