



Accrington and Rossendale College

Better  
education  
and care

# Re-inspection report

Audience  
Post-sixteen

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## Introduction

Accrington and Rossendale College was inspected in January 2005. 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 performing arts and media which was 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 curriculum area was re-inspected on 30-31 January 2007. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Performing arts and media	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory

## Context

The college offers first diploma in performing arts, GCE AS and A-level film studies, and national diplomas (ND) in performing arts, music and media. Part-time courses include The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) qualifications for full-time learners and pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools. The college has a programme of degree and HND courses in music and media. At the time of re-inspection there were 83 full-time enrolments.

### *Strengths*

- *high pass rates*
- *high value added on national diploma courses*
- *good teaching of performing arts and film studies*
- *excellent learning support*

### *Areas for improvement*

- *low professional expectations in dance*
- *some less effective media teaching*

## Achievement and standards

Pass rates are high and are above the national averages on most courses. In 2006, all learners on national diploma performing arts, national diploma music

and AS film studies successfully achieved their qualification. Learners on national diploma courses have high value added and in 2006 all but one student achieved at least two distinction grades. Retention on all courses has improved and is now around the national average. Current in-year retention shows a marked improvement on most courses. Attendance is good.

The standard of learners' written work is satisfactory and good in practical performances and performing arts portfolios. The standards in dance are insufficiently professional. Learners' clothing and footwear are not appropriate for the subject and the teaching does not establish high professional expectations of learners.

### Quality of provision

Most teaching and learning are satisfactory. Good teaching was observed in performing arts, radio and A-level film studies. Lessons are well planned with a variety of activities to interest and engage learners. Discussions are well managed and teachers use effective questioning techniques to challenge learners and test their understanding. Most learners are highly motivated and work well in developing their practical skills and theoretical knowledge. In media, the use of group work and teachers' classroom management skills are not always successful in supporting effective learning.

Assessment and internal verification are thorough and detailed written feedback explains clearly what learners need to do to improve their work. Initial screening is rigorous. There is an excellent level of learning support. All learners identified as needing support attend additional lessons and achieve well as a result.

### Leadership and management

Good progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Quality assurance arrangements are now more robust. Retention is steadily improving. Actions have been taken to improve standards of teaching and learning. Internal observers have accurately identified areas for improvement, however, in some lessons these have not yet been addressed successfully. Good practice is identified and shared both formally and informally. New teachers complete a useful competence-based induction. The self-assessment report is largely accurate.

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Accrington & Rossendale College

Date of visit: 30 & 31 January 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit (AAV). It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

### Achievement and standards

Has the continued improvement in success rates been maintained in 2006?

- The college's overall success rate for long courses improved from 69% in 2005 to 72% in 2006, almost 10% above the 2005 national average. The success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 and adult students at all levels are above the national averages. They improved at each course level except for adults on level 2 qualifications, where there was a 4% decline in the success rates as a result of a fall in retention. Improving retention rates remains a key priority for the college.

In 2005 the success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses was slightly below the national average. Has the success rate for this group of learners improved in 2006?

- The success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses improved to 73% in 2006, which is significantly above the 2005 national average.

The overall success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 in information and communication technology (ICT) was below the national average. Has the college introduced effective strategies to improve the performance?

- The college's ICT provision has been rationalised and reorganised to better meet the needs of learners. Success rates on most courses improved significantly in 2006 and are above national averages. However, retention and pass rates on the iTQ qualification at levels 2 and 3 and retention on CLAIT are below national averages. Curriculum managers closely monitor the progress of individual learners and the accuracy of central data for learners on roll-on, roll-off programmes. In-year data indicate that changes made to these courses in September 2006, including revised enrolment criteria, have had a positive impact.

How good are the timely success rates in work-based learning (WBL)?

- Success rates for apprentices, who make up the majority of work-based learners, in all curriculum areas have improved over the last three years and are now significantly above national averages. In 2005/06, the college success rate for apprenticeship frameworks was 75%, 20% above the national average and the timely success rate was 69%, twice the national rate. Recent data for advanced apprentices show a substantial decline in overall and timely success rates in 2005/06. The college success rate for advanced apprenticeship frameworks now stands at 42%, marginally below the national average, and the timely success rate is 37%, significantly above a very low national average. The majority of advanced apprentices are in construction.

Have key skills success rates continued to improve? What action has been taken to improve level 2 literacy and numeracy success rates for adults?

- The college has continued to implement its strategy for improving and developing key skills. More areas are now teaching key skills as an integral part of their vocational curriculum and offering key skills training early in learners' programmes. Key skills success rates continue to improve and are now significantly above national rates. Effective action has been taken to sustain previous improvements in adult literacy and numeracy, including a more consistent approach to initial and diagnostic assessment and active promotion of accredited learning in the workplace. The success rate in level 2 numeracy increased from 44% in 2005 to 67% in 2006. The skills for life action plan is now reviewed and updated each term.

