# Brooksby Melton College

**Focused monitoring visit report**

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| **Unique reference number:** | 130754 |
| **Name of lead inspector:** | Shaun Dillon HMI |
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| **Type of provider:** | Specialist college |
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# FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

## Context and focus of visit

Brooksby Melton College is a small specialist land-based college, based on three sites in Melton Mowbray and Brooksby. The Brooksby campus, approximately nine miles from Melton Mowbray, is an 880 acre estate and working farm, which includes an equestrian centre, an animal care centre, a fishing lake, a plant centre and residential accommodation for learners. The Melton campus includes dance studios and a theatre, both of which are used by the community. The college has provision within 11 of the 15 subject areas. It delivers work-based learning across seven subject areas and workforce training through Train to Gain courses. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is low.

The most recent inspection report was published in March 2010. All aspects were judged satisfactory, as were health, care and early years and land-based studies. Performing arts and media were judged good.

## Themes

### Self-assessment and improvement planning

**What progress have managers made through the self-assessment process to improve provision for learners?**                **Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, managers have extended the self-assessment process to all areas of the college and have made improvements to the self assessment of employer-responsive provision. In the last self-assessment report, managers graded employer responsive provision separately and evaluated differences in performance. Governors are more fully involved in the self-assessment process and in monitoring the quality improvement action plan. Frequent course reviews contribute to self-assessment effectively. In a minority of cases, course level self-assessment analysis of evidence is insufficiently evaluative and does not support the grades awarded. In quality improvement plans, a few actions are too descriptive and do not include appropriate targets. Managers have developed a number of effective measures as part of self-assessment activities. They use notices to improve effectively to address declines in course performance. Meetings between programme and senior managers to evaluate programme area performance lead to improvements. Departmental risk registers include assessments of key curriculum performance indicators and provide a useful link to self assessment. Since the last inspection, improvements include an increase in the proportion of good or better lessons, more effective use of employers' feedback and more effective use of learners' involvement in course reviews and the self assessment process.

**Outcomes for learners**

**What progress have managers made to increase the success     Reasonable
rates of learners on learner-responsive provision?                          progress**

Most success rates, except for learners aged 16 to 18 on very short courses,
increased in 2010/11 compared with 2009/10. Most are average (compared with
specialist college data), except for those for adults on advanced level and on short
courses which are high, and those for learners aged 16 to 18 on short courses and
for the very few adults on very short courses which are very low. The success rates
of learners aged 16 to 18 on intermediate level courses increased considerably in
2010/11, to just below average. Success rates for adults increased. Managers have
changed the curriculum to be more suited to learners' needs and to aid success and
progression. Success rates by learners with disabilities are not significantly different
compared with those without disabilities. Students receiving support are more
successful than those not receiving support. The proportions of learners from
minority ethnic backgrounds are very small and most succeed as well as, or better
than, learners from a White British background. The success rate of the few learners
from a White Other background has declined over three years and is low. Success
rates on key and functional skills courses are low, because of low pass rates.

**What progress have managers made to increase the success     Reasonable
rates and the completion rates within the expected                          progress
timescales of learners on employer-responsive provision?**

At the last inspection, the successful completion of apprenticeship frameworks was
average, but learners often took longer to achieve than the time allocated. On Train
to Gain provision, only about half of the trainees completed within the expected
timescale. In 2009/10, success rates for apprentices aged 16 to 18 in animal care,
hairdressing and for learners from Lincolnshire were low. During 2010/11, managers
improved provision in these areas of concern effectively. Over the three years to
2010/11, overall apprenticeship success rates and completions within the expected
timescale improved, but they are below average. The proportion of advanced
apprentices completing within the expected time is low. Following a review of its
training programmes in 2010/11, a major manufacturer transferred over 50 learners
to another training provider before the completion of their apprenticeships.
Consequently, these learners are recorded as non-completers and their removal has
had a significantly adverse impact on success rates. Managers have recognised this
threat to business continuity and have put appropriate actions in place to alleviate
risk. In 2010/11, Train to Gain overall success rates are high. Completion rates within
the expected timescale are very high. Success rates on Skills for Life qualifications
have increased significantly.

## Quality of provision

**What progress have senior managers and programme teams           Reasonable
made in monitoring the progress of employment-based                    progress
learners closely through detailed training plans which they
share with learners and employers?**

Employers receive helpful guidance on their role in the joint planning of each
learner's learning programme and in supporting learners at progress reviews. College
managers have introduced new training plans which are subject to further
development. These plans provide a general breakdown of how the programmes will
be delivered and the framework of assessments for each unit. Engineering employers
receive helpful guidance on the training they are expected to deliver. Both employers
and learners agree with, and receive a copy of, the training plan. Tutors and
assessors provide very good support for learning. The quality of progress reviews
has improved so that they evaluate progress effectively. The review of progress
reports and management meetings ensure managers monitor learners' progress
thoroughly. Employers are engaged fully in these reviews, although it is not always
clear what they should do to support further training. For the majority of learners,
target setting focuses on the completion of units and does not provide them with a
clear understanding of their short-term targets. More able learners refer to activity
lists to plan their own learning. The progress reviews do not evaluate sufficiently the
effectiveness of support for learners with additional learning needs.

