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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Provision for the Priority Skills Areas at Level 2

South West College

Inspected: March 2009

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A number of quantitative terms are used in the report. In percentages, the terms correspond as follows:

More than 90%	- almost/nearly all
75%-90%	- most
50%-74%	- a majority
30%-49%	- a significant minority
10%-29%	- a minority
Less than 10%	- very few/a small minority

PART ONE

SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The South West College was formed in August 2007, following the merger of the former East Tyrone College of Further and Higher Education, Fermanagh College of Further and Higher Education, and Omagh College of Further and Higher Education. The college catchment area covers the district council areas of Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh and Omagh, and the main campuses are located in Dungannon, Enniskillen, and Omagh. There is also a small campus in Cookstown, and a skills training centre on the outskirts of Enniskillen.

1.2 According to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry's monthly Labour Market Report, in February 2009, the claimant counts in Dungannon (4.0%), Fermanagh (3.8%), Omagh (3.7%) are at or just below the Northern Ireland average of 4.0%, with Cookstown just above at 4.1%. The employment rates in Cookstown (64.5%), Fermanagh (63.6%) and Omagh (64.4%) are below the Northern Ireland average of 68.8%. In Dungannon it is above the average at 71.2%. The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure ranks Dungannon at 9th, Cookstown at 7th, Fermanagh at 10th, and Omagh at 7th in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland (NI). The current economic downturn continues to impact negatively on employment opportunities, including the priority skills areas at level 2, across the South West College's catchment area.

1.3 In 2007-08, the South West College had a total enrolment of 1,695 full-time and 10,383 part-time students funded under the Department for Employment and Learning's (the Department) Further Education Grant. The college had a total of 2,310 students in those areas that the Department has designated as priority skills areas. The enrolments for the priority skills areas in 2007-08 accounted for 26% of the college's funded learning units under the Further Education Grant. The college also has a significant training provision at level 2 through the Department's Training for Success (TfS) and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes, particularly in construction and engineering.

1.4 The main focus of the inspection was on the South West College's accredited full-time and part-time further education provision across the priority skills areas at level 2, which is equivalent to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) at grade C or above. The priority skills areas inspected were computing and information and communications technology (ICT), construction, engineering (electrical, electronic and mechanical manufacturing), tourism and hospitality (hospitality and catering, and travel and tourism), and the essential skills of literacy and numeracy within these areas. Due to the limited full-time further education provision in engineering and construction at level 2, a sample of level 3 classes in these areas were included in the inspection. According to the data provided by the college, there were 778 students enrolled on level 2 technician and craft courses in the priority skills areas during 2008-09.

1.5 Prior to the inspection, the students were asked to complete a confidential questionnaire to ascertain their views on their experiences, and on the arrangements for pastoral care at the college. The team also conducted pastoral care interviews with groups of students across the college. The inspection team held discussions with members of the management team, heads of department, deputy heads of department, curriculum managers,

course teams and managers with cross-college responsibilities, and with a sample of employers. A total of 45 lessons were observed and a sample of the students' work was inspected. Relevant documents were reviewed, which included course self-evaluation reports, the college's strategic development plan, staff development plans, and course team documentation.

1.6 The Department's circular, 'Circular FE 11/08', required each of the six colleges in Northern Ireland to submit to the Department a self-evaluation report for their priority skills areas further education provision at level 2, and a Whole College Quality Improvement Plan, together with their College Development Plan for 2008-11. The college was also required to include statistical information on student enrolments and levels of achievement for each priority skills area at level 2 in their submission. This statistical information was used by the inspection team to compare the levels of achievement of the South West College against the average for all of the colleges in Northern Ireland.