## Quality of education and training

What do the college's self assessment report (SAR) and lesson observation records tell us about the quality of teaching and learning?

- Self assessment indicates that the quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, with a higher proportion of good or better lessons and a slight fall in the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. All teachers are observed annually by either their line manager or an advanced teaching practitioner. Lesson observation grades are carefully moderated by a panel of staff including an independent specialist advisor for the curriculum area.
- The college has effectively re-focused the work of advanced practitioners who are working well in allocated teaching teams and coaching individual staff. The outcomes of lesson observations are used to identify the themes for staff development sessions and to share good practice through the teaching and

learning newsletter. However, there are missed opportunities in using the qualitative information from lesson observation records in identifying best practice and aspects for future development.

Has the college embedded its improved monitoring and target-setting systems?

- The college has very clear systems for establishing targets at all levels. Staff are aware of whole college targets for success, retention and achievement rates. Managers use data effectively to measure performance against key targets. The tutorial system and individual learner reviews have been revised and a standard pro-forma is now used throughout the college. A pilot system in tracking learners' progress in relation to a minimum expected grade is being trialled in three curriculum areas and has had good success so far. All learners have an individual learning plan (ILP) and a minimum of three reviews per year with their personal tutor to discuss progress against individual targets. A minority of courses include routine assessments as an integral aspect of learners ILPs, but this is not consistent across the college. Plans are in place to implement an electronic monitoring system, including attendance monitoring, from September 2007.

The last AAV explored the extent to which good practice was being shared in WBL to improve success rates across the college. What impact has this had on success rates in the less successful areas such as hairdressing and motor vehicle programmes?

- Arrangements for sharing good practice and structural changes in the occupational areas have been effective in helping to improve achievement and standards on apprenticeship programmes. The training services department works well with vocational areas to promote and share good practice, particularly in monitoring and encouraging learner progress. New management arrangements in the vocational areas have improved communications with employers and within the college. The college has increased the number of assessment opportunities available for learners by training more assessors, particularly in the workplace. Success rates in hairdressing and motor vehicle have improved but remain low on advanced apprentice programmes.

## Leadership and management

Have college managers evaluated the impact of strategies introduced in 2005/06?

- Managers at all levels have good access to a relevant range of data reports to assist them in monitoring their provision and making management decisions. The impact of the college's retention strategy is very closely monitored. The

attendance and retention co-ordinators monitor 'at-risk' learners and provide regular reports to managers.

- Senior managers meet with curriculum team leaders three times a year to monitor and review progress against targets and actions resulting from the curriculum SARs. SARs clearly evaluate the progress made in addressing weaknesses from the previous year, but they do not always indicate how strengths will be maintained or satisfactory aspects improved.

How is the college maintaining its thorough approach to self assessment?

- All staff are involved in the self assessment of their provision. Data are now more robust. Regular meetings are scheduled between curriculum managers and central data staff to maintain an accurate central record that is owned and understood by all staff. SARs are moderated and make good use of a wide range of information and robust evidence to support judgements made, including the improvement in curriculum area grades. All areas now consider their contribution to the 5 themes of Every Child Matters. The college has targeted three curriculum areas to improve their self-assessment grade from good to outstanding during 2006/07. Improvements in success rates are a good indicator of the college's strong capacity to improve.

Has the college revised its safeguarding children procedures in line with the new guidelines?

- The college's arrangements for protecting and safeguarding children meet statutory regulations and recent guidelines. The child protection policy is reviewed and updated annually and approved by governors. A single central record of staff checks is in place, with plans to include full records of staff qualifications by April 2007. All staff, including governors, have received training on child protection.

How do curriculum managers assess the efficiency and effectiveness of their programmes. How do they determine the extent to which their programmes offer value for money?

- The college continues with its extensive re-building programme and optimising space utilisation remains difficult until this is completed in September 2007. The business planning process introduced since the previous inspection is valuable in helping curriculum managers to plan their provision. The process is continuously developing and is providing managers with a range of powerful tools to help them cost individual courses and measure their financial effectiveness. Detailed monthly budget reports, supplemented by termly meetings with senior managers, help curriculum managers to monitor the financial aspects of their operations. Delegated budgets are carefully managed and ongoing software developments and training are

helping the college to reinforce the importance of running effective and efficient programmes.

- The business planning process is complemented by comprehensive training programmes for managers and aspiring managers together with external benchmarking against other colleges, all of which are raising staff awareness of the importance of financial considerations in the planning of provision.

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

- The college has introduced a comprehensive competency-based induction programme for all staff. In addition to routine administrative information and staff responsibilities, the programme places a strong emphasis on putting learners first and on providing high quality teaching and learning and guidance and support.