

Bowling College

Not for profit organisation

Inspection dates		1–3 October 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- The vast majority of learners gain their qualifications very well with some pockets of outstanding success rates.
- Learners develop good vocational and personal skills and many gain promotions at work, go onto further and higher education or work in a voluntary capacity.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, with highly motivating staff who set high standards for learners, and plan interesting and stimulating activities.
- Support and information, advice and guidance for learners are strong. The tutorial system is a key factor in this support, contributing well to learner retention and achievement.
- Interim managers have kept a clear focus on improving the quality of the learner experience despite many management challenges.
- Curriculum management is good with effective actions taken to improve provision.
- Staff are highly experienced, provide good role models for learners and maintain high standards.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Functional skills success rates and attendance on some courses require improvement.
- Too few learners experience outstanding teaching, learning and assessment. Tutors do not consistently correct errors in spelling and grammar. They do not use information and learning technologies (ILT), a virtual learning environment or individual learning plans well enough.
- Strategic planning is under-developed and is not sufficiently promoting the development of cross-company themes such as equality and diversity or safeguarding. The board of directors is insufficiently diverse in its make up to provide challenge to managers.
- Performance-management systems and use of data need further development.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more learners experience outstanding success rates by continuing to monitor and track attendance rates and by ensuring the curriculum design best meets learners' needs. Use initial assessment and strong guidance to match learners to the right programme.
- Develop teaching learning and assessment by:
 - implementing a virtual learning environment that provides increased contact and support for learners
 - increasing staff development on the use of information learning technologies
 - ensuring that individual learning plans are used as a genuine working document to increase progress. Train staff in the use of individual learning plans and work with other providers to share practice
 - using the process of observation of teaching and learning in a focussed way to assess the impact of actions.
- Develop better strategic management arrangements by:
 - widening the composition of the board to ensure a good 'fit' to the needs of the business and its new strategic direction
 - training the board in their roles and responsibilities, particularly with regard to providing challenge on making improvements
 - developing robust action planning that encompasses longer-term strategic planning as well as the development of key cross-company themes such as equality and diversity and safeguarding.
- Further develop the use of performance management and data so that they contribute well to moving from good to outstanding by:
 - using data to identify specific performance measures and targets
 - applying targets to individual staff and teams to hold them to account
 - evaluating performance against objectives to assess improvements
 - partnering with other organisations to learn from their processes.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Overall success rates have improved steadily for three successive years and are above national averages. Success rates for learners on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, who represent the largest proportion of learners, are