



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



RE-INSPECTION OF NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COLLEGE

Published March 2005

Outcome of Re-Inspection

- The overall provision in work-based learning (WBL) in motor vehicle technology is now **satisfactory**.
- The overall provision in the curriculum area of hospitality and catering is now **good**.

Background

North Hertfordshire College was inspected in February 2003. 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 hospitality and catering, and work-based learning in motor vehicle technology, 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 work-based learning (WBL) areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or where leadership and management are unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory leadership and management, or less than satisfactory provision in solely WBL, inspectors from Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of the less than satisfactory areas. As a result of the re-inspection monitoring visits, inspectors may judge that previously less than satisfactory areas of provision, or leadership and management, are now satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Where leadership and management are satisfactory, but there is curriculum provision that is less than satisfactory, there will be no monitoring visits. All less than satisfactory provision will be re-inspected, normally during one week, within two years of the original inspection.

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.

Date of the Re-Inspection

In accordance with the above procedures, re-inspection of hospitality and catering and work-based learning in motor vehicle technology took place during the week of 7-11 February 2005.

Motor vehicle technology

In the February 2003 inspection, the quality of overall provision in the work-based learning (WBL) element of this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report for motor vehicle technology as a whole:

Strengths

- rapidly improving and good entry level pass rate
- high motivation and self-confidence of students in workshop activities
- good teaching
- early completion of key skills by apprentices
- substantial recent investment in specialist resources.

Weaknesses

- slow completion of portfolios and low pass rates and progression on NVQ courses
- insufficient NVQ assessment in the workplace
- no recent progress reviews for work-based students
- lack of rigour in internal verification
- small scope of the provision.

Following the re-inspection, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses. The overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

Pass rates for work-based learning have significantly improved to above national averages, with foundation modern apprentice (FMA) framework achievement improving from 0% in 2002/03 to 62% in 2003/04. A similar trend in advanced modern apprentice (AMA) framework achievement shows improvement from 0% in 2002/3 to 63% in 2004/5. Achievement of key skills is improving with 94% of those who started in 2004/05 successful in the information technology (IT) test. Retention rates for WBL have improved from 25% in 2002/03 to 48% in 2003/4, with further significant improvement so far in 2004/05. Punctuality is still a concern. However, a recently introduced monitoring system provides notification of poor time-keeping to employers.

The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the re-inspection was good, with 80% of lessons judged to be good or better and no unsatisfactory teaching. The planning of WBL lessons is consistent, and students are encouraged to participate. The use of electronic whiteboards to support theory teaching and learning provides opportunities for students to be involved in their learning.

The assessment of apprentices' competences, by appropriately qualified trainer/assessors who are vocational specialists, is now scheduled regularly in the workplace. All the work placements visited are of high quality and supportive of college programmes. Evidence for some units at level 3 is difficult to obtain due to the unpredictability of incoming repairs and changes in manufacturers' warranties.

Monitoring of apprentices' progress is now more rigorous, with scheduled review meetings in the workplace every 12 weeks and timetabled weekly tutorial sessions. An individual training plan enables clearly defined progress and assessment targets to be set, and the tracking of student progress is more effective.

There has been considerable improvement in the management and quality of work-based learning provision, with scheduled steering group and curriculum team meetings. There is adequate monitoring of equal opportunities and health and safety issues during student progress reviews. The college delivers well-planned WBL programmes in motor vehicle technology with positive support from local employers who are involved with the development and updating of apprentices' individual training plans. However, employers' understanding of the framework details is limited. All work-based students undertake a planned induction programme and an initial learning assessment. This provides a basis for individual help and guidance, which is followed up during individual progress reviews.

Hospitality and catering

In the February 2003 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

- well-planned assignments
- good retention and pass rates on NVQ level 2 food and drink service
- good attendance rates.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on NVQ food preparation courses
- low standard of students' work in practical lessons
- insufficient progress by students in many lessons
- unsuitable assessment arrangements for more able students
- inadequate links with employers
- the management of aspects of realistic working environments.

