

## RE-INSPECTION MONITORING OF SOUTH BIRMINGHAM COLLEGE

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### Outcome of monitoring inspection

The provision in the curriculum areas of **science and mathematics, business administration, management and professional** and **work-based learning (WBL) construction** is now **satisfactory**.

### Background

South Birmingham College was inspected in October 2001. 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 in all areas inspected, except in science and mathematics, business administration, management and professional, and WBL construction, which were found to be unsatisfactory.

Ofsted and the ALI have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum and/or WBL areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or that leadership and management are unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory provision in any curriculum or WBL area, or less than satisfactory leadership and management, Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of the unsatisfactory areas.

As a result of monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum or WBL areas, or leadership and management are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum or WBL area or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grade for the area that continues to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection within the cycle. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and the reasons why.

### Dates of Re-inspection Monitoring Visits

In accordance with the above procedures, re-inspection monitoring visits of science and mathematics, business administration, management and professional, and

WBL construction, took place on 10 and 11 June 2002, 24, 25 and 26 September 2002, 13 and 14 February 2003, 10 and 11 June 2003, and 14 and 15 October 2003.

### **Science and mathematics**

In the October 2001 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

#### **Strengths**

- Improving retention and pass rates in GCSE science to above the national averages
- Good support materials for learners
- Well-organised assessment and monitoring of progress in mathematics
- Good support for learners.

#### **Weaknesses**

- Declining retention rates on GCE A-levels for learners aged 16 to 18
- Poor GCE A-level pass rates for learners aged 16 to 18
- Much poor teaching
- Insufficient use of IT in some teaching
- Some poor punctuality and attendance

- Limited range of courses in science
- Poor liaison in science and mathematics.

Following the monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

The retention and pass rates have improved on most courses and are now close to or above the national averages. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better. Lessons are well planned. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject. In the best lessons, imaginative methods are used to stimulate student interest. There has been extensive staff development focusing on teaching and learning. The lesson observation programme is now more robust. However, although there has been significant staff development in the use of ILT it is seldom used in lessons. The monitoring of punctuality and attendance has been strengthened. Procedures are more rigorous. Subject tutors routinely follow-up student absences and two full-time attendance officers follow-up more acute problems. Since the inspection a strategic review of the curriculum offer has been undertaken. The range of courses offered has been changed to better meet the needs of students. The college has withdrawn its GCE A-level provision, the range of access to HE courses has been expanded, and a wider range of mathematics courses has been introduced. Liaison between science and mathematics areas has improved. A management restructuring has taken place. A curriculum manager is now responsible for science and mathematics provision across all sites. There are regular meetings of science and mathematics teachers to discuss teaching and learning and to monitor and evaluate initiatives to improve the quality of the provision. Subject teams meet regularly to plan and exchange ideas and share good practice.

### **Business administration, management and professional**

In the October 2001 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

#### **Strengths**

- Broad range of provision from level 1 to level 4
- Good tutorial support for full-time and part-time provision
- Good teaching on office studies and teacher training programmes.

## Weaknesses

- Poor retention rates on programmes for students aged 16 to 18
- Pass rates well below national averages on a number of programmes
- Some unsatisfactory and poor teaching on business and professional programmes
- Lack of rigour in course reviews, self-assessment and action planning.

Following the monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

In 2003, the pass rates on many courses for students aged 16 to 18 were at or above the national averages. The pass rates on teacher training and trade union programmes remain high and are above the national averages. Retention rates on most courses remain at or above national averages. However, the retention and pass rates on some accounting, word processing and administration courses are more mixed and a few remain below national averages. Since the inspection, the college has reviewed and changed the curriculum offer to better meet the needs of students. Appropriate action has been taken to withdraw or replace courses where students' achievements have been low. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and most teaching is now good or better. Lessons are well planned. Careful consideration is given to the needs of individual students. Support for students from teachers and classroom assistants are good. Good practice and learning materials are shared across the curriculum area. Quality assurance arrangements have been improved. Self-assessment is more rigorous and lesson observations are more self-critical. Teaching teams meet regularly to monitor the quality of the provision and take prompt action to address weaknesses.

## Construction (work-based learning provision)

In the October 2001 inspection, the quality of the work-based learning provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses pertaining to the construction provision including work-based learning provision were identified in the inspection report:

## Strengths

- Good pass rates in foundation and some intermediate vocational crafts

- Excellent practical teaching in carpentry and joinery
- Some innovative community-based projects
- Broad range of enrichment activities and additional qualifications
- Extensive specialist workshops with realistic training facilities
- Good library facilities for construction students.

### **Weaknesses**

- Poor achievement of qualifications in the normally inspected time
- Declining retention rates on the majority of courses over the past three years
- Poor progression of level 1 craft learners to level 3 or higher
- Insufficient development of key skills
- Unsatisfactory work-based learning
- Some inadequate physical resources.

Following the monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

The management of work-based learning has been improved. A new management structure is in

place and roles and responsibilities are clear. Overall, support for learners has improved. Learners additional support needs are identified at the start of their programme. Induction is well planned and comprehensive. A high priority is given to health and safety checks and training in college and in the workplace. The college's health and safety officers check all placements to ensure that employers have a health and safety policy and carry out risk assessments. Work placements are of a high quality and enable learners to access the full range of experiences required for the NVQ qualification. However, insufficient assessment is undertaken in the workplace and the progress of some learners towards gaining their qualification is delayed as all assessment is carried out in college. The arrangements to monitor learners' progress is now more rigorous. The modern apprenticeship (MA) co-ordinator monitors learners' progress through regular site visits which include progress reports from site supervisors. Course tutors in college systematically review learners' progress towards their NVQ and key skills qualification. Communication between the MA co-ordinators, teachers and tutors on the progress of learners is good. The progress of learners is well documented. More attention has been given to the teaching of key skills. Key skills teachers work closely with vocational teachers. A higher proportion of learners are now achieving key skills than at the time of the inspection. The achievement of work-based learners has improved steadily since the inspection and is now above the national average. However, although retention has improved on the foundation modern apprenticeship it remains low.

There will be no further monitoring visits of the college because there are no remaining unsatisfactory areas.