



Cadbury Sixth Form College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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130469

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Cadbury Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College (with a high widening participation factor)
Principal:	David Igoe
Address of college:	Downland Close, Redditch Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, West Midlands, B38 8QT
Telephone number:	0121 458 3898
Fax number:	0121 433 2619
Chair of governors:	Eleanor Mallatratt
Unique reference number:	130469
Name of lead inspector:	John G Evans HMI
Dates of inspection:	10 – 14 October 2005

Background of the organisation

1. Cadbury Sixth Form College is a medium-sized sixth form college located in the south west of Birmingham. The large majority of its students reside in Birmingham. Others travel in from Worcestershire, Sandwell and Solihull. The college primarily provides full-time advanced level courses for 16 to 18 year-olds. It is the largest A-level institution in Birmingham, taking about 13% of all Birmingham school leavers who achieve 5 GCSE A* to C grades. The largest numbers take courses in science and mathematics, followed by humanities, visual and performing arts, English and modern foreign languages (MFL), business and information and communication technology (ICT). Part-time courses, which represent some 3% of provision, take place in the college's Learning Centre and are targeted at the needs of adults on the neighbouring 'New Deal for Communities' estates.
2. At the time of the inspection there were 1,345 full-time students and 140 part-time students attending the college. The gender balance in 2004 was 40% male, 60% female. Over half the students have minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest numbers being of Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean heritage. The student population broadly mirrors the population profile of the areas from which the college recruits. The college recruits more students with relatively low GCSE point scores than is typical for a sixth form college.
3. The college's mission is 'to provide an educational experience of high quality for 16 to 19 year-old advanced level students from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds, and to offer opportunities to members of the local community wishing to further their education.'

Scope of the inspection

4. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management

Summary of grades awarded

EFFECTIVENESS OF PROVISION	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievements and standards	Satisfactory: grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. Learners' achievements are satisfactory. Retention rates improved following the last inspection and have remained close to the national averages for the last four years. Pass rates, and consequently success rates, have been more variable from year to year, although they are around national averages and the overall trend is one of improvement. Value-added data used by the college indicate that full-time students mostly achieve in line with expectations. The attendance rate has been unsatisfactory in recent years and this has had a detrimental impact on the achievement of too many full-time students.
6. The quality of provision is good. Teaching is mostly good. Lesson planning now pays closer attention to the learning needs of the different abilities in each class, although teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge for students at the higher end of the ability range. Accommodation and learning resources are good. Many teachers make effective use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons.
7. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. Strong links have been formed with secondary schools and the local community. The student profile reflects an increasingly rich ethnic mix. The curriculum and extra-curricular activities are well-matched to the needs and interest of students.
8. Students receive very good advice and guidance before they join the college and good personal support during their time at the college. The tutorial system for full-time students is well planned and increasingly effective. Support for entry into higher education is excellent. The college has not yet secured sufficient take-up of learning support by those students who would benefit from it.
9. Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers set a clear direction for the college and quality assurance arrangements contribute to the improving performance of the college. Financial management is good and has enabled the continuous improvement of accommodation and resources. The college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college demonstrates good capacity to improve its provision for students. Quality assurance procedures have improved since the last inspection. They are now much more rigorous and focus closely on retention and achievement and teaching and learning. There is a consistent approach to collecting and evaluating students' views across the college. All teachers are observed while

teaching and their lessons are graded. However, the focus of these observations is on how well the teacher performs, rather than how well the students understand their work and develop their skills.

11. Self-assessment at departmental level has become more rigorous and self-critical. Senior managers carefully evaluate the self-assessment reports from departments. Action plans and the necessary management checks to ensure they are successfully followed through are in place. Self-assessment of cross-college aspects such as leadership and management remains underdeveloped.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