1.7 The South West College's level 2 further education provision varies significantly across the priority skills areas of computing and ICT, construction, engineering, hospitality and catering, and travel and tourism. In computing and ICT, there is a good range of part-time and full-time computing and ICT courses across the main campuses; these include the full-time Edexcel First Diploma and Diploma in Digital Applications, and the part-time British Computer Society level 2 Certificate for information technology (IT) users, and the CISCO networking and IT essentials programmes. In construction and in engineering, the further education provision at level 2 is limited to short part-time courses, and includes computer aided-design, welding, and health and safety. Most of the South West College's provision in construction and in engineering at level 2 is concentrated in its Tfs and ApprenticeshipsNI provision. The college in partnership with local post-primary schools, however, does provide a GCSE in construction for five schools, a GCSE in engineering for three schools, and a First Diploma in construction for one school, under the Vocational Enhancement Programme. In hospitality and catering there is an appropriate range of courses, both full-time and part-time, across the South West College's main campuses. These are mostly National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in professional cookery. Currently, there are no courses offered in travel and tourism at level 2. The college has, however, identified this as a high priority and has initiated a strategic project to develop its travel and tourism provision at all levels, to support the local tourism and hospitality industry, particularly in the Fermanagh region.

1.8 Most of the students on entry to level 2 courses in the priority skills areas have a low academic profile; most do not hold a GCSE grade C or above in English and/or mathematics. In addition, a small number of the students have been identified as requiring additional learning support.

2. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by South West College is good. The South West College has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement, which the South West College has demonstrated the capacity to address.

2.2 The main strengths are the:

- very good start made to strategic planning by the Director and the senior management team through setting up and initiating appropriate strategic projects to unify the college's culture and working practices, to bring about improvement across the South West College;
- good progress in making effective use of management information, including enrolments, attendance, and retention and success rates, to manage and improve the quality of the students' learning experiences;
- good arrangements in place to support course teams in the self-evaluation process, and to use its outcomes to inform the college's staff development programme;
- excellent accommodation and specialist learning resources available to the students enrolled on courses in the priority skills areas, on the Omagh and Dungannon campuses;
- good or better standards of the students' work;
- good or better learning and teaching in most of the lessons observed, with a significant minority being very good or excellent;
- good arrangements for the students' pastoral care and additional learning support, including the promotion of health and well-being for both the students and the college staff;
- effective use of information and learning technology in most of the lessons observed, to enhance the student's learning experience and support their independent learning skills through the use of the college's virtual learning environment;
- good opportunities available for students to progress to further education, training and/or employment; and
- good quality of the provision at level 2 in the priority skills areas of computing and ICT, and hospitality and catering across the South West College.

2.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- limited further education curriculum offer at level 2 across the priority skills areas of construction, engineering, and travel and tourism;
- variation in the quality of the careers education, information, advice and guidance provision across the courses inspected;

- lack of coherence in the essential skills provision, and the limited action taken to improve the poor outcomes, particularly in numeracy;
- limited opportunities for curriculum teams to share good practice, and to plan and develop the curriculum on a whole college basis; and
- limited planning for the use of the new specialist innovation and technology resources to support curricular expansion and development across the priority skills areas at level 2.

PART TWO

OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 Since the formation of South West College in 2007, the priority for the Governing Body and the Director has been the development of the college's management and organisational structure, which was just finalised by the time of the inspection in March 2009. The senior management team comprises the Director, a Head of Curriculum and Business Development, a Head of Corporate Services, a Head of Client Services, a Quality and Performance Manager, and four Heads of Departments. There are also eight recently appointed deputy heads of department and 25 curriculum managers. In addition to their management support responsibilities, the deputy heads of department and curriculum managers also have an allocated teaching timetable.

3.2 The Head of Curriculum and Business and Development, together with curriculum development and governance, is also responsible for economic development and engagement through a Business Development Unit. Within the unit, there are three research lecturers, a business development officer and a learner access and engagement development officer. The college has successfully attracted significant funding to support the setting up of a new innovation and technology centre. The centre provides internal services to the college to support and develop the curriculum, and external services to local employers to help them develop innovation and enterprise within their business. Some of the services available include: 3-dimensional modelling and rapid prototyping; computer-aided design and manufacture of electronic circuits; and renewable energies. The planning for the use of this new centre to stimulate and inform the expansion and development of level 2 courses in computing, engineering and construction is, however, under-developed.

