MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Kingston College

Date of visit: 24 February 2009

Context

The most recent inspection report on Kingston College was published in
March 2007. The college was graded satisfactory for overall effectiveness, capacity to
improve, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and
management. Five of the six curriculum areas inspected were graded satisfactory
and one curriculum area, visual and performing arts, and media, was graded good.

The monitoring visit report published in March 2008 concluded that all areas
inspected had made reasonable progress. In particular the college had achieved an
improvement in success rates at level 1 for adult learners, for learners' on AS and A2
courses, and for framework achievement on apprenticeships. Reasonable progress
had been made to tackle the significant proportion of teaching that did not meet
individual learners' needs.

Achievement and standards

How much progress has the college achieved in the improvement of overall success rates for adult learners at level 1 and learners' progress on AS and A2 courses?	Reasonable progress

At the previous monitoring visit overall success rates for adult learners at level 1 had
improved from 40% in 2005/06 to 54% in 2006/07. This was still significantly below
the national average of 71% for 2006/07. College data for 2007/08 show that
success rates have risen significantly and are satisfactory at 72%.

At the previous monitoring visit the success rates for 16-18 year olds on
A2 courses had improved from 85% in 2005/06 to 88% in 2006/07. College data for
2007/08 shows that these success rates have declined slightly but are satisfactory at
84%. Success rates for adult learners are satisfactory at 78%.

The previous report identified insufficient improvement in success rates on AS
courses. The success rate declined from 63% in 2005/06 to 60% in 2006/07 for 16-
18 year olds and remained static at 55% for adults. A more comprehensive adult
information, advice and guidance (IAG) process was introduced in 2006/07.
Retention and success rates have improved. The improved IAG system has yet to be
implemented for 16-18 year olds. However, college data for 2007/08 shows that
success rates for 16-18 year olds on AS courses have improved to 65% and,
significantly, to 68% for adults. Success rates are now satisfactory.

How much progress has the college achieved in the improvement of overall success rates for framework completion for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships?	Reasonable progress

At the previous monitoring visit the overall qualification success rates for 2006/07 on apprenticeships were low at 47% for advanced apprentices and 59% for apprentices. The success rates for all advanced apprentices improved in 2007/08 to 52% and the rates for apprentices to 71%.

College data for 2007/08 shows satisfactory timely success rates for apprentices at 63% in engineering, 76% in transportation operations and maintenance, and 70% in service enterprises. Advanced apprentices' timely success rates are satisfactory in engineering at 83%, transportation operations and maintenance at 50%, and electrotechnical at 67%. Provision in sport, leisure and recreation, and advanced apprenticeships in service enterprises, ceased in 2006/2007.

How much progress has the college achieved in improving the overall success rates for key skills?	Reasonable progress

Key Skills success rates for 16-18 year olds and adults in 2006/07 were below national averages at 37%. College data for 2007/08 show success rates have improved to 54% for 16-18 year olds and 42% for adult learners. The college has worked well with staff in curriculum areas to teach key skills as an integral part of other programmes. In many subject areas key skills success rates have improved significantly. However, key skills success rates for adult learners remain low.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made by the college in raising the standards of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress

Since the previous monitoring visit the college has significantly improved the ability of tutors to identify and provide appropriate support for individual learners' needs. Tutors now have a much improved, coherent knowledge of each learner and their progress. However, it is not currently possible to identify direct links between this improved support and improvements in success, retention and attendance rates.

Arrangements for sharing good practice between tutors have improved. Tutors effectively apply new techniques in the classroom such as strategies to differentiate teaching according to learners' ability, and techniques for engaging all learners in learning.

Particularly good use is being made of information learning technology (ILT) on hair and beauty courses. These include the use of streamed video and interactive learning resources in the college's hairdressing salons. The use of ILT is not as sophisticated in all curriculum areas.

Over the past two full years, little improvement has been made in the grade profile of learning session observations, with continued wide variation in the proportion of sessions judged either satisfactory or good between different subject areas. The college is not sufficiently confident about the defining attributes of a satisfactory or good teaching and learning session to be able to grade consistently. Observation records are not always sufficiently detailed to support the grade awarded.

How much progress has the college achieved in improving the consistency and effectiveness of tutorials and support for all learners?	Reasonable progress

Since the previous monitoring visit, the college has fully implemented an online database and communications system to provide tutors at all college sites with a comprehensive, up-to-date single record for each learner. This includes achievements, stage of learning, attendance, disciplinary and pastoral issues. The system is put to particularly good use during regular individual tutorials, and at parent's evenings. Communication about learner issues between managers and full- and part-time staff is now faster, more secure and reliable. It has replaced a partly paper-based system. Electronic registration systems for recording learners' attendance and punctuality are now in use across the college, enabling faster identification and follow-up of absent learners.

The college has made significant effort to promote a college-wide consistency of process and practice for the provision of tutorials, student advice and guidance. The range and provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG) for learners has increased over the past year. Full-time IAG staff have been appointed and a separate office established next to the students' college entrance. The college has achieved a national standard for IAG delivery. All tutorial staff receive appropriate information and training in how to identify and respond to learners' academic and pastoral needs. Systems and processes for the initial assessment and induction of learners are standardised. The minimum entry criteria for courses are now rigorously applied.

Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in improving the curriculum planning and performance monitoring of individual curriculum areas?	Reasonable progress

Since the previous monitoring visit, the college has introduced and implemented clear, effective strategies and processes to review and monitor curriculum planning and performance. The processes are now more thorough and systematic at all levels within the college. All staff are encouraged to use the college-wide electronic data collection systems to check retention, achievement and success rates as part of the curriculum review process. Self-assessment is a significant contributor to the monitoring of action plans at curriculum area level. Staff are fully involved and confident in the self-assessment reporting process. Clear targets are set for continuous improvement at appropriate levels. Very effective use is made of the qualifications self-assessment review. Changes have been implemented to more

appropriately meet learners' needs, for example, the development of more flexible ESOL provision. Changes to the curriculum planning and performance monitoring process at curriculum area level have been introduced since the previous monitoring visit, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

How much progress has been made to improve the promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity?	Insufficient progress

The college has made insufficient progress in improving the promotion of equality and diversity both overall and specifically within teaching and learning. Its ability to monitor students' achievements by ethnicity or other factors is satisfactory, but in some cases can only be done manually or is restricted to data which is only available annually. Just over half of college students, and 14% of teaching staff, are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Some appropriate actions have been implemented to focus attention on, and provide coordination and resources for, the promotion of equality and diversity. These include the formation of an equalities and social cohesion group. A first draft of a comprehensive equality and diversity toolkit has been produced by the college and communicated with staff. It has not yet had a discernible impact. The college has recently approved its single equality scheme and associated action plan. This has not been shared with staff. Useful, well structured guidance on how to promote equality and diversity through teaching and learning has been prepared for staff. However, many tutors do not fully understand how this can be achieved in practice.

Success rates of some black and black Caribbean learners are lower than other learners. The performance of white male learners is lower than that for other learners. Initiatives to improve success rates of these groups, implementing knowledge and practice learned from the outcome of a pilot programme in early 2008, are at an early stage.