12. The college has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. Teachers are more successfully planning lessons to meet the wide range of abilities of their students, although weaknesses remain in a minority of lessons. Retention rates, a major weakness at the last inspection, have improved significantly and are now at the national average. Success rates have risen, especially in the last two years. Quality assurance arrangements are much more rigorous. Teachers are better at identifying what they do well and what they need to do to effect improvements. Procedures to identify students who need additional support to successfully complete their studies work well. Attendance remains unsatisfactory despite the efforts made to improve it. Key skills provision is now well organised.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Very good advice, guidance and personal support for students.
- Effective strategies to widen participation.
- Good accommodation and resources.
- Good leadership, management and governance.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- Aspects of students' achievement.
- Students' attendance and punctuality at lessons.
- Take-up and evaluation of learning support.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. The success rate for full-time level 3 courses, which represent 95% of the provision, has improved since the last inspection and is now at the national average for sixth form colleges serving disadvantaged areas. A major factor has been the significant improvement in retention, which was a key weakness at the time of the last inspection. Retention rates have remained steadily around the national averages for the last 4 years. Pass rates are also around the national average. The AS-level pass rate has improved markedly since 2003. College data indicates a 10% improvement in 2005 which would bring it up to the national average. The pass rate on A-level courses declined slightly in 2005 to 92%, just below the national level. Success rates on GCSE courses have usually been above national average, but the proportion of students achieving A* to C grades is below the national level. Success rates on part-time courses for adults are good.
14. The value added analysis subscribed to by the college indicates that while most students achieve the grade expected based on their GCSE results, too few students achieve better than this. Students with lower attainment levels on entry tend to make the most progress. The proportion of students gaining higher grades at AS and A-level is low in most subjects. The pass rate in key skills is very low but has started to improve.
15. The college thoroughly analyses the performance of different groups of students and in departments such as English and sociology this information is used to plan the curriculum in ways which will raise achievement. Female students generally achieve better than male students, particularly at AS level. There are differences in the achievement of different ethnic groups, but the college can demonstrate that the key factors influencing achievement are students' attainment on entry and attendance. Poor attendance and punctuality detrimentally effect the achievements of too many students. Average attendance on full-time courses last year was only 77%, almost 10% below the average attendance during inspections of sixth form colleges last year.
16. The quality of students' written and project work is at least satisfactory and often good. The same quality is often less apparent in classroom discussion. Nevertheless, most students achieve at the level they need to progress to their preferred destination and almost 70% of students enter higher education.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

17. Teaching and learning are good. Joint observations carried out by inspectors and college managers revealed close agreement about the quality of lessons. The strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained and clear progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses. The college has strongly promoted teaching which addresses the needs of all students and the effective use of ILT in the classroom. The benefits of this are apparent in many

lessons, although some weaknesses remain. The college has improved the arrangements for key skills by concentrating on communication and literacy skills, targeted effectively at those most likely to benefit. The teaching of adult students is well structured and effective.

18. Most lessons are well organised, purposeful and linked strongly to what students need to do to pass their examinations. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and communicate their enthusiasm for their subject. Learning resources are good within classrooms and in the open access resource areas, including the library. Learning materials are varied and engage students' interest. These materials frequently allow students to work independently at their own pace and to revise and consolidate their knowledge in a subject. Many teachers make good use of the ILT resources available in most classrooms. In a minority of lessons the benefits of interactive white boards are not adequately exploited. The college has developed a virtual learning environment (VLE) which provides an extensive range of materials and activities in many subjects and is well used by students.
19. Teaching is supportive and designed to increase students' confidence in their own abilities. A culture of praise adds to the positive atmosphere in most lessons. Students respond well and appreciate the individual help provided in and out of lessons. They work well in groups and many are confident in presenting their ideas to the whole class. However, a significant minority of students are much more reluctant to volunteer answers or participate in class discussion. Teachers do not encourage such students sufficiently. Support is quickly offered to students experiencing difficulties, but those students capable of making further progress are not always given sufficiently challenging work. Written work is normally marked and returned promptly with comments designed to help students to improve; however, very good work rarely attracts sufficient comment to promote further improvement.
20. The curriculum is well matched to the needs and interests of students. There are 40 different AS and A-level subjects available, including two vocational options, together with those GCSE subjects most important for employment opportunities. This range is suited to students' aspirations and prior achievement. There are good links with the large number of secondary schools from which students are recruited, including sharing teaching, attendance at careers evenings and the provision of taster and master classes.
21. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. Effective strategies are being employed to widen participation. A high proportion of students are from deprived areas. The college has recently built a well-equipped adult learning centre on campus, through which it offers a range of entry and foundation level courses to people living on the adjacent estates. A small but increasing number of adult students progress to mainstream college courses.
22. The college is successfully extending the work experience programme and, through this, developing appropriate links with employers. The number of placements has increased significantly in recent years but does not yet meet demand. Work-related study is underdeveloped within the curriculum, although

