

# City of Bath College

## Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130558

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**Type of provider:** General Further Education College

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## **REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS**

### **Context and focus of visit**

City of Bath College is a medium-sized general further education college. It is located in the centre of Bath and serves the city and the surrounding rural area of Bath and north-east Somerset. The minority ethnic population of the area is approximately 3%. The college offers courses in 15 subject areas. The largest area is arts, media and publishing which accounts for approximately 20% of all enrolments. Many more students study at advanced level than at foundation or intermediate levels. The college offers apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds at the college is 16%.

The college was inspected in January 2010 when its overall effectiveness was found to be satisfactory. Outcomes for learners and the quality of provision were satisfactory. Leadership and management and the capacity to improve were good. Of the four curriculum areas inspected, art and design provision was outstanding, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages were satisfactory. Sport, leisure, travel and tourism provision was inadequate.

### **Themes**

#### **Self-assessment and improvement planning**

**What progress has been made in using quality assurance systems more effectively, so that managers can identify weaknesses at an early stage and take swift action to tackle them?**      **Significant progress**

The college now applies much more rigour in monitoring the progress of all aspects of its provision, and responds more quickly to any poor or declining performance. The college has enhanced its procedures for observing lessons. Many staff have received training in the analysis and use of college data to enable them to monitor the quality and success of their courses more accurately. Learning coordinators in each subject area have received further training, and their roles and responsibilities have been strengthened and clarified. They provide a valuable resource to course leaders and curriculum managers by identifying quickly any decline in performance and proposing actions to rectify this.

Course reviews are now more evaluative and succinct, and based on accurate and detailed evidence. Resulting targets and actions for improvement are more robust. The college carries out full audits on courses and curriculum areas where there are concerns about the quality of provision. It conducts a detailed analysis of all aspects of the learners' experience and provides effective support and staff development for teams where necessary. As a result, a significant improvement in the success rates of most courses examined by inspectors can already be seen.

## **Outcomes for learners**

### **What progress has been made in improving students' Significant outcomes since the last inspection? progress**

In 2009/10 the college has made significant progress in improving outcomes for learners in comparison with the previous year. In 2009/10, overall retention rates improved to three percentage points above the national average for 2008/09. Retention on long qualifications improved by nine percentage points to three percentage points and are broadly average. Retention rates improved significantly at intermediate and advanced levels to above the 2008/09 national average, but they declined slightly at foundation level in 2009/10 to around average. Retention rates in almost all subject areas improved strongly and most are high.

Success rates on GCE AS level qualifications have improved markedly compared to the previous year. The success rate for GCE A levels improved in 2009/10, but is three percentage points below the national average for 2008/09. The college made good improvements to the success rates in key skills, from ten percentage points below the 2008/09 average to just above. Attendance improved by three percentage points between January 2010 and July 2010 when compared to the same period in the previous year.

## **Quality of provision**

### **What progress has been made in strengthening the Significant monitoring of teaching and learning and the actions for improvement? progress**

The college has strengthened significantly its procedures for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Subject specialists, either internal or external to the college, now conduct half of all lesson observations. Observations result in detailed action plans which include satisfactory elements observed as well as weaker aspects. Senior managers now moderate all action plans.

Managers now allocate a learning coach to all staff whose lessons are judged satisfactory or inadequate, and set a detailed action plan for improvement. Learning coaches provide effective support by arranging further training, peer observations, and individual coaching sessions, as well as conducting ungraded observations. Re-observations by a subject specialist and co-observer have shown that in almost all cases, the quality of lessons has improved by at least one grade. Students commented that they could identify examples of when their lessons improved through the year. The college has strengthened the moderation of observations and judgements, and is confident that its estimate of 72% of lessons being good or better is accurate.

## **Leadership and management**

### **What progress has been made in the sharing of good practice between curriculum areas? Reasonable progress**

The college is developing practice in the sharing of good teaching and learning well within most curriculum areas. However, it is still in the early stages of ensuring that good practice is shared across the college. In most areas there is informal sharing of techniques and resources. Learning coaches use lesson observations effectively to analyse the skills needed by staff, provide effective mentoring, and identify lessons from stronger performing areas for staff to observe. Coaches also pair staff in under-performing teams with staff from high-performing subjects. Coaches present exemplars of good practice on the college intranet. However, these are not always used by other areas of the college. The college provides effective training sessions on elements of good practice at regular staff development days. The college plans to improve the widespread sharing of good practice in the current year through a specially devised project, a commercial skills updating scheme, and by ensuring that all staff with lessons consistently graded as outstanding formally share their good practice across the college. The college also plans to enable middle managers to share exemplars of good management practice through regular staff development opportunities during the current year.

## **Sport, leisure, travel and tourism**

### **What progress has been made in improving the sport, leisure, travel and tourism curriculum area, which was judged to be inadequate at the last inspection? Significant progress**

The retention rate on long courses improved from 74% in 2008/09 to 84% in 2009/10 and is broadly average. Success rates improved on almost all long courses to above the national average for 2008/09. The success rate on the national diploma in sport and exercise sciences is six percentage points below the 2008/09 average, in spite of the achievement rate being very high at 97%. This was due to poor retention which had already been noted at the last inspection. Eighty-eight per cent of sport and exercise science first year students in 2009/10 progressed to the second year in 2010/11 compared with 73% in the previous year.

New management actions now ensure the very effective monitoring of students' attendance and progress. Good links have been forged with outstanding provision in other colleges. Teaching and assessment have been strengthened considerably and students enjoy their lessons. Engaging teaching methods are used by teachers. Teachers undertake peer observations frequently and actively share good practice and evaluate its effectiveness. Teachers are now more accountable for their students' success. Student interview and selection processes are much improved and well focused. Average attendance improved from 85% in 2008/09 to 88% in 2009/10. Target setting has improved but is not always sufficiently developmental.

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