3.3 During the first quarter of 2009, the Director and the senior management team have made a very good start to strategic planning to unify the South West College's culture and working practices, to bring about improvement. Twenty-three strategic projects have been set-up and initiated. These projects focus on appropriate key areas for development, and include gaps in curriculum provision, curriculum governance and quality assurance, economic engagement, essential skills, information and learning technology, student services and learner support, and workforce development. The projects are supported by detailed operational plans, for each curriculum area and cross-college function, which consist of specific, measurable, and time-bound objectives.

3.4 The arrangements for quality improvement across the level 2 courses in the priority skills areas are good. There is a strong focus by curriculum managers to collate and use key performance indicators to monitor the quality and performance of curriculum areas. For example, a good start has been made to the sharing of weekly student attendance from electronic registers and retention rates with course teams. This has resulted in actions being initiated to bring about any necessary improvements. The Quality and Improvement unit has provided course teams with initial training and ongoing support on the self-evaluation process and on the production of development plans to address areas for improvement. The Heads of

Departments moderate effectively the outcomes of the self-evaluation process to ensure that the judgements made by individual course teams are accurate and consistent across the college. While, the whole college self-evaluation by senior management of curriculum areas across the priority skills areas is satisfactory, there is insufficient emphasis on evaluating the overall effectiveness of the college's level 2 curriculum provision within the priority skills areas in meeting and supporting economic development and social cohesion.

3.5 The development plans produced by course teams to address the areas identified for improvement within curriculum areas are mainly satisfactory. The actions for improvement are not appropriately prioritised, and there is insufficient use of measurable outcomes to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the plans, particularly on a whole-college basis for curriculum areas.

3.6 The staff development provision is good. The recently appointed staff development officer has made a very good start in putting in place effective arrangements, aligned to the college's strategic aims, to ensure that staff development is targeted appropriately to support the development of the curriculum. Well-planned staff development activities include an audit of lecturing staff skills linked to the Lifelong Learning United Kingdom professional standards, to identify skills gaps and to inform future staff development. There is also very good cognisance taken of the course teams' self-evaluation reports and development plans, to ensure that staff development is matched well to curricular development needs. In addition to individualised staff development, there is a college-wide three year workforce development project to improve the college's organisational culture and overall performance and effectiveness.

3.7 Across the priority skills areas, the lecturers are well-qualified and experienced. Most participate in appropriate staff development activities to ensure their skills and knowledge are up-to-date with current industry practice. A small number of lecturers have benefited from the Lecturers into Industry scheme, which provides good opportunities for lecturers to update their professional and technical skills and knowledge.

3.8 The quality of the accommodation and specialist facilities on the Dungannon and Omagh Campuses is excellent, providing students with a modern and welcoming learning environment. There is a good supply of bright and spacious construction and engineering workshops, catering kitchens, restaurants and ICT suites, which are well-equipped with modern industry standard equipment. While the hospitality and catering facilities on the Enniskillen campus are satisfactory; the facilities are spread over two floors of the building and require updating. The college is at the planning and feasibility stage for the refurbishment of the Enniskillen campus, which includes the hospitality and catering facilities.

3.9 The quality of the learning resource centres and social areas vary across the South West College. On the Dungannon and Omagh campuses, the learning resource centres are excellent; they are well-equipped and facilitate very good access to on-line learning materials and to the college's virtual learning environment. On the Enniskillen campus they are mainly satisfactory. The social and recreation areas in Omagh are excellent with a very good quality cafeteria and student common room. In Dungannon, there is also an excellent sports hall and gym, which the students make good use of. In Enniskillen the students benefit from the recent provision of a student common room, but the cafeteria is cramped.

3.10 In hospitality and catering, the course teams have well-established and very effective relationships with local restaurant owners and hoteliers to facilitate student work experience, support special training events, and provide advice on developing the curriculum to meet industry standards and requirements. Currently, the college together with the South West Workforce Development Forum is working with local employers and stakeholders to develop suitable travel and tourism courses to support economic development in the Fermanagh region.

