

Carshalton College

Partial reinspection report

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Introduction

Carshalton College was inspected in March 2011. Overall effectiveness was satisfactory and awarded a grade 3. Learner responsive provision in information and communication technology was inadequate and awarded a grade 4. The subject area was found to have made significant progress in a monitoring visit in September 2011.

The outcome of the reinspection is as follows:

Subject area	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Information and communication technology (ICT) learner responsive provision	4	2

Context

Carshalton College is a medium-sized college located in Sutton, south London. It is part of a federation with Kingston College. The college offers a vocational curriculum in 10 subject areas. Apprenticeships are offered in many of those areas. The college offers full-time courses in ICT from foundation to advanced level. Of the 103 learners, 70 are aged 16 to 18 and 33 are adults. One quarter of learners are female, and 60% are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key findings

- Success rates on all courses improved significantly in 2010/11 and were high on almost all courses. Learners are making good progress and high numbers of learners are still on their courses. The improvement in the success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 was particularly impressive at 18 percentage points from the previous year.
- Many lessons are adversely affected by poor punctuality and in some lessons attendance is low. Staff question those who are late appropriately and make every effort to ensure that latecomers are integrated into the work of the lesson, but learning is disrupted for others while this happens.
- Learners acquire good practical skills and subject knowledge which equip them to work effectively as information technology (IT) professionals in industry. Learners demonstrate good team working skills. They research topics independently and successfully. Learners' involvement in community projects broadens their experience and development well.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers develop students' abilities very skilfully and effectively. Lessons are well planned to stimulate learners with a variety of appropriately challenging activities. The work of support staff is fully and effectively integrated into lessons. Learners enjoy well-chosen tasks that reflect realistic work scenarios and enliven learning.

- Assessment is good and improves students' performance. Teachers check learning very effectively in almost all lessons, and provide helpful written and verbal feedback to learners on their progress, so that they understand what to do to improve. The return of marked work and assignments is not always in good time. Internal verification is rigorous.
- The college provides a good range of courses which meets learners' needs and interests. Courses are provided appropriately at all levels. Learners have good opportunities to study specialist units and professional qualifications in software design and networking. A new and well-considered foundation programme has enabled learners to aspire to careers in IT.
- Links with industry and the community are strong. Students benefit from a good range of educational visits, community projects and engaging speakers from a range of businesses and organisations. The college informs learners most effectively about its own way of working. It helps them to understand the roles of IT workers in organisations.
- Learners receive good personal and academic support which helps them to achieve very successfully. Tutors provide extra help in drop-in sessions at flexible times. They produce well-written and effective progress reviews which set clear targets specifying what learners need to do. Group tutorials are well focused and productive.
- Leadership and management are good, leading to a significant rise in success rates; current students are making good progress. A productive programme of staff development has enabled teachers to improve their practice in developing learning. Teachers confidently apply a range of innovative approaches in lessons. Self-assessment is effective and accurate.
- Learners feel safe and demonstrate safe working practices which are continually reinforced by staff during practical lessons. Tutorials highlight sharply the safe use of on-line media.
- Equality and diversity are promoted very well in lessons. Visiting speakers are strong, diverse role models who encourage students effectively to have high aspirations. Targeted promotion has improved the participation of women learners in ICT courses significantly at all levels, but they are still in a minority.
- The college listens to learners' views carefully and acts on them promptly, for instance by changing the timetable to accommodate learners' caring and employment needs. Learners are consulted frequently through their course representatives and also through surveys.

What does Carshalton College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that learners make good progress in all lessons by checking their learning carefully and frequently.
- Implement rigorous procedures to improve learners' attendance and to reduce poor punctuality, to improve success rates further.
- Ensure that learners derive most benefit from written feedback by consistently returning marked work promptly.

Additional Themes

Inspectors explored the following themes as part of this reinspection.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in ensuring quality assurance procedures are applied consistently across the provision and secure sufficient improvements?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress in ensuring that quality assurance procedures are applied consistently and secure sufficient improvements. Improvements made to the lesson observation scheme now ensure that lessons are evaluated more effectively. The quality of teaching and learning is improving. Curriculum managers take prompt and effective action to improve weaker lessons. Training for staff now includes a sharp focus on improving lessons from good to outstanding. Previous training focused mainly on strategies for improving key weaknesses identified in inadequate or satisfactory lessons. Senior managers and curriculum managers monitor performance in each curriculum area closely and frequently. They formally and thoroughly evaluate progress against a range of performance indicators each month. They implement promptly interventions to address areas of concern. The sharing of good practice between curriculum managers has improved performance in other areas. Curriculum managers' rigorous auditing of the quality of students' learning plans and targets contributes to greater student success. Managers have standardised and improved methods for recruiting students onto the most suitable courses, and introduced more effective communication with parents. New strategies have been introduced, for example to improve punctuality and tutorials, but the impact of new strategies is not always evaluated in good time.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving students' outcomes since the last inspection?	Reasonable progress
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Significantly more students have remained on long qualifications and been successful since the last inspection. Success rates for students on long qualifications improved to well above average in 2010/11. They were above average for students aged 16 to 18 and high for adults. Success rates were at least at the national average or high at all levels last year. The success rate for the small number of short qualifications declined in 2010/11 and was low. Success rates for functional skills in 2010/11 declined to the national average. The proportion of students remaining on courses this year is high and has improved well. It has improved for students aged 16 to 18 at advanced level and is high. Success rates increased significantly in almost all areas, although they declined in three subjects. Success rates for apprenticeships declined in 2010/11 and were low. Students' average attendance improved from 83% at the last inspection and is currently satisfactory at 85%. Actions to reduce lateness in lessons are having some success, but punctuality requires further improvement. The development of employability skills through work experience is

uneven across the college. The college recognises that this is an area for development in several areas.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in ensuring that actions designed to minimise differences in success rates between different ethnic groups of learners are successful?	Reasonable progress
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The college has been successful in reducing the gap between the success rates of students from most minority ethnic groups and the average for the college since the last inspection. Staff training in equality and diversity is wide ranging. Teachers now promote equality and diversity more effectively in lessons. Inspirational and successful Black role models have made presentations to students in several subject areas. The college has devised a carefully considered system which helps it to identify, at an early stage, students who are at risk of leaving their courses early or being unsuccessful. Targeted assistance, which is highly valued by students, is offered to each of the 'at risk' students to support their basic skills, study skills and personal issues. Students receiving support do well. However, those from underperforming minority ethnic groups are not automatically targeted unless they are highlighted as being 'at risk'. Staff now analyse success rates systematically by ethnic group in subject self-assessment reports. However, the college has not focused sufficiently on ensuring that students from the few underperforming minority ethnic groups always receive appropriate support, and this has led to poor outcomes for some students. Managers now clearly identify and monitor student attendance rates by ethnic group.

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