

Kirklees College

Focused monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130537

Name of lead inspector: Jan Bennett HMI

Last day of inspection: 7 May 2010

Type of provider: General Further Education College

Address: New North Road
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
HD1 5NN

Telephone number: 01484 536521

FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Kirklees College is a large general further education college formed by the merger of Huddersfield Technical College and Dewsbury College in the summer of 2008. The college has provision in venues across Kirklees but the two main campuses are in the centre of Huddersfield and Dewsbury. The college has provision in all subject areas and had over 18,600 enrolments during 2008/09. Around 80% of learners on full-time programmes are aged 16 to 18, with adults making up around 70% of part-time enrolments. The college provides programmes for over 900 14 to 16-year-olds and has around 500 learners on Entry to Employment courses. Around 500 learners are following apprenticeship programmes and the college is the lead partner in a consortium offering Train to Gain provision across the region.

The college has not had a full inspection since the merger but had a re-inspection monitoring visit in May 2009 and was found to be making reasonable progress. Information and communication technology was re-inspected and judged to be satisfactory.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has been made in improving self-assessment and development planning since the last monitoring visit?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

More rigorous self-assessment procedures have been introduced and judgements are now accurate. The systems are still embedding as many managers are new in post and some are new to the college. The quality team has been strengthened and is sending out clear and consistent messages to staff. The team is providing training and support for staff and is focusing extra help on areas with the weakest provision. Variation in the quality of the current self-assessment reports and improvement plans is evident but all have benefited from stronger moderation procedures that link grades to outcomes for learners. Internal quality reviews are improving the consistency of self-assessment. The reviews involve external consultants who work alongside college staff to ensure realistic grading and to build capacity within college.

Outcomes for learners

How much progress has been made in raising success rates and tackling the significant variations within and between different subject areas?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The 2008/09 data show that success rates for 16 to 18-year-olds have improved since the last monitoring visit. Success rates have been below average for a number of years but there has been steady improvement in the overall rate which is moving

closer to the national average. Success rates on long courses for adults did not improve in 2008/09, however, and they remained low. Success rates on apprenticeship courses continue to be satisfactory with timely success rates higher than average. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes are improving. Overall success rates on key skills courses have been low for a number of years but key skills achievement rates are high in some subject areas such as construction.

A thorough analysis of the reasons for low success rates has been carried out and action has been taken. For example, weak management has been strengthened in construction; unsuccessful recreational gardening and flower arranging courses have been withdrawn; and more robust selection procedures have been applied this year to make sure that learners are on the most appropriate course. Reasons for low success rates in key skills include learners being placed on the wrong level or length of course. More care has been taken with key skills enrolments this year and individual learning plans have been introduced to improve the monitoring of learners' progress.

What progress has been made in increasing retention rates since the last monitoring visit? Reasonable progress

The 2008/09 data show that the overall retention rate improved by 4.5 percentage points but was still below average. A number of initiatives have been introduced to improve retention rates this academic year. They include stricter entry criteria and more robust induction procedures to ensure that learners are on the most appropriate course; closer monitoring of learners' attendance and progress; and better-targeted support for individual learners. Low retention rates on two-year courses are an issue and, although the new initiatives are having an impact in the first year, course retention rates are still being affected adversely by a legacy of the lower retention rates amongst second years. Last year, staff did not withdraw learners promptly when they left the course so there were few withdrawals in the spring followed by a high number in June. This led to a falsely inflated retention rate for May last year. This year, measures are in place to ensure that withdrawals are made promptly, making a direct comparison between last year and this year unreliable. Managers and staff are confident that the overall retention rate for this year will be higher than for last year.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning? Reasonable progress

The new lesson observation process is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Observers have been trained well and detailed documentation provides a consistent basis on which to support observers. The process is rigorously monitored and reviewed. Joint observations and externally led internal quality reviews are making the system more robust and ensuring consistency of grades. Senior managers are addressing the few lingering inconsistencies. A dedicated team is

effectively linking findings from observations to staff training across the college. Subject area managers use observation findings to plan specific staff development for their areas. Advanced teaching and learning coaches have been appointed to mentor and support new teachers and those who receive a less than satisfactory observation report. Observation outcomes are used in teachers' professional development reviews and the human resource department supports managers and staff through formal capability processes where necessary. The vast majority of observations planned for 2009/10 have already been completed and the profile shows an increased proportion of good or better teaching.

What progress has there been in improving the quality of provision in the four areas judged to be inadequate in the 2008/09 self-assessment report? Reasonable progress

The college has strengthened the management of these areas in different ways. Public services provision has been incorporated into the sport, travel and tourism department. New managers have been appointed to lead improvements in creative industries. The other two weak areas of provision, literacy/numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), have been combined together under a new Skills for Life manager.

The public services team identified flaws in initial advice and guidance for learners. Entry criteria were not always applied and progression opportunities not promoted sufficiently. A revised recruitment procedure ensures that learners are fully aware of the content of public service programmes and entry criteria are rigorously applied. The department provides additional workshops that 'at risk' learners are required to attend. Staffing has been strengthened and team meetings used to monitor performance more closely.

Managers in creative industries investigated the very low success rates on some programmes and realised that staff did not appreciate the impact that low retention rates have on success rates. Major revisions have been implemented including more rigorous application of entry criteria resulting in an increased number of foundation and intermediate courses in some areas. The internal quality review process has helped staff to understand the underlying reasons for their 'inadequate' grade. Involvement in the British Youth Film Academy project over the summer is one of the strategies to maintain learners' motivation and reduce drop out rates.

The Skills for Life team has developed a range of strategies to address the key issues identified in self-assessment. They have improved recruitment procedures, initial assessment and the diagnosis of specific needs. Initiatives have also been introduced to improve the quality of the teaching. Interim examination results for literacy/numeracy are good across the college but interim results remain broadly satisfactory in ESOL.

Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in improving access to timely and accurate data reports and their use in improving quality? Reasonable progress

The restructured data team is working more effectively and has developed more productive working relationships with teaching staff. Learner records from the two merged colleges have been harmonised in one system and the register attendance marks are entered into a central college database. The collection of examination information has been centralised enabling earlier publication of achievement reports. A schedule of published reports alerts teachers and managers to changing patterns in learners' attendance and highlights areas needing further investigation. Senior managers and governors also receive timely summary reports. Regular monitoring meetings ensure that both managers and teaching staff analyse data and address any emerging issues. Teachers say that they have good access to accurate data reports and have been well trained in how to use them. They also say that they are beginning to appreciate the ways in which the reports can be used to improve quality. The new 'team leaders for learner success' are using data reports to target support more effectively in their subject areas.

What progress has been made in ensuring that the quality of provision is consistent across site and subject areas? Reasonable progress

The new management structure has provided clearer lines of accountability. It has brought together areas of provision from across the college that are benefiting from working more closely together. The new management team is now in place and beginning to have an impact but some external appointments were made relatively recently so the full impact has yet to be felt. Staff from all sites and subject areas have access to a wide range of training and are sharing ideas and best practice. The strengths of the two original colleges have been combined to develop new and unified systems that are embedding and evolving. Quality systems are playing a major role in ensuring more consistency.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010