

Southampton City College

Reinspection report

Provider reference	130696
Published date	5 May 2009

Audience	Post-sixteen
Published date	11 May 2009
Provider reference	130696

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Introduction

Southampton City College was inspected in October 2007. Inspectors carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory or better in all areas inspected, except in construction which was found to be inadequate. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is inadequate.

The inadequate curriculum area was re-inspected on 24-25 March 2009. The outcomes of the reinspection are as follows.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Construction	4	3

Context

The college offers full and part time construction courses from level 1 to level 3, apprenticeships in building crafts and heating and ventilation, and higher level courses in building services. Of the 723 students, most are part time. Vocational programmes are provided for pupils from local schools.

Strengths

- High and improving success rates for students aged 16–19 at level 1 and adults at level 3.
- High framework completion rates for apprentices.
- High key skills success rates.

Areas for improvement

- Low framework completion rates for advanced apprentices.
- Low and declining retention for students aged 16–18 at level 2.
- Insufficient good or better teaching.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for 16–19 year olds at level 1 and adults at level 3 are high and improving. Success rates on most other programmes have improved and are now satisfactory. Key skills success rates are high at 82%, as are framework completions for apprentices at 80%. Advanced apprenticeship framework completions are low at 44%. Retention rates for most student groups are satisfactory with the exception of those aged 16–18 years at level 2, which are low.

Standards of learners' practical work are mostly satisfactory but good in some areas. Written work is generally satisfactory, as is attendance. Students' progress to higher levels was previously seen as a strength and is now judged to be satisfactory.

Quality of provision

The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning have started to improve but remain satisfactory. Some lessons are poorly planned although practical workshop sessions are generally well taught.

The range of provision adequately meets students' and employers' needs. Employer involvement is satisfactory and has much improved since the previous inspection. Students' experiences are enhanced through the introduction of industrial visits and trade competitions.

Support and guidance are satisfactory. Student progress is well monitored, but targets in individual learning plans are insufficiently clear.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management have improved and are now good. New management has had a positive impact on improvement. Staff morale is high and roles clearly understood. Internal communications remain good and performance monitoring has improved. Resources remain satisfactory. Self-assessment is broadly accurate and promotion of equality and diversity are satisfactory.

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Southampton City College

Date of visit: 24 & 25 March 2009

Southampton City College is a medium sized general further education (GFE) college, largely based on one site close to the city centre, with a separate centre for its specialism in marine engineering. Educational achievement in Southampton for those at age 16 is significantly below England averages. Around a quarter of the adult population have no qualifications and there are low levels of literacy and numeracy. Just over 7% of the population are from minority ethnic groups in addition to a large proportion of migrants from Eastern Europe.

The college offers a broad and primarily vocational curriculum, along with significant provision in basic skills. In 2008/09, approximately 7574 students enrolled on courses. Of these students, 4843 were adults, although most full time students are aged 16–18. Most enrolments for both age groups are at level 1. Apprenticeship programmes, organised under the college's City Training arm, are available in several sector subject areas, with the largest number in construction. The college is also involved in a substantial programme of work for pupils aged 14–16 from local schools.

The college was inspected in October 2007 and judged to be satisfactory overall. One sector subject area was graded good, four were satisfactory and construction was judged inadequate. Construction was reinspected on this visit and judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving success rates?	Significant progress
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Significant progress has been made in the overall improvement of success rates. Following the last monitoring visit the college continues to focus well on ensuring that students are placed on the right course and supported appropriately. Attendance and punctuality also continue to be monitored carefully and intervention procedures for those identified at risk of leaving early are impacting positively on retention. Since the last inspection there has been a concerted effort by senior managers and staff to effectively monitor and track student progress and learner success rate predictions. Since 2005/06, overall success rates on long courses have shown good improvements with a six percentage point increase between 2005/06 and 2006/07 to 74%. Data for 2007/08 indicates further improvement to 78%. Level 1 long courses for those aged 16–18 years and for those over 19 years of age, which account for a significant proportion of students, have improved particularly well and overall success rates are now 84% . Level 2 and 3 long courses have also shown good

improvements in success rates. Work-based learning apprenticeship framework completions have shown considerable improvements from 48% in 2005/06 to 78% in 2006/07. Timely success rates have also improved from 23% to 60% in the same period. The college recognises that it has more work to do to improve advanced apprenticeship framework completions which declined in 2007/08.