Following the re-inspection inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses. The overall provision in this area is now **good**.

There is good achievement on NVQ courses. Pass rates are at or above national averages over the two years since the last inspection. Retention rates are generally good and have improved since the last inspection to at or above national averages. Students' attendance is good. The average was 90% in the autumn term. Achievement in key skills is poor.

Students' work is generally of a good standard in practical classes. Students are attaining appropriate levels of skills for the various stages of their courses. Students have been taught to work in a methodical and organised manner, in order to comply with appropriate hygiene practices. They choose the correct small equipment to complete the food preparation and cookery tasks set. In food service they work effectively. Practical work results in products of good quality, consistent with industry standards.

The majority of teaching is good or better, and none is unsatisfactory. In practical food and pastry production lessons, where the aim is to prepare and cook the lunch for the college's 60-seat public restaurant, the teaching is very good. Students in these sessions work effectively under commercial pressure. The sessions are well-structured, giving students a good range of opportunities for assessment towards their NVQs. Students have well-defined roles in production kitchens and in the restaurant for food service. Teachers in practical and theory lessons use computer presentations that are innovative and accessible to students. Teachers have developed some very good theory lessons that link immediately to practical work undertaken in the food preparation classes on the same morning. Teachers make good use of questions to ensure understanding and to check learning. Students also work on functions in the training restaurant to broaden their learning. This type of work meets the assessment requirements for NVQ 2 and NVQ 3 awards. A series of master classes by expert and well-known chefs from industry has been held recently to broaden the

experience of the students, and to improve links with the industry.

The catering facilities are satisfactory, including a training kitchen, production kitchen, pastry production kitchen, a restaurant and a bistro open to the college and the public. The kitchens have a good variety of specialist equipment to support practical work. Some small equipment is worn and in short supply. The dry food storage facilities are satisfactory. A new, small blast-freezer is well used by students in the pastry and food production sessions. The outdated library stock has been removed and replaced with a good range of current texts and materials. Students have access to computers and the college intranet to support their work. The level 3 NVQ students have produced some very good powerpoint displays used in the restaurant. Teachers in theory and practical classes are making good and innovative use of computers to improve teaching and learning.

The assessment of vocational work in food preparation, pastry production and food service is well planned and organised. Much time is spent by teachers and students at the close of practical sessions gathering the evidence for their assessments and making judgements on the quality of the outcomes. Students carefully record this on evidence recording forms, which are commented on and signed by the teacher assessor, for inclusion in the portfolios. However, students at level 1, and some at level 2, have difficulties with spelling and inaccuracies in their written evidence forms go unchecked by the teachers. Teachers use observation and questioning to complete accurate and thorough assessments that are clearly recorded.

The area offers a satisfactory range of provision from level 1 through to level 3, and a range of short courses for the trade. There is good evidence of progression for full-time students through these levels. Part-time attendance is available and taken up by a small number of adult students on these programmes. There are effective links with local and national employers that have been developed and improved since the inspection. Key skills are integrated into the main programmes of study. A school link programme for year 10 and 11 pupils is well supported. Last year, four year 11 students progressed to NVQ courses at the college.

There is good screening and diagnosis of individual learning and support needs. Many students at level 1 and in the level 2 first year receive additional learning support, either in class or through attendance at workshops. Students speak highly of the additional support they receive for dyslexia, or to improve their basic skills. A student with a physical disability is well supported on her course. There are good examples of students with mild impairments receiving good mentoring support and counselling. Teachers provide good information, advice and guidance about progression and employment in the industry through the weekly tutorial provision. Many students have regular part-time employment in the catering industry and see gaining NVQs as a sure way of securing their future progress.

The area benefits from good leadership and management. There is good communication and the team works together effectively. Regular team meetings are recorded with clear actions that are followed up. Staff and students have a clear understanding of what needs to be achieved for success. Staff appraisals are effective and there is good staff development. Self-assessment and lesson observations are effective in securing improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

There will be no further re-inspection of the college because there are no remaining unsatisfactory areas.