3.11 Partnerships with local post-primary schools are well-established and managed effectively; a significant number of pupils across years 11, 12, 13 and 14 benefits from professional and technical programmes provided by the South West College. At the time of the inspection, 53 year 11 and year 12 pupils were taking a GCSE in the priority skills areas of construction or engineering, and four were taking a First Certificate in construction. The South West College has plans to link with local primary schools, to make use of its innovation and technology centre in Cookstown to promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as a career pathway to primary school pupils. There are also preliminary plans to develop a similar provision in Dungannon and Enniskillen. The South West College also supports Foras Aiseanna Saothair in its delivery of off-the-job apprenticeship training in construction.

3.12 Embedding information and learning technology into the curriculum is a key strategic priority for the South West College. A cross-college project with appropriate objectives is clearly defined, and sets out the target of achieving the fully embedded stage of Demonstrating Transformation by 2011. To facilitate this, there are in place suitable procedures and milestones, which include health checks by the Regional Support Centre for Northern Ireland (RSCni), to inform development planning and monitor progress.

3.13 The quality of the leadership and management of the essential skills provision across the South West College is satisfactory. The Head of Department and deputy heads of department with responsibility for managing the essential skills provision have their roles and responsibility clearly defined. The role of the curriculum managers in managing and developing the essential skills provision is, however, unclear. At the time of the inspection, there was no coherent policy or procedures for the management, co-ordination and development of the essential skills provision in place across the South West College.

4. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

4.1 The standards of work achieved by most of the students on the courses inspected are mostly good, and on occasions are very good. The students are well-motivated, and are enthusiastic to learn and to develop new skills. Hospitality and catering students, through working in the South West College's restaurants and kitchens, develop and demonstrate their professional skills and interpersonal skills to a good or very good standard. They also develop their personal confidence and contemporary cooking skills through competing in regional, national and international competitions and through foreign exchange visits. The students in computing and ICT develop a good range of skills and competences in using industry standard software and hardware. The range of skills they develop is matched well to industry needs and supports effectively their progression to employment and/or to further education.

4.2 The standards of the students' literacy and numeracy skills demonstrated in their professional and technical assignments vary from poor to good, and are mostly satisfactory. Most students are able to communicate effectively with their peers and respond appropriately to instructions from their lecturers, when carrying out practical tasks. They are able to read and follow menus and technical instructions satisfactorily to complete professional and technical assignments. For a minority of students, however, their written responses in professional and technical assignments are poorly constructed, and contain inaccurate spelling and grammar, which are not always corrected.

4.3 The average retention rate, over the last three years across the areas inspected, is good at 86%, and the average success rate over this period is satisfactory at 70%. The resulting average achievement rate is 60%, which is just below the average (61%) for all the Northern Ireland colleges. The average achievement rate in computing and ICT is 61%, which is above the average (56%) for all the Northern Ireland colleges. The average achievement rate in tourism and hospitality equates to the average for all the Northern Ireland colleges, at 64%.

4.4 Retention rates, in 2007/2008, for essential skills were good (87%) for literacy, and modest (64%) for numeracy. The success rates for this period were satisfactory (70%) for literacy, and poor (57%) for numeracy. The resulting achievement rate for literacy is modest at 61%, and for numeracy it is poor at 36%.

5. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5.1 The quality of the teaching and learning in most of the lessons observed is good or better. In the Dungannon campus where the infrastructure, resources, technical support, and lecturers training in the use of information and learning technology are well developed, the teaching and learning is mostly very good. These lessons are well-planned with a suitable variety of teaching approaches, including the appropriate use of interactive whiteboards, video clips, and computer-based interactive formative assessment, which enrich and stimulate the students' learning experiences. The South West College's virtual learning environment is also used effectively to support the students' further and independent learning. In the satisfactory lessons, the range of teaching strategies deployed, and the pace of work is not matched appropriately to the students' ability. As a result, the students are not motivated or challenged sufficiently.

