

# Lambeth College

## Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 385343

**Name of lead inspector:** Andy Harris HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 5 October 2012

**Type of provider:** General further education college

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## Re-inspection Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

### Context and focus of visit

Lambeth College is a large general further education provider in south London. The college offers provision in almost all subject areas from its two main centres in Clapham and Vauxhall and a smaller centre close to the centre of Brixton. The Clapham sixth form centre was opened in June 2009; however, in September 2012 the college withdrew its AS-level offer and the concept of the sixth form changed in 2012 to reflect the new structure which is more closely aligned to vocational and subject areas. In 2011/12 around 13,500 learners attended college courses, with about 84% being adult learners and 66% on part-time provision. The college also supports apprenticeships and workplace learning programmes.

At the college's February 2012 inspection the overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate, as were the college's capacity to improve, outcomes for learners and leadership and management. The quality of provision was judged as satisfactory. Five subject areas were inspected; two were graded as good, one as satisfactory and both humanities and social science, and business administration and law, were graded as inadequate.

This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

**What progress has been made in improving the accuracy of self-assessment, including appropriate analysis of teaching and learning, more rigorous quality assurance and more effective action planning?**

**Significant progress**

At the previous inspection the college was not evaluating the quality of its performance with sufficient accuracy or detail. Quality assurance and self-assessment systems had not been sufficiently rigorous or consistent to secure sustained improvement and were not effective in alerting senior managers soon enough to under-achievement.

The college has made significant progress. Senior leaders have appointed a new quality team and produced a clear and coherent quality assurance policy and framework which carefully integrate self-assessment, course reviews and observations of teaching and learning. A consistent self-assessment structure has been introduced with clear guidance, expectations and deadlines. Course reviews are monitored and quality checked and the process is now more critical and reflective.

Managers have developed a detailed and realistic action plan which is regularly monitored and updated. They have made a number of improvements to the college's systems in the short time since the previous inspection, including arrangements for governance, enrolment, induction, initial assessment and the observation of teaching

and learning. While some of the completed targets on the action plan relate to the design and implementation of new systems, clear and realistic targets have been set for the next phase aimed at changes which will have a greater impact on success rates and the quality of teaching and learning.

### **Outcomes for learners**

#### **What progress has been made in improving outcomes for learners?**

**Reasonable progress**

The previous inspection noted a fluctuation in success rates over a period of years, culminating in a general decline in 2010/11 to an inadequate level. Progress in dealing with this aspect has been reasonable in the relatively short period since then. After the inspection the college concentrated on ensuring that learners still on course did achieve. On long courses this resulted in reasonable improvements at all levels, although success rates require further improvement when compared to results from similar providers. Short course success rates improved notably, although again with room for further improvement. Apprenticeship success rates, for a small number of learners, are poor and declining; managers have identified the reasons for this and are making substantial changes to improve provision in this growing area. Success rates for AS-level courses overall improved in 2011/12. The smaller A-level provision showed satisfactory improvement and some courses had good outcomes. Action by the college to help underperforming students has enabled Black and Black Caribbean students to achieve at the same level as their colleagues. The college is, partly in response to the previous inspection, encouraging a culture of raised expectation amongst staff and students; the impact of this on current students is not yet clear.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

#### **What progress has been made in ensuring an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection too much of the teaching and learning was no better than satisfactory. Punctuality and attendance were not good enough and this prevented effective learning. Teaching varied too much in quality.

The college now has a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and managers have put in place a comprehensive range of support, development and performance measures. They have appointed and trained a new teaching and learning team including observers and advanced practitioners. The new observation arrangements are more structured and better targeted to improve quality. Observations focus clearly on identifying strengths and areas requiring improvement and are accompanied by an action plan which is followed up with appropriate monitoring and support. The college has strengthened its moderation process, but it acknowledges the need to improve further the accuracy of observation judgements.

A new strategy for improving punctuality and attendance has emphasised the college's raised expectations to staff and students. Attendance and punctuality are still poor in a few areas, but arrangements are now in place to monitor this more effectively and to take appropriate action; it is too early to see the full impact on current teaching and learning.

**What progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses identified in business administration and law and in humanities and social science? Reasonable progress**

Reasonable progress has been made in dealing with weaknesses in the humanities and business administration areas. After the inspection, business administration staff focused on improving achievement, leading to an overall increase in success rates. Although most outcomes still require further improvement, level 1 success rates jumped 15 percentage points to above national averages. Well-implemented, rapid changes in many aspects of the provision, including the management of courses, better use of data, improved monitoring of progress, more support to staff in dealing with attendance and punctuality, and improvements in teaching and learning, all have the potential to improve the provision.

In the humanities area no students were recruited onto AS courses in September 2012; although courses are due to be reviewed again, this provision may cease in 2013. However, significant effort has been put into the improvement of the remaining A-level provision, with a range of well-planned initiatives including better involvement of students and parents in tracking progress, a more effective management structure, more realistic assessment, extra challenge to students and improvements to teaching and learning. This work is already resulting in higher attendance and some better-planned teaching.

In both areas the use of technology in the classroom and the application of the virtual learning environment require further improvement.

**What progress has been made in ensuring that enrolment is effective and that target setting is helping and motivating students? Reasonable progress**

Enrolment and the setting and review of targets were identified as areas for improvement at the previous inspection. Enrolment procedures for September 2012 were suitably revised, with improved processes, clearer criteria for entry, helpful quality checks and improved advice and guidance. Initial assessment of literacy and numeracy skills is now more comprehensive, although the process is still being developed. Results of initial assessment are generally used satisfactorily as an aid to enrolment and to guide subsequent support. This is reasonable progress in terms of changing procedures, but it is too early to see if this really has resulted in placing all students on the course which best meets their needs. Similarly, reasonable progress

has been made in changing the approach to the setting and review of students' learning targets, with some staff training and better organisation of the first progress review week. Individual examples of target setting show some promise, but at this stage of the term too few formal targets have been set to confirm if quality has routinely improved. Useful targets are now set as part of early preventive work by skills coaches working with students with personal challenges. Systems are being implemented to allow students to be involved, online, with their own target setting.

### **Leadership and management**

**What progress has been made in ensuring that governors receive, and critically review, detailed and timely information enabling them to monitor college performance and challenge senior managers effectively?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection governors demonstrated a strong commitment but had not received sufficiently detailed and timely information to enable them to monitor performance and challenge senior managers effectively.

The college has agreed new governance arrangements which have a good focus on strategic and business planning and the monitoring of performance. A new clerk to the board of governors has been appointed very recently, with an independent role. The college is implementing a carefully considered strategy for succession planning to recruit governors with the appropriate entrepreneurial skills and experience to steer and monitor the impact of the innovative strategic plan. The college has set effective targets for the development of the strategic and operational capacity of the board, and progress against these has been monitored carefully. Governors receive appropriate information relating to the college's performance in key target areas such as success rates, retention and finance. They are now better able to analyse and challenge college senior management and have effected some changes to targets and strategy. Senior leaders have well-developed plans to make better use of current data at future board meetings, to set the college in context and show progress against targets, thus enabling governors to understand, analyse and challenge more effectively.

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