

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Dudley College of Technology

Date of visit: 04 to 05 December 2007

### Context

Dudley College of Technology is a large general further education (GFE) college. The college is located at four main sites: The Broadway, Mons Hill Centre, Castle View and Wolverhampton Street. Around two fifths of learners are from Dudley, a quarter from Sandwell and most of the remainder are from other Black Country boroughs and neighbouring cities and counties of the West Midlands. In 2006/07, the college had 23,843 learners. Of these, around two thirds were adult learners; just over half were female and just over a quarter were from minority ethnic groups.

The college offers courses in all sector subject areas. The highest number of learners are in preparation for life and work; information and communication technology; health, public services and care; arts, media and publishing; business, administration and law; construction, planning and the built environment and engineering and manufacturing technologies. The college provides education and training for apprentices, advanced apprentices, and Train to Gain learners.

Dudley's population is 305,155. Dudley has a ranking 109 out of 354 for the highest levels of deprivation in England. Dudley's unemployment rate is just below the national unemployment rate. Some 6% of the local population are from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils gaining five GCSE's at grades A\*-C in Dudley, including mathematics and English, in 2006 was 43.0% compared to a national average of 45.8%.

## Achievement and standards

How much progress has the college made in increasing low FE success rates in 2006/07?	Reasonable progress
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At the time of the last inspection success rates were low for further education courses. The college has made reasonable progress in resolving this issue. Long course success rates are no longer low and although not high, have increased markedly between 2004/05 and 2006/07 for learners aged 16 to 18 and particularly for adults. The long course success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 was better than that for adults.

Long course success rates for subject sector areas between 2004/05 and 2006/07; show the increase was particularly marked in nine out of fifteen sector subject areas. In three areas the rate was similar to other colleges, two stayed at a comparable level to the previous year and one area sharply declined. Long course success rates in 2006/07 were high in health, public services and care; retail and commercial enterprises; leisure, tourism and travel; arts, media and publishing and education and training. However, success rates were low in ICT. The success rate for key skills between 2004/05 and 2006/07 was particularly marked and was higher in 2006/07 than inspectors routinely find.

Success rates for short courses, five to 24 weeks, for learners aged 16-18, between 2004/05 and 2006/07, increased sharply. Both rates in 2006/07 were high. Success rates for 2006/07 for short courses less than five weeks for learners aged 16 to 18 and for adult learners remained at a high level between 2004/05 and 2006/07.

The success rates for male and female learners were similar in 2006/07. The success rates for all minority ethnic groups overall in 2006/07 were similar to the college as a whole.

What progress has been made in increasing success rates for work based learning in 2006/07?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in increasing success rates for work based learning in 2006/07. The overall framework success rate for 2006/07 was the same as the national average. This was a marked improvement on 2004/05 when the rate was well below the national average. The rate of increase was nearly double the national rate. The framework success rate for advanced apprentices in 2006/07 was significantly above the national average but the rate for apprentices was below. Just over half of learners successfully achieved the framework by the targeted end date. This compares well with the national average. The number of Train to Gain learners achieving their key learning objectives in 2006/07 was high.

#### Quality of provision

Is inadequate provision in health, public services and care improving?	Significant progress
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At the last inspection, this area was inadequate. Progress in improving health, public services and care is significant. Success rates increased sharply to a high rate between 2005/06 and 2006/07. A key factor was improving retention. Entry requirements are now more rigorous, especially for NVQ courses in health and social care at levels 2 and 3, and the identification of learners at risk of leaving early has improved. Teachers have implemented the good practice in behaviour management in public services across the sector subject area. Initial assessment to identify additional support needs of learners is more effective. Managers have improved staff development and the sharing of good practice to raise standards of teaching and learning. Observation of teaching and learning, overseen by an external consultant, indicate this is now good. The use of workbooks by learners to improve their understanding of a subject has improved. Learning targets for learners are now clearer. Self-assessment is more rigorous and the use of accurate data is good.

Is inadequate provision in business, administration and law improving?	Reasonable progress
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Provision in business, administration and law was inadequate at the last inspection. Progress towards resolving this issue are reasonable. Since the last inspection, considerable change has taken place in the management of this area. New leadership has only been in place since September 2007. Actions to improve provision have increased significantly since this point. At the last inspection, inspectors judged teaching and learning to be tedious and dull. Managers have successfully focused staff development on raising standards of teaching and learning including external mentoring to support teachers to improve their work. Teachers show a keen commitment to improve teaching and learning, with a willingness to try new approaches and engage and challenge learners more effectively. No formal observations have taken place in the autumn term but informal feedback indicates teaching and learning are more effective. Teachers now successfully use prior attainment and target grades to raise expectations of learners. Overall, success rates, although still not high, increased markedly between 2005/06 and 2006/07, but at level 1 for learners aged 16 to 18 the rate declined. Managers make better use of data and they have improved the organisation of the sector subject area. They have removed programmes that are no longer appropriate to meet the needs of learners.