5.2 In the essential skills provision, the quality of the teaching and learning is mainly good. In the best practice, good links have been made with the students' professional and technical learning, to improve their interest and the development and application of their literacy and numeracy skills. Across the lessons observed, initial assessment is used well to inform individual and group learning plans. The use of these learning plans to monitor and review individual student progress is, however, not consistently effective across the South West College.

5.3 The South West College has invested significantly in improving the quality and accessibility of information and learning technology resources, particularly on the Dungannon and Omagh campuses. On these campuses, there is a very good supply of computers, multi-media projectors, interactive whiteboards and suitable software packages in most classrooms and computer suites. Lecturers continue to develop their skills and abilities in the use of information and learning technology to enhance the quality of the students'

learning experiences. On the Enniskillen campus, the supply of information and learning technology resources, and its use to enhance students' learning is mainly satisfactory. In hospitality and catering across the South West College, the recording and use of digital images and/or videos to support practical tasks is under-developed.

5.4 The assessment of the students' work for accreditation is mostly well-planned. There is a wide range of strategies used, and students are provided with appropriate feedback on their performance. During induction, the students are informed well about assessment arrangements, including the use of the college's virtual learning environment for collecting assignment briefs and depositing completed work. The consistent and systematic use of formative assessment to consolidate the students' learning and to inform future learning needs is not well-developed across the courses inspected.

5.5 The South West College's careers, education, information, advice and guidance service is not fully operational. The manager with responsibility for the college's careers service has just been just appointed, and the post of careers guidance officer for Enniskillen campus is vacant. The quality of the careers provision is variable across the courses inspected. In a minority of courses it is very good, and in the remainder it is mainly satisfactory. In the best practice, the careers guidance officer makes very good use of the students' tutorial time to provide them with careers information and support in completing curriculum vitae, and to prepare them for international exchange visits and competitions. In addition, a minority of the students benefit from well-structured work experience and industry visits to develop their understanding of the industry sector they have chosen, and to enhance their employability prospects. On a few occasions, work experience has led to permanent and relevant employment for students. While most students have at least a satisfactory awareness of career opportunities and progression pathways, there is a need for a consistent careers provision across the South West College, to ensure that all of the students benefit from a well-structured careers programme.

5.6 The arrangements for learning support are good. A total of 15 students enrolled on level 2 courses within the priority skills areas were registered for additional learning support. They benefit from a good range of appropriate additional support, which includes classroom assistants and/or computer-adaptive technology for physically disabled students, examination readers, and additional literacy support for dyslexic students.

5.7 The students, through the pastoral care questionnaires and pastoral care interviews, report high levels of satisfaction with their experiences in the South West College. Nearly all of the students surveyed reported that the College provides a caring and supportive learning environment; that relationships with their lecturers are very positive; and that they feel safe and secure in college. Most students enjoy attending the college, and would recommend their course to a friend. The students also reported that the induction programme was very useful in informing them about the structure and content of their course. Most, however, were unaware of their individual student learning agreement, or of regular monitoring of their progress through the use of these documents.

5.8 The quality of the pastoral care provision across the South West College is very good. The main features of this provision include:

- the provision of external counselling services;
- a programme of road safety awareness events;
- a structured health and well-being promotion programme;
- regular cultural diversity events;
- timetabled tutorial sessions; and
- an employability programme for personal development for full-time students.

5.9 The range and the nature of the student support services vary across the South West College. There is inconsistency in the procedures for identifying and supporting students with additional learning needs. The college has begun to address these variations through a cross-college strategic project to ensure that the good practice is standardised and equitable.

5.10 The South West College has very comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults, which reflect the guidance issued by the Department.

PART 3

REPORTS ON CURRICULAR AREAS

6. CURRICULUM AREA: COMPUTING, AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

6.1 There is a good range of full-time and part-time programmes in computing and ICT at level 2 offered across the South West College. The full-time provision comprises the Edexcel First Diploma for ICT practitioners and the Edexcel Level 2 Diploma in Digital Applications for IT Users, which is offered along with the Edexcel First Certificate in Business. The design and content of these programmes provides appropriate opportunities for the students to study a range of disciplines including computing, ICT, software engineering and digital applications. The part-time provision comprises a range of courses including the British Computer Society level 2 Certificate for IT users, and the CISCO networking and IT Essentials programmes.

