

Tyne Metropolitan College

Reinspection report

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Capacity to improve.....	3
Health, care and public services	4
Monitoring visit: main findings.....	6

Introduction

Tyne Metropolitan College was inspected in December 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 capacity to improve and in health, care and public services which were found to be inadequate. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is inadequate.

The inadequate aspect and sector subject area were re-inspected on 3 and 4 February 2009. The outcomes of the reinspection are summarised below.

Sector subject area/CIF aspect	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Capacity to improve	4	4
Health, care and public services	4	3

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: Grade 4

The college continues to demonstrate inadequate capacity to improve. A clear strategic direction to promote apposite, speedy and sustainable improvements to learner outcomes is not evident at all levels of the college. Senior leaders are not sufficiently clear about the causes of underperformance to provide direction and support for middle managers. Quality assurance processes and self-assessment have not been effectively driving improvement. Some grades awarded by the college, through its self-assessment process for 2007/08, to cross-college and sector subjects areas do not take sufficient account of poor achievement or the lack of urgency in the implementation of improvement plans.

Effective action has been taken to improve the monitoring and tracking of learners' progress. The very recent introduction of course reviews has been welcomed by staff as introducing more transparent procedures and greater accountability. However, too many reviews place insufficient focus on the key actions required to promote improvement. Achievement and standards, which were judged to be satisfactory at the previous inspection, have deteriorated and are now self-assessed by the college as inadequate. While provision has improved in health, care and public services, similar progress has not been made across the college and in ICT and key skills the quality of the provision has worsened. As at the previous inspection, too much of the provision remains satisfactory and is not improving.

The management structure has impeded progress and senior managers have been slow in identifying and addressing this problem. Complex reporting and line management arrangements have hindered decision making. At the time of the re-inspection the college was implementing a new structure. The college's history of setting and meeting targets is poor. The financial management of the college is also poor and, as a consequence, external consultants have been appointed to support the recovery of the college. The governing body has expressed concern over the

current pace of improvement in the quality of provision. The college's financial position remains weak.

Health, care and public services Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

Around 300 full- and 260 part-time learners are enrolled on courses in health, care and public services. Of these, approximately 240 are aged 16 to 18. Full-time and part-time courses are offered in health, social care and childcare. Full-time courses are offered in uniformed services. Most courses are offered at levels 1 to 3 and an increasing number of courses are being offered at level 4.

Strengths

- High and improving success on many courses.
- Strong focus on improving standards.
- Effective tracking of learners' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Low retention on some courses.
- Weak course and assessment planning.
- Missed opportunities to promote equality and diversity.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. In 2007/08 success rates on many courses improved to above the previous year's national averages. Success rates on entry to uniformed services courses are high. The rate on the level 2 counselling course improved to around the previous year's national average. However, on the level 3 certificate in counselling the rate declined significantly. Success rates on the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 children's care, learning and development and part-time level 2 certificate in childcare and education remain low. However, retention rates on underperforming courses are improving and, at the time of the re-inspection, were significantly higher than at the same time in the previous year.

Quality of provision

The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teaching is lively and the differing needs and interests of learners are met well. Learners on most courses make good progress and develop useful work related skills and knowledge. A few learners do not have a good understanding of the purpose of their work placement. Opportunities to promote equality and diversity are missed in the planning and delivery of some learning. Course structures and assessment are poorly planned. Too few opportunities are provided for learners to achieve unit accreditation early in their courses. The range of provision and support for learners are satisfactory. Individual learning plans and an electronic monitoring system are

now used well to track the progress of learners. Additional learning needs are quickly identified and support both in and out of the classroom is more consistently planned and managed.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Clearer management and course team leader arrangements have been established recently. Middle managers have promoted a strong focus towards quality improvement and have taken action that has been effective in addressing underperformance. This includes arrangements to increase the sharing of good practice within the area and across the college, the implementation of peer observations and more thorough monitoring of action plans.

The quality improvement plan is now being used effectively to bring about improvements and monitor impact. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate.

Monitoring visit: main findings

Name of college: Tyne Metropolitan College

Date of visit: 3 and 4 February 2009

Context

Tyne Metropolitan College is the major provider of further education in the borough of North Tyneside. The main campus is located in the Battle Hill estate in North Tyneside with the Sixth Form Academy located in North Shields. The college was formed in March 2005 following the amalgamation of North Tyneside College and Tynemouth Sixth Form College. It offers a wide range of full-time and part-time provision, for learners aged 16 to 18 and adults, across all fifteen areas of learning. Provision ranges from entry level to foundation degrees.

The college was last inspected in December 2007. At that inspection the overall effectiveness, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory. Capacity to improve was judged to be inadequate. Of the six curriculum areas inspected, one was graded outstanding, one was good, three were satisfactory and one was inadequate.

This is the second monitoring visit since the inspection.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made improving success rates for all learners?	No discernible progress
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No discernible progress has been made in improving success rates for all learners. At the previous inspection achievement and standards were judged to be satisfactory. The college's own self-assessment for 2007/08 has judged that performance has worsened since then and is now inadequate. The overall success rate shows a three-year declining trend. On long courses for adults the overall success rate declined in 2008. At level 1, the rate remained static. At level 2, where there are most learners, there is a three-year declining trend and at level 3 the rate declined in 2008. At all levels the rates are below national averages.

