

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Lambeth College

Date of visit: 12 June 2009

### Context

Lambeth College is a large general further education college located in the London borough of Lambeth. In 2007/08, 2,500 students' aged 16 to 18 and 18,300 adults attended the college. Of these 21% were full-time and 79% were part-time. On a full-time equivalent basis, adults constitute 74% of the college's intake. Some 63% of students are from black and minority ethnic communities, which is significantly higher than the local population of 37% recorded at the last census. The student body is equally divided between males and females. Approximately half of the college's students are recruited from Lambeth. Enrolment numbers for students aged 16 to 18 are roughly equal across levels one to three but most adults follow programmes at levels one and two. The college offers a wide range of provision covering almost all sector subject areas and the college has Centre of Vocational Excellence status in construction, business and health. Employment in the area is mainly in retail and the public sector but residents have good access to a wide range of opportunities outside of the borough. The unemployment rate in Lambeth is 8.6% and 7.9% of young people are not in education, employment or training.

### Achievement and standards

How much progress has been made in improving achievements and standards since the previous inspection?	Insufficient progress
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The college has made insufficient progress in improving overall success rates for long courses since the previous inspection. Rates improved at levels one and three for adults in 2007/08 and while rates at level one are significantly below the national average for similar colleges, rates for level three are significantly above. Rates declined slightly at level two for the same age group. Overall success rates for students aged 16 to 18 following long courses in 2007/08 declined at both levels one and two and remained unchanged at level three. Against this background, the college has been successful in steadily improving retention rates but these improvements were unfortunately accompanied by a decline in pass rates.

Although overall success rates for long courses have declined for a number of groups of learners, success rates have shown steady improvement in most sector subject areas. The exception is literacy and numeracy programmes where success rates declined sharply in 2007/08. Because of the high numbers of learners following these

programmes, these outcomes had a significant impact on overall long course success rates at levels one and two. This decline has stemmed partly from the reorganisation of the provision and the rationalisation of staffing. The college is taking appropriate action to bring about improvement including significant investment in staff development and support. College data, based on pass rates to date compared with the previous year, indicate that the action taken is having a positive impact.

For Train to Gain provision, timely success rates have improved from 44% in 2006/07 to 58% in 2007/08 but continue to be low at 53% at the time of the visit. Overall success rates had not changed at the time of the visit and remained at 76%.

The college has been actively involved in implementing local strategies to reduce the numbers of young people who are not in employment, education or training. Initiatives run by the college have been successful and local targets have been exceeded with high success rates on some programmes.

How much progress has been made in improving attendance since the previous inspection?	Insufficient progress
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Attendance rates improved from 76% at the time of the previous inspection to 78% in 2007/08 and the rate was 77% at the time of the visit. The college is particularly thorough in its recording of attendance and only records actual attendance in classes. The college does not allow any form of authorised absence and rightly takes the view that these exacting standards reflect the reality of working life. The college has a high proportion of part-time students who at times have to prioritise work commitments over attendance at college. In areas of work where students are predominantly aged 14 to 18 and following full-time courses, attendance rates are higher at around 80%. Many learners enrol on skills for life programmes and attendance rates are low at 60% and have a significant impact on the college rate overall. Attendance is monitored carefully by tutors and absences followed up promptly. Tutors discuss attendance with learners regularly to identify the cause of absence and provide support where required. Despite relatively low attendance rates, retention rates have continued to improve steadily and the overall rate for long courses was 85% in 2007/08.

#### Quality of provision

How much progress has the college made in implementing actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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The quality of teaching and learning was judged good at the previous inspection. The college has made reasonable progress in maintaining this standard and achieving improvements. The proportion of lessons graded by the college as good or better has increased over the last three years and was 67% at the time of the visit. Students are very positive about the support they receive from teachers and other staff.

Lesson observation procedures are thorough and the college places particular emphasis on training observers. Joint observations are used well to maintain consistency of judgements across observers. The small proportion of inadequate lessons has decreased. Targeted work by a team of advanced teaching practitioners ensures teachers receive good support which is effective in improving performance. The college ensures teachers are observed teaching lessons which are representative of their main teaching commitment thus ensuring the teaching and learning profile is a realistic assessment of day-to-day teaching. Peer observations between teachers are encouraged, but the college does not have formal procedures for monitoring their frequency or evaluating the benefits they bring.

A comprehensive staff development programme covers a broad range of teaching and learning topics. Group training sessions are organised well and cover areas for improvement identified through the lesson observation process. These include aspects such as the use of information and learning technology and how to best meet the individual needs of learners during lessons. The impact of these sessions is evaluated well. Advanced teaching practitioners, curriculum managers and other teachers also provide effective coaching for individuals.

The previous inspection reported the college to have some good on-line learning resources although they were under-developed across the college as a whole. A sound platform for a virtual learning environment (VLE) to enrich learning has been developed but the college has made little progress in promoting its use. A steering group has worked well to provide a sound technical base for the VLE and has also ensured the quality of learning materials available on the system is high. A group of enthusiastic staff have been trained and will act as champions to encourage their colleagues to make better use of the facility.

How much progress has been made in developing procedures for setting targets for individual students and monitoring their progress?	Reasonable progress
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The college has adopted a holistic approach towards setting targets, covering all aspects of learners' education and personal development. Tutors incorporate a broad range of information about individual learners when setting targets, including their prior attainment and the results of initial diagnostic tests conducted following enrolment. Targets are aspirational and aim to raise the expectations of learners. They include subject specific aspects, which are identified through close liaison between tutors and subject teachers.

Tutors meet with individual learners regularly to discuss progress and set new targets. These meetings are highly valued by learners and their quality is evaluated through observations carried out by advanced teaching practitioners. These observations tend to be informal however, and do not provide the college with an overview of the effectiveness of the review arrangements. However, the college intends to extend lesson observation procedures to incorporate this area of work.

Arrangements for preparing students' individual learning plans (ILPs) have been simplified. The college has piloted the use of electronic ILPs with around 100 learners during 2008/09 and plans are in place to extend this to all full-time learners in 2009/10. The electronic version simplifies the sharing of information and the monitoring of learners' progress in individual units of their programmes. The college has comprehensive procedures for audit of ILPs by managers.