MAIN FINDINGS

6.2 The main strengths are the:

- good range of level 2 computing and ICT courses provided across the South West College, including the opportunity for the students to achieve additional qualifications;
- good quality of the teaching and learning in the majority of the lessons observed;
- good standards of work produced by most of the students, and the good progress they are making in their learning;
- very good quality of the hardware and software resources available across the South West College; and
- good overall retention and progression rates.

6.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- limited opportunities for course teams to share good practice and plan the provision across the South West College;
- narrow range of teaching approaches, used in a minority of the lessons, to support and meet effectively the diverse range of student learning needs; and
- overall success rate across the provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

6.4 The quality of the leadership and management of the level 2 programmes in computing and ICT is good; the individual courses are well-co-ordinated. The lecturers are well-qualified, and have developed good links with industry and other external agencies. Although the lecturers across the South West College have had opportunities to meet and to communicate informally, the holistic planning of the college's provision, and the sharing of good practice is under-developed. With the exception of hardware resources for the CISCO programmes, which need to be updated, the quality of computing and ICT hardware and software resources across the South West College are very good. The quality of the self-evaluation and development planning process across the college is satisfactory; the actions to bring about improvement are not clearly defined, and do not include measurable outcomes for teams to review and monitor progress against.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

6.5 The standards of work produced by most of the students, in the lessons observed, are good. They are working at an appropriate level and are competent in their use of a range of industry standard software packages. The students are well-motivated and responsive, and are making good progress in their learning. Over the past three years, the overall retention rate is good at 87%, and the success rate is satisfactory at 70%, resulting in an achievement rate of 61%, which is above the average (56%) for all the Northern Ireland colleges. The progression rate to further education, training or employment is also good at 84%. The monitoring of the students' progress and achievement of essentials skills qualifications is variable across the South West College. There is a lack of consistency in tracking and monitoring students with low academic achievements, to ensure that they develop their literacy and numeracy skills within their programmes to a sufficient level, and to achieve their full potential.

QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

6.6 The quality of teaching and learning is good or better in the majority of the lessons observed. The lecturers are well prepared and the quality of their teaching and the learning materials they provide is good. The majority make good use of information and learning technology to support their teaching, and enhance the quality of the students' learning. There is a good range of learning resources available on the college's virtual learning environment. The quality of the assessment is good, and is at an appropriate level for the students. Most of the students are supported well in their learning and good provision is made for the students with additional learning needs. In a minority of lessons, there is, however, a limited range of teaching strategies to support and meet effectively the individual learning needs of the diverse range of students enrolled on the programme. The students, across the South West College, are provided with impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance; most of the students interviewed during the inspection were aware of the range of careers in computing and ICT or software engineering and of the various progression routes to employment and/or further education available to them.

CONCLUSION

6.7 In the level 2 curriculum area of computing and ICT, the quality of education provided by the South West College is good. The college has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the South West College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the college's progress on the areas for improvement.

7. CURRICULUM AREA: ESSENTIAL SKILLS

INTRODUCTION

7.1 The Head of Department for Social Science, and the two deputy heads of department, have overall responsibility for the management and development of the essential skills provision across the South West College. The 25 curriculum managers across the South West College also have management responsibilities for the delivery of essential skills provision within their curricular areas. All of the full-time students enrolled in the South West College have good opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy and obtain appropriate essential skills qualification.

MAIN FINDINGS

7.2 The main strengths are the:

- hard work and the commitment of the essential skills lecturers to develop the students' literacy and numeracy skills;
- good quality of teaching and learning in most of the lessons observed;
- good opportunities provided for all of the full-time students to develop their essential skills of literacy and numeracy to an appropriate level; and
- good opportunities provided for the essential skills lecturers to participate in continuous professional development to improve the quality of the provision.