**What progress have managers and staff made to improve           Reasonable
target setting in the individual learning plans of learners on           progress
learner-responsive provision to inspire learners of all abilities
to achieve demanding aims?**

Each learner has an electronic individual learning plan (ILP), based on a virtual
learning environment and so accessible by learners from outside college. These
contain full details of learners' initial screening and assessment outcomes for literacy
and numeracy and also their entry qualifications. Initial targets do not, however,
always relate to these outcomes. Tutors make very helpful and constructive
comments which include short-term learners' targets, but frequently these lack
challenge. Learners' involvement is underdeveloped and their targets are often very
general. Managers have improved the consistency and use of ILPs and have
improved target setting in certain subject areas, but they are aware that these
remain areas for improvement in 2011/12. They have provided much professional
development and delegated a member of staff from the information technology unit
to support tutors to use the virtual learning environment and ILPs to best effect.
They are aware, however, that tutors' use of the virtual learning environment and
ILPs and their target setting are too inconsistent and that the sharing of good
practice is insufficient. Many learners find their ILPs and jointly agreed targets very
helpful; others do not. For a minority of learners, their plans start well and contain
useful targets, but these are not reviewed sufficiently frequently to sustain
motivation.

**What progress have teachers made to improve teaching and learning so that learners are challenged and motivated to learn and progress?**                                    **Reasonable progress**

Managers have improved the quality of teaching and learning of those teachers whose lessons were previously judged satisfactory. They have increased the use of lead practitioners and have improved teachers' effective use of information and learning technology (ILT). Lesson plans require the inclusion of equality and diversity and health and safety but these are not evident in lesson observation proforma. In the best lessons, all learners are engaged in interesting and enjoyable activities which challenge them to progress rapidly. Lesson plans are good and include individual learners' needs. Teachers question learners thoroughly to check their prior learning and experiences. Teachers make good links between the college's respect strategy and using it in the outside world. Teachers emphasise the importance of good health and safety practices during practical lessons. They use ILT effectively to aid learning. In the less effective lessons, teachers talk at passive learners and do not question individuals. Learners have insufficient challenge to motivate and inspire them to progress to higher levels rapidly. Lesson plans contain insufficient references to the promotion of equality and diversity, other than through mutual respect. Opportunities to use ILT to aid learning are missed.

**Leadership and management**

**How much progress have managers made to finalise and implement the single equality policy?**                                    **Reasonable progress**

Managers produced a suitable single equality scheme in May 2010 and reviewed it in 2011. The roles and responsibilities of staff and learners are set out clearly. An equality and diversity working group has been established to manage the scheme. The current equality and diversity action plan addresses six objectives. Actions include the provision of faith rooms, a revised marketing strategy to widen access and the appointment of a lead practitioner with responsibility for embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum. The links between the action plan and the equality scheme are unclear. Connections between the scheme and other college strategies, such as that for teaching, learning and assessment, are underdeveloped. Managers and staff complete equality impact assessments to evaluate college functions and policies promptly. The performance of different groups of learners informs self assessment effectively, but performance reporting linked to challenging targets for improvement is not yet in place. All staff receive appropriate mandatory training. The college has a suitable strategy to promote and reinforce equality and diversity amongst work-based learners and their employers.

**What progress have managers made to ensure compliance with, and implementation of, the performance management system?**

**Significant progress**

Managers have devised and tested an appraisal system which is based on key competences pertinent to an appraisee's role. These competences will be expanded and clarified this term using key behaviours for each competence. This will enable all staff to understand more fully the requirements of their role and how to determine how well they fulfil these requirements. In 2010/11 managers appraised all their available staff. Managers are also required to have termly one-to-one meetings with their staff, but this is not monitored. Managers have improved the use of the learners' voice and the outcomes from lesson observations to inform the appraisal of a teacher. This also includes the key competences in the teaching and learning strategy based on what constitutes a good lesson. Lesson observation outcomes relate very well to the appraisal discussion and the appraisal action plan. Both inform managers of staff development needs effectively, and these determine mandatory staff development. The positive impact of appraisal is evident in many ways such as staff changing roles, fewer people in capability procedures, improving teaching and learning and on raising standards, accountability and expectations. Managers have improved significantly the consistency of approach to, and implementation of, the appraisal system.