Queen Alexandra College

Ofsted

Better education and care

Re-inspection report

Introduction

Queen Alexandra College was inspected in April 2004. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) 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 Information and Communication Technology (ICT), literacy and numeracy and leadership and management which were found to be less than satisfactory. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is less than satisfactory within two years of the original inspection. If inadequate areas of learning or aspects of provision remain inadequate following re-inspection, inspectors will continue to monitor progress at annual assessment visits, but the areas will not be re-graded. They will be re-inspected during the full college inspection.

The less than satisfactory ICT, literacy and numeracy and leadership and management were re-inspected on 6 and 7 June 2006. The outcomes of the leadership and management re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Literacy and numeracy	4	3

Context

All students receive literacy and numeracy as part of their course. Students are entered for adult literacy and numeracy qualifications, key skills and a range of English Speaking Board qualifications. Not all students attempt qualifications. There has been a reduction in the numbers of students taking literacy and numeracy qualifications whilst the number taking English Speaking Board qualifications has increased.

Strengths
- very good development of oral skills
- good teaching of literacy for students with dyslexia
- good use of learners' vocational programmes to develop literacy skills

Areas for improvement
- under developed links with the residential and extended curriculum
- insufficient analysis of qualification data

Achievement and standards

The standard of students' literacy and numeracy work has improved. It is now satisfactory overall. Students develop good oral skills with many students

achieving increasingly higher levels of English Speaking Board qualifications over time. They speak clearly and listen appropriately to their peers and the staff, with many able to articulate their ideas in a range of settings. The development of literacy skills for students with dyslexia continues to be a strength, as identified in the previous inspection. This impacts positively on the achievement of their main programme. Students' numeracy skills are less well developed.

Quality of provision

There has been significant improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection. Literacy lessons focus on skills to be developed by using the context of the students' vocational programmes and this is increasingly being introduced in numeracy lessons. In the good lessons, course assignments are well used to develop understanding of vocational language. In effective lessons the teaching is lively and students are engaged in their learning. Information technology (IT) is used well in many lessons; however, there is scope to increase the IT resource base to support this area of learning. Whilst the quality of teaching in numeracy has improved, it is not as consistently effective as seen in the literacy provision. Individual student records are comprehensive and contain detailed formative assessment. Links with the residential and extended curriculum have yet to be developed in the same way that links with the vocational provision have evolved.

Leadership and management

Managers have set clear direction for the development of literacy and numeracy supported by a realignment of staff responsibilities. The creation of close links with vocational areas enable staff to share good practice and to embed literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. The literacy team is well established. The changes to the numeracy team are more recent and its impact is just starting to be visible. Staff training is impacting positively on the quality of teaching and the assessment of students. Accommodation has been improved significantly. Better use is made of data relating to learner achievement but there is inconsistency in the way it is analysed. The data is not used routinely to set targets to drive improvements.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
ICT	4	3

Context

Full-time provision for ICT learners includes foundation provision, first diploma for IT practitioners and iTQ (NVQ in IT applications). Other learners have the opportunity to develop skills and gain an ICT qualification as part of the core

curriculum. These courses include computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) at levels I and 2 and computer-aided design.

Strengths
- high overall success rate
- good opportunities for ICT qualifications for all learners
- comprehensive learner reviews
- good learning environment in ICT centre

Areas for improvement
- inadequate arrangements to store resources and learners' work
- insufficient use of adaptive aids to support individual learners
- insufficient progress monitoring in workshops

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards have improved significantly since the last inspection. In 2004/05 the overall success rate in ICT was 20% above national average. The iTQ programme has had high success rates for two years. The foundation level course also has good success rates, with three quarters of learners gaining a distinction. College learners who took additional qualifications in ICT were all successful last year. Learners make good progress in lessons and participate well in group-work. The standard of learners' work is good in many lessons as is the work in learners' files. Some work is creative and imaginative. Learners gain confidence in using computers and are proud of their achievements. Learners studying iTQ achieve the appropriate aspects of their programme through relevant work placements.

Quality of provision

All teaching is now satisfactory or better. Lessons are well planned with clear methods and tasks to support learners' needs and develop skills. Learners are well motivated and work diligently in lessons. Teachers use an appropriate variety of learning methods with activities that engage the learners. Learning support assistants are used effectively in lessons. There are detailed individual learning plans for learners on the main programmes. These contain comprehensive reviews with appropriate long and short term targets which are monitored regularly. However, there is weak progress monitoring in the CLAIT workshop sessions. There are inconsistencies in the use of assistive aids which results in some learners not having the support they need. For instance, voice recognition software is not used; some students need keyboards with large keys and document holders would benefit many learners.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection a new coordinator has been appointed to manage the ICT provision and quality assurance arrangements have improved considerably. There is a purpose built centre which provides a very good learning environment for learners on ICT courses. There are inadequate arrangements for storing learning resources and learners' work. Staff save resources temporarily on a server for use in class but there is no centrally stored bank of resources for staff and learners to use or share. This is not recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

CIF Aspect	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Leadership and Management	4	3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and have improved considerably since the last inspection. The college has established a clear strategic direction. The strategy identifies seven key aims supported by a detailed action plan and progress is measured through ten critical success factors. Governors have provided strong support and made decisive interventions to ensure that standards of provision have improved. The current principal has been in post since January 2006 and has clarified the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle management. A new appraisal system for senior staff is linked to responsibility and accountability for the achievement of strategic objectives. Staff value the clarity of purpose and the open management style that engages staff participation. The governors and leadership team are promoting an organisational culture that is aspirational and celebrates the achievement of learners and staff.

Quality assurance procedures have improved considerably. The self-assessment report is more evaluative than at the last inspection. Staff engage in a self-critical and open process that encourages clear targets for improvement. Better use is made of learner achievement data although there are still some inconsistencies in the interpretation and presentation of the data. Whilst target setting within individual learning plans is much improved, there are no course or whole college quality improvement targets for learner achievement. The observation of learning and teaching is frequent and rigorous. The focus upon teaching and learning has contributed to an improved student experience. There has been recent rapid development of the college management information system. It has been populated with a range of learner information, including achievement, which middle managers are beginning to use effectively. Pilot work is underway to include individual learning plans. It is too early to fully assess the impact of these developments on improving standards.

A recent review of the curriculum structure has enabled good utilisation and deployment of staff and resources. There is clarity of role and function of teaching and learning support staff. However, the range of specialist-trained staff to meet the needs of some individual learners is inadequate. Teaching and learning accommodation and resources are good.

Equality and diversity is effectively promoted across the college and staff and governors have undertaken training programmes. The college has delivered training to support learners with autism as part of its wide ranging staff development programme. However, the college does not comply fully with its obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 or the Children Act (2004) and some staff require further training on these aspects. A recent Provider Financial Audit (PFA) confirmed that the monitoring of learner schedule and purchase orders are compliant with the funding requirements. Financial management is sound and the college provides satisfactory value for money.