7.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- development and implementation of a coherent strategic policy and procedures for the management and co-ordination of the essential skills provision across the South West College;
- arrangements for essential skills lecturers to meet, and to share and develop good practice across the South West College; and
- poor success rates, particularly in numeracy.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

7.4 While the roles and responsibilities of the Head of Department and the deputy heads are clearly defined, the role of the curriculum managers in managing and developing the essential skills provision across the South West College is unclear. At the time of the inspection, there was no coherent and overarching policy for the management, co-ordination and development of the essential skills provision in place across the college. There are significant variations in the current policies and procedures across the various campuses. The essential skills lecturers do not meet regularly to share good practice and to plan for the development of the provision, including action to address the poor student success rates. There are no members of the essential skills team identified, to provide curriculum support and advice for literacy and for numeracy lecturers across the South West College. The Head of Department does, however, provide good opportunities for the lecturers to engage in continuous professional development provided by external providers, including the Learning and Skills Development Agency (Northern Ireland).

ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

7.5 In 2007/2008, the retention rates for literacy and numeracy were good (87%) and modest (64%) respectively. The success rates for this period were satisfactory for literacy at 70%, and poor for numeracy at 57%. This results in an achievement rate for literacy of 61%, and 36% for numeracy. Attendance to classes during the inspection was variable, ranging from 40% to 90%, but was poor overall. Punctuality at classes was mostly good. The standards of most of the students' work range from good to satisfactory, and are mostly satisfactory. The students are able to communicate effectively with their peers and respond appropriately to instructions from their lecturers, when carrying out practical learning tasks. They have developed a suitable vocabulary and basic arithmetic skills to enable them to complete their professional and technical assignment work. The written responses for a minority of the students are, however, poorly constructed and contain inaccurate spelling and grammar, which are not always corrected. Most of the students demonstrate a positive attitude to the development of their essential skills and the standards of behaviour in class are good for almost all students. Most of the students are making good progress in developing their essential skills and completing their action based activities.

QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

7.6 The quality of the teaching and learning is mainly good. The lecturers use a range of effective teaching strategies and contexts to engage and motivate the students in their learning. For a minority of students, links with their professional and technical learning activities are beginning to develop, which builds on their interests, and supports effectively the development and application of their literacy and numeracy skills. A professional and technical context is evident in the students' class work and in their action based activities. In most lessons, the learning is well-planned and there is good evidence of the results of the initial assessment process being used to inform their learning programme. All lessons have a group learning plan that identifies the individual strengths and weaknesses of each student. However, not all lecturers are using the plan to monitor the individual progress made by students in the development of their essential skills. There is good use made of an appropriate range of paper-based learning resources, together with information and learning technology, which includes the effective use of video clips and links to learning materials on relevant websites.

CONCLUSION

7.7 In the essential skills provision, the quality of the education provided in South West College is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in achievements and standards and in leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the college's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

8. CURRICULUM AREA: TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY (HOSPITALITY AND CATERING, and TRAVEL AND TOURISM)

INTRODUCTION

8.1 The South West College provides an appropriate range of full-time and part-time courses in hospitality and catering at level 2. There are good progression routes to employment and higher education. Over the past three years, the full-time numbers recruited to level 2 courses in hospitality and catering have increased from 59 during 2005/2006, to approximately 88 during the 2008/2009. At the time of the inspection, there were no level 2 courses in travel and tourism. The South West College's main provision in travel and tourism is the level 3 Edexcel National Diploma, and the level 5 Foundation Degree.

MAIN FINDINGS

8.2 The main strengths are the:

- good strategic planning for the expansion and development of the tourism and hospitality provision across the Fermanagh and Tyrone areas;
- good or better quality of almost all of the teaching and learning;
- good standard of the occupational skills demonstrated by most of the students; and
- excellent quality of industry standard equipment and accommodation available in the Dungannon and Omagh campuses.