- departments such as ICT and health and social care make good use of students' work experience. The range of curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular activities is good; most students participate in the former, but fewer join in college-wide activities. Students have access to good sports and exercise facilities and the college is developing an appropriate team sports ethos.
23. Guidance and support for students is very good. Full-time students, in particular, benefit from good advice, guidance and support from specialist staff in student services, subject teachers and personal tutors. All students have access to a wide range of information and welfare services that cover housing, finance, health and personal counselling.
24. College publicity materials are attractive and informative. Induction procedures, together with mixed year tutorial groups, help full-time students to settle into their course and quickly become familiar with the college. Regular bulletins encourage students to approach student services when they feel in need of support. Group tutorials are good and the emerging system of 'active' tutorial lessons has started to provide an effective, college-wide focus on key topics and issues.
25. Initial assessment of students' learning support needs is completed promptly at induction. However, once needs have been identified there is insufficient persuasion for students to take up the learning support available. Of those identified as likely to benefit from learning support last year, less than 25% attended support sessions. Most students who subsequently refer themselves to student services for additional help benefit from the excellent support they receive. Good specialist support is provided for dyslexic students. The impact of learning support is not systematically evaluated. There is an effective system to identify students 'at risk' of under-achieving or leaving their course. Efforts to improve attendance have had too little impact.
26. Helpful information on career and higher education opportunities is available and support for students applying to university is excellent. More specialist and varied careers advice for those seeking employment is less readily available. The reporting of student progress and welfare to parents and carers is thorough, but some parents find the written progress reports and chances graphs too complicated. Parents have a positive impression of the college.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

27. Leadership and management are good. Governors have set a clear strategic direction for the college. They discharge their responsibilities effectively. Management actions have had a positive impact on some specific areas of achievement, most noticeably the significant improvement in retention and the improvement in AS results over the last two years. The management structure has recently been revised to increase the focus on improving teaching and learning. Communications between managers, governors, staff and students are good, and are supported by weekly bulletins for staff and students, a weekly all staff meeting and bi-weekly group tutorials for students.

28. Good financial management has enabled the college to continuously improve its accommodation and resources. There is good access for learners with impaired mobility to all areas of the college. Teaching staff are well qualified and are able to undertake appropriate staff development to meet their identified needs.
29. The rigour of self-assessment by subject departments has improved markedly recently, although lesson observations focus too much on the teaching rather than learning. Accurate and detailed information on students is now available on-line to support quality assurance processes, and a sophisticated level of analysis is undertaken by most course teams to determine the factors that most significantly impact on the success of learners. Good use is made of feedback from students in self-assessment. The recently introduced college improvement groups provide a catalyst for cross-college quality improvement and facilitate the sharing of good practice. The self-assessment of leadership and management, service areas and cross-college functions is underdeveloped.
30. There is a proactive approach to inclusion and equality and diversity, as evidenced by the introduction of provision for adults in the local community and the increasingly ethnically diverse student population. The college complies with child protection, race relations and disability discrimination legislation, and analyses and monitors its performance against equality and diversity factors. However, policy review and action planning to reduce differentials are underdeveloped.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream Level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	01/02	263	77	69	8	10	30	40	-10
	02/03	263	73	71	2	1	100	48	
	03/04	191	83	75	7	5	80	47	
GCSEs	01/02	259	78	72	6	2	100		
	02/03	255	73	73	0	1	100		
	03/04	186	82	77	5	5	80		
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	0		70		0			
	02/03	0		69		0			
	03/04	0		71		0			
NVQs	01/02	0				0			
	02/03	0				0			
	03/04	0				0		52	
Other	01/02	4	50			8	13	29	-16
	02/03	8	63	62	0	0		41	
	03/04	5	100	73		0		32	

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	01/02	4,963	63	71	-8	51	78	49	30
	02/03	5,116	62	72	-10	71	59	53	6
	03/04	5,036	67	75	-7	65	66	58	9
A/A2 levels	01/02	1,476	88	85	3	24	83		
	02/03	1,564	84	88	-4	36	61		
	03/04	1,547	90	89	1	32	78		
AS levels	01/02	3,422	53	66	-13	26	77		
	02/03	3,486	52	66	-14	35	57		
	03/04	3,413	57	69	-12	32	53		
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	58	22	50	-28	1	0		
	02/03	51	61	63	-2	0			
	03/04	67	43	68	-25	1	100		
NVQs	01/02	0				0		56	
	02-03	0				0		52	
	03/04	0				0		51	
Other	01/02	7	29			0		21	
	02/03	15	33	54	-21	0			
	03/04	9	89	57	32	0			