Quality of provision

What impact are the revised arrangements for improving the quality of teaching and learning having?	Significant progress
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The new 'Excellence in Teaching' programme is leading to significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning throughout the college. The lesson observation scheme is moderated internally, and by external organisations including a consortium of colleges. Teachers speak highly of the support they receive after lesson observations and comment that observations are now seen as a tool to identify how they can improve. Staff are more confident to discuss their development needs, and to introduce more innovative teaching methods. Information and learning technologies are starting to be used more effectively as teachers gain more confidence in using the college's virtual learning environment (VLE). Actions resulting from identified areas for improvement are realistic and have appropriate timescales. Effective support is provided through coaching, bespoke good-practice sessions, and more extensive professional development where necessary. Actions for improvement are reviewed regularly with managers, and through further lesson observations. The quality of teachers' lessons is discussed at appraisals. An electronic database for recording observation outcomes now enables managers to more systematically analyse strengths and areas for development and plan future staff development activities.

What progress has been made in successfully integrating key skills into the curriculum since the previous inspection?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in the successful integration of key skills into the curriculum. Most college departments have successfully incorporated key skills into their provision although some have yet to start. There has been a clear focus on ensuring that students undertake the most appropriate level of key skills and are given guidance by qualified tutors and support staff. Many areas seeing improvements in key skills success rates. Most students at the college undertake key skills at level 1 where success rates have improved steadily since 2005/06 to 66% for those aged 16–18 years of age and 69% for those over 19 years of age according to data for 2007/08. However, level 2 success rates have declined to 31% in 2007/08 for the relatively small proportion of students aged 19 years and over.

What improvements have been made to tutorials, and in particular group tutorials, following the previous inspection?	Reasonable progress
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Since the previous inspection the college has made reasonable progress to improve the arrangements for tutorials. All students now have a personal tutor who is a member of the team who is teaching them. One to one sessions provide useful opportunities for students' progress to be monitored and reviewed, and for students to receive effective individual support. A generic scheme of work for group tutorials for all full time students has been developed. It is clearly linked to 'Every Child Matters' themes, Skills for Life, and support for students to progress to the next stage of their education or employment. Attendance at tutorials is generally good.

Most tutors follow the scheme well, but this varies across the college. The college does not yet monitor the consistency of tutorials or check that all topics are covered. However, plans are in place to initiate a monitoring system in the current year. The college has recently begun to include tutorials in its lesson observation programme. Tutors generally produce their own materials, but central support is available to advise on subject matter and to provide resources when required. External agencies assist individual tutors when requested. However, there are few centrally organised events to help students gain a deeper understanding about particular issues.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in the use of data and other management information to improve provision?	Significant progress
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Since the previous inspection significant progress has been made in ensuring better use is made of data regarding students' performance to develop improvements. Since the previous inspection the college has installed new data recording software which has improved access and use for all. Data is now stronger, and thorough checks are made to ensure accuracy. Staff are more confident in using management information following training and now have good access to this data via their computer. Staff can also access this data through the college's intranet. All staff are now regularly involved in discussions arising from the student performance data in their areas and targets are set at all levels. College predictions for success rates in 2007/08 have been mostly accurate.

What improvements has the college made in the effectiveness of quality improvement and self-assessment since the previous inspection and monitoring visit?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress in quality improvement and self-assessment since the previous inspection and further refinements have been introduced since the last monitoring visit. There is a clear drive for improvement in performance throughout the college and progress against targets is monitored and

reviewed closely by the governors. The senior leadership team monitors the performance of the college on a monthly basis and sets appropriate actions for improvement. Responsibility and accountability for specific and measurable targets are clear and linked to a challenging performance management scheme.

Developments in the lesson observation scheme, subsequent professional development and review of improvements in performance have been central to raising standards. The regular teaching and learning quality days that the college holds ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and involved in evaluating their own, and their team's, performance. After effective staff training, course reviews and curriculum-based self-assessment reports are now more evaluative and accurate in their identification of strengths and areas for development. These help develop school and the college self-assessments well. Action plans have improved. Common themes for improvement are now identified and appropriate staff development is provided. The positive impact of these and the sector review process can clearly be seen and is evident in the most recent self-assessment report.