

# Sandwell College

## Reinspection report

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## Introduction

Sandwell College was inspected in March 2008. 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 business, administration and law which was judged to be inadequate. Ofsted is responsible for reinspecting all provision that is inadequate.

The less than satisfactory business, administration and law was reinspected on 6–7 May 2009. The outcomes of the reinspection are as follows.

Sector subject area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Business, administration and law	4	3

## Context

Provision includes full-time vocational courses at levels 1 to 3 and part-time course in NVQ accounting and management at levels 2 to 3. Of the 287 learners, 163 are aged 16 to 18 years, 172 are male, 169 are full-time and 199 are from minority ethnic groups. The number of work-based learners is 85 and a further 85 learners are on Train to Gain programmes.

## Strengths

- High success rates for work-based learning
- Good academic support for learners
- Good development of business skills for learners

## Areas for improvement

- Poor punctuality and low attendance in lessons
- Too little stimulating teaching

## Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall and timely success rates for work-based learners between 2005/06 and 2007/08 increased markedly to a high level. For the same period, the long course success rate for all learners increased substantially to a rate comparable to that for similar colleges. Learners develop good problem solving and business skills. The presentation of learners' written work is generally of a high standard but in a minority of instances, English is weak and spelling inaccurate. Although improving, learners' punctuality and attendance rates remain at unsatisfactory levels.

## Quality of provision

Quality of provision and teaching and learning are satisfactory. Planning of lessons is thorough but a minority of teaching does not stimulate learners' interest. Resources are good and include a well-equipped business centre and virtual learning environment. The response to the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. The range of vocational business courses for full-time learners is comprehensive. Support for learners is of a high standard, particularly the academic support in lessons. Learners have access to a good tutorial system. The use of learning targets and individual learning plans is improving; teachers use them well to monitor learners' progress.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Actions to increase success rates and improve the monitoring of learners' progress and the use of data have been particularly effective. Judgements made in course reviews and self assessments are accurate. Equality of opportunity is good. Managers and staff have been less effective at improving learners' attendance and punctuality.

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Sandwell College

Date of visit: 6 – 7 May 2009

### Context

Sandwell College (the college) is a medium sized further education (FE) college. The college has campuses in Oldbury, Smethwick and West Bromwich. Just under two thirds of learners are from Sandwell. Most of the remainder are from Birmingham, and other neighbouring Black Country local authorities. In 2008/09, college-based learners numbered 6,159. Of these, around two thirds were adults; just over half were female and just under two thirds were from minority ethnic groups. The number of learners aged 14 to 16 was 127. Some 285 learner were on work-based learning programmes and 304 were Train to Gain learners. Nearly three quarters of learners at the college are from areas of high deprivation. The college offers courses in all sector subject areas with the exception of agriculture, horticulture and animal care and humanities.

Ofsted last inspected the college in March 2008. At that inspection, inspectors found equality of opportunity, range and responsiveness and guidance and support good. They judged as satisfactory the college's overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management. Hairdressing and beauty therapy was good. Health, public services and care, engineering and manufacturing technologies, construction, planning and the built environment, information and communication technology and preparation for life and work were satisfactory. Provision in business, administration and law was inadequate.

### Achievement and standards

How much progress has the college made in increasing long course success rates for sector subject areas?	Reasonable progress
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Progress in increasing long course success rates for each sector subject area is reasonable. The long course success rates for each sector subject area have all increased between 2005/06 and 2007/08. The increase was very substantial in six sector subject areas, particularly business, administration and law. The increase between 2005/06 and 2007/08 in these areas was much quicker than the rate nationally. The increase in the long course success rate for one sector subject area between 2005/06 and 2007/08 was slower than the rate nationally. For the remaining sector subject areas, the long course success rate increased at a rate similar to the rise seen nationally between 2005/06 and 2007/08.

In 2005/06, no sector subject area long course success rate was above that for similar colleges. Ten of these were below that for similar colleges, of which eight

were particularly low. In 2007/08 of the 13 sector subject areas which were available to learners, nine of the long course success rates were above or around that for similar colleges. The remaining rates were below but not by the same level as in 2005/06.

How much progress has the college made in increasing success rates on work-based learning in sector subject areas?	Significant progress
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Progress in increasing overall and timely success rates for work-based learning is significant. In engineering and manufacturing technologies, the overall and timely success rates for advanced apprentices and apprentices between 2005/06 and 2007/08 increased markedly to well above national average, particularly for advanced apprentices. The overall and timely success rates for advanced apprentices in business, administration and law increased very substantially between 2005/06 and 2007/08, from a very low level to well above national averages. Overall and timely success rates for apprentices in business, administration and law have remained high between 2005/06 and 2007/08. The overall and timely success rates for hairdressing apprentices between 2005/06 and 2007/08 increased markedly to well above national averages. Data from the college for the first eight months of 2008/09 indicate that overall and timely success rates for work-based learning across the different sector subject areas remain at a high level.

Are Train to Gain success rates at a high level?	Significant progress
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In August 2008, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) awarded the college its own Train to Gain contract. The number of learners enrolled on Train to Gain programmes since this date has reached 304. College data indicate that the overall and timely success rates for those Train to Gain learners due to complete in the first eight months of 2008/09 were very high. The overall and timely success rates for engineering and manufacturing technologies were at a particularly high level, with nearly all learners completing successfully. Learners on Skills for Life and business, administration and law programmes targeted to finish within the first eight months of 2008/09 have extremely high success rates. All have completed successfully.

How much progress has the college made in increasing success rates in key skills?	Insufficient progress
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Insufficient progress has taken place in increasing key skills' success rates between 2005/06 and 2007/08. The overall key skills success rate for this period declined to well below that of similar colleges, while nationally the rate increased substantially. Out of 13 key skills awards taken at the college in 2007/08, only three have success rates at a level above that for similar colleges; the remaining rates were below. The self-assessment report clearly identifies this as an area for improvement. Senior

managers are taking action to resolve this problem. They regularly and closely monitor the performance of learners and those that manage and provide key skills tuition. Managers and teachers now ensure that in lessons, the teaching of key skills is an integral part of a learner's main subject area and that learners complete their portfolios and tests in a timely manner. However, at the time of this reinspection monitoring visit it was too early to assess whether these actions would lead to an increase in key skills success rates.

#### Leadership and management

Is self assessment accurate, rigorous and effective?	Reasonable progress
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Progress in ensuring the self-assessment process is accurate, rigorous and effective is reasonable. Since the last monitoring visit, managers have maintained the thorough links between self-assessment and course reviews, the effective use of employers' views to support self-assessment and have put in place training programmes so learners can strengthen their contribution to the self-assessment process, a concern at the last monitoring visit. Strengths and areas for improvement and grades provide an accurate assessment of standards at the college. The evidence to support judgements in the self-assessment report makes good use of data on learners' performance. However, in a minority of instances, judgements are insufficiently evaluative and evidence to support judgements is not sufficiently meaningful. The self-assessment process links to the outcomes from the previous inspection and addresses concerns from previous quality improvement plans well. Quality improvement plans are an integral part of self-assessment. The links between the 2007/08 self-assessment report and the quality improvement plans are clear. Monitoring of quality improvement plans is thorough.