How successful are managers in improving teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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Inspectors found at the last inspection that much teaching and learning was no better than satisfactory. The college has made reasonable progress in improving teaching and learning. Managers successfully ensure substantial training now takes place to improve teaching and learning and that it covers effectively the areas for improvement recorded in the last inspection report. The time allocated for advanced practitioners to support teachers in preparing and delivering lessons has increased markedly. These actions have a positive effect on teaching and learning. For example, a recent training session improved teachers' use and understanding of learning objectives; an issue at the last inspection. Quality assurance of lessons is more rigorous.

Observations are now unannounced. Managers have strengthened the moderation arrangements for observations. Links between observations and individual staff development plans are more effective. However, no formal evaluation of the outcomes of observations has taken place and at the time of the monitoring visit only a small proportion of the planned teaching and learning observations for 2007/08 had taken place.

Has the college sustained its good breadth of provision?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection, the breadth of provision was good. The college has made reasonable progress in sustaining the good breadth of provision. The wide range of courses still meets local needs well. The college responds well to meeting the training needs of employers and employees. The level of employer engagement to improve workforce skills has encouraged growth in both the number of employers and employees making use of the college's provision. However, measures to record this formally are not sufficiently thorough. A review of enrichment is taking place, which inspectors judged as limited at the last inspection. The capacity to cater for gifted and talented learners includes promoting participation in national competitions but other aspects of provision for these groups are insufficient.

#### Leadership and management

What progress has the college made in improving the effectiveness of governors in monitoring learners' performance?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection, inspectors did not record any comment about the effective involvement of governors in monitoring learners' performance. Governors recognised debate on learners' performance was insufficient. Since the last inspection, governors have made reasonable progress in ensuring they monitor learners' performance effectively. Governors now have a good understanding of learners' success rates. They regularly question and challenge the reports of senior managers on learners' performance and teaching and learning. Minutes from meetings of the governing body and the academic standards committee show that governors now discuss and debate the performance of learners. Governors have reviewed their links with sector subject areas and have put in place arrangements aimed at strengthening

their understanding of sector subject areas. After the last inspection, governors ensured that the college now has in place senior managers that effectively focus on improving achievements and standards and the quality of provision for learners.

What progress is the college making in ensuring that management of finances and resources improves provision for learners?	Reasonable progress
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The last inspection report noted that the college had not invested effectively in improving achievements and standards of provision. The self-assessment report for 2005/06, evaluated financial management on procedures and processes but not on its impact on learners. The college is making reasonable progress in ensuring that the management of finances now focuses effectively on improving provision. The college has increased the proportion of its overall budget spent on resources for teaching and learning and support and guidance by a quarter since the last inspection. This has resulted in the strengthening of the training and support for teaching and learning and a better range of resources available to learners. Senior managers and governors are now fully aware that a key aim of financial management is to support learning.

How are managers succeeding in remedying insufficiently critical self-assessment?	Reasonable progress
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An area for improvement at the last inspection was insufficiently critical self-assessment. At the monitoring visit, inspectors found the college had made reasonable progress in ensuring self-assessment is self-critical. Self-assessment for 2006/07 has changed significantly. Managers have strengthened the procedures and the validation of self-assessment. Staff are now involved fully and effectively in the process. Staff consider self-assessment a helpful and productive process. Self-assessment takes full account of the college's areas for improvement. At sector subject area, self-assessment is particularly rigorous and makes very good use of accurate data. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. The use of evidence to make accurate judgements and grades has improved considerably. Sector subject area reports are evaluative and areas for improvements link clearly to development plans. At college level, much of the self-assessment report has

insufficient clarity on strengths and areas for improvement. The evaluation of teaching and learning is insufficient. The report places too much emphasis on the grade profile rather than the results of observations of teaching and learning. The section on achievement and standards has insufficient evaluation of performance by gender and ethnicity.

What progress have managers made in resolving an inadequate capacity to improve?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection, inspectors found the college's capacity to improve was inadequate. Managers have made reasonable progress in addressing this issue. Success rates for long courses and apprentice and advanced apprentice frameworks, although not high, have increased markedly. Train to Gain success rates remain high. The college is improving teaching and learning, business administration and law and particularly health public service and care. The college now has senior managers that have a clear focus on improving provision for learners. The college is spending a higher proportion of its budget on resources for learners. Self-assessment is mostly more robust, especially at sector subject area. Governors' monitoring of the college's performance is better.