For learners aged 16 to 18 the overall long course success rate improved slightly in 2008, but remained below the national average. At level 1, the success rate improved to around the national average. At level 2, although the success rate has improved over the last three years, it remains below the national average. At level 3, where there are most learners, the rate did not improve in 2008 and is below the national average. Success rates on GCE AS-level courses declined in 2008 to well below the sixth form college national average and are now very poor.

Success rates on key skills declined significantly in 2008 to well below the national average and are very low. Success rates on short courses declined for both age groups and are below national averages.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in implementing appropriate action to improve the quality of teaching and learning?	Insufficient progress
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Insufficient progress has been made. Much work has taken place to improve the quality of teaching and learning but the impact on learners' achievements is not yet evident. Some positive benefits can be seen, in improvements in the rigour of the observation process and the grade profile for good and better lessons. The sharing of good practice within departments and across the college has increased.

However, actions taken by the college have focused on improving the delivery of lessons and are not linked effectively to priorities for improvement within course and subject areas. Course level self-assessment and review are not sufficiently rigorous in identifying the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning, particularly in relation to course structure and the planning of assessment. Resulting improvement plans are weak.

Has the monitoring of learners' progress improved?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made in this area. An electronic tracking system was implemented across the college in September 2008 following a pilot in the previous year. Staff have been provided with useful training and the system is now being used effectively to monitor learners' progress and to highlight those whose performance is causing concern, so that appropriate intervention strategies can be put in place. Although the tracking system has been introduced recently, examples can already be seen where interventions, such as the use of mentors, have led to improvements.

The use of individual learning plans has been developed further. A common format is now used across the college; target-setting and monitoring of students' progress has improved. Feedback on learners' work is now more focused on highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. However, it is too early to see the full impact of these initiatives as they have only been implemented this academic year.

Leadership and management

Has there been effective leadership to ensure consistent quality improvement across all aspects of the provision?	Insufficient progress
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Insufficient progress has been made to secure consistent quality improvement. Senior managers have not been sufficiently swift and decisive in identifying and

rectifying weaknesses in the management structure. Complex reporting and line management arrangements have hindered decision making processes and have been a barrier to change. A restructure was in progress at the time of the visit. Action has been taken to improve the quality of course review, the monitoring of underperforming courses and for identifying and supporting students at risk. However, much of this work is in the very early stages of implementation and has not had time to make an impact. Self-assessment and course reviews have not been sufficiently rigorous in identifying the underlying causes of poor success rates, particularly in relation to whether the curriculum meets the needs of students and the appropriateness of course design and delivery methods. The college has had assistance from external agencies to produce improvement plans but implementation is slow. Middle managers have not been provided with sufficiently effective senior leadership to drive quality improvements.

Has there been progress in improving the quality of the provision across sector subject areas?	Insufficient progress
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Insufficient progress has been made. While inspectors agree with the college that provision in health, care and public services has improved, similar progress has not been made in other sector subject areas. The provision in business which was judged by the college to be inadequate in 2006/07 has not improved. The college has judged that provision in ICT has deteriorated from good in 2006/07 to satisfactory in 2007/08, and that key skills provision has worsened and is now inadequate. Too much of the provision remains satisfactory and is not improving at a fast enough pace.

Has appropriate action been taken to improve the college's weak financial position?	Insufficient progress
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Insufficient progress has been made. Although actions to address the college's poor history of meeting targets and its weak financial position have been put in place, progress has been slow. The college's financial health remains weak. Following the monitoring visit in summer 2008 the college, supported by the Learning and Skills Council, secured assistance from external consultants to produce a strategic improvement plan and to improve the accuracy and accessibility of management information. Consultant support to improve financial management at senior level has been put in place very recently. Progress has been made in setting more realistic targets for learner numbers for 2008/09 and arrangements to improve curriculum and business planning for 2009/10 are being implemented. Further work is needed to ensure that managers at all levels understand and can use management and financial information to secure efficient use of resources.

Has effective action been taken to improve the provision in health, care and public services which was inadequate at the previous inspection?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made in improving the provision in health, care and public services, which is now satisfactory. In 2007/08, success rates improved on

many courses. The rates on the NVQ level 2 children's care, learning and development and part-time level 2 certificate in childcare and education remain low. However, at the time of the re-inspection, retention rates on these courses had improved significantly. More rigorous analysis of the underlying causes of poor success rates is now in place. Standards are improving through closer monitoring of action plans and better sharing of good practice. Learners' attendance and progress are now monitored well. Staff are clearer about their roles and responsibilities. Course and assessment planning is still weak. Opportunities for the promotion of equality and diversity are missed in some lessons.

Has appropriate action been taken to address the college's capacity to improve which was inadequate at the last full inspection?	Insufficient progress
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Insufficient progress has been made. The college continues to demonstrate an inadequate capacity to improve. Senior leaders are not sufficiently clear about the underlying causes of underperformance to provide middle managers with the direction needed to drive improvement. The management structure creates a barrier to implementing change. Quality improvement plans continue to have too little impact. Achievement and standards have worsened and are self-assessed by the college as inadequate. The quality of performance in some sector subject areas has deteriorated since the previous inspection. The college's history of setting and meeting targets is poor. The financial management of the college is also poor and, as a consequence, external consultants have been appointed to support improvement. The governing body has expressed concern over the slow pace of improvement in the quality of the provision. The college's financial health remains weak.