8.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- under-developed industry links in the Enniskillen and Omagh campuses;
- quality of accommodation and learning resources for the students in the Enniskillen campus; and
- strengthening of the self-evaluation process across the provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

8.4 The high priority afforded to the development of the tourism and hospitality provision, at strategic level, and the significant engagement with relevant stakeholders in initiating a three year development strategy to support the tourism industry in the Fermanagh and Tyrone areas, demonstrates the college's commitment to expand this provision. The co-ordinators of the individual courses are highly committed and work hard to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning, and students' work is of a high standard. Although the course teams complete course reviews in accordance with the South West College's quality assurance procedures, they are not sufficiently robust or well developed. The use made of statistical data in the reviews is satisfactory. The opportunities for lecturers to share good practice and plan the provision across the college are limited. Whilst all lecturers are suitably qualified, a significant minority would benefit further from a sustained period of time in the tourism and hospitality industry to ensure that their teaching relates to modern practice in industry.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

8.5 Almost all of the students are highly motivated and hard-working; they use well the excellent range of equipment and accommodation provided in the Dungannon and Omagh campuses. The quality of accommodation and facilities on the Enniskillen campus is satisfactory; they are outdated and not fully fit-for-purpose. Most of the students demonstrate good standards of occupational skills. Their practical skills, demonstrated through a wide range of menus, are very good, and the quality and presentation of the dishes they prepare consistently reflect modern industry standards. Most students are able to explain well the methods of preparing and cooking dishes, and the quality points of various food commodities. The standards of their written work are mostly satisfactory; a minority have weaknesses in spelling and grammar. Over the last three years, the average retention rate across the provision is good at 83%, and the average success rate over the same period is satisfactory at 77%. This results in an achievement rate of 64% that equates to the average for all the Northern Ireland colleges. The progression rate to further education, training or employment is excellent at 90%.

QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

8.6 Relationships between the lecturer and the students are very good. The lecturers are conscientious and highly committed to the well-being of the students. The quality of the teaching is good or better. The lessons are well-planned with a good balance between the practical and theoretical components. Most lecturers use a good range of teaching approaches, including whole-class teaching, individual work and small group work, with an appropriate focus on developing the students' personal skills and qualities. As a result, the students work very effectively in teams to produce lunch and dinner menus. The principles of health, safety and food hygiene are taught thoroughly and applied well to the practical activities. All of the full-time students have an individualised student learning agreement drawn up at the beginning of their course, which is reviewed regularly by lecturing staff during tutorial sessions. In most cases, these agreements focus only on setting targets to monitor their progress in professional and technical units, and fail to set targets for them to achieve in their essential skills development or workplace training. In the Dungannon campus, effective use is made of visits to, and talks from local employers to inform and motivate the students, but is under-developed in the Enniskillen and Omagh campuses.

Likewise, the very good international links that have been developed by the Omagh campus have not been shared across the South West College. The procedures for assessment are well-planned across the South West College. In most cases, the students discuss their progress regularly with their tutor and set appropriate target dates for assessment. All students receive appropriate feedback following the assessment of practical activities, have good opportunities to discuss the outcomes of assessment and, where necessary, agree remedial action.

CONCLUSION

8.7 In the level 2 curriculum area of tourism and hospitality, the quality of education and training provided by the South West College is good. The college has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the college has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the college's progress on the areas for improvement.

PART FOUR

CONCLUSION AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of the education and training provided by the South West College is good. The college has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the college has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the college's progress on the areas for improvement.

9.2 The inspection has identified key strengths in the quality of the provision across the courses inspected, including the good start to strategic planning for improvement; the standards of the students' work; the quality of the teaching and learning; the quality of the accommodation and specialist learning resources; the pastoral care arrangements, and the use of information and learning technology.

10. KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

10.1 The inspection has identified the following key priorities for development:

- the development of a more coherent approach to self-evaluation and quality improvement planning across the South West College, to ensure that good practice is identified, shared and built upon, and that curriculum development is planned on a whole-college basis;
- the review and expansion of the further education curriculum offer, both full-time and part-time, at level 2 across the priority skills areas of construction, engineering, and travel and tourism to ensure that the educational and training needs of the local community and employers are met more effectively; and
- significant improvement in the outcomes of the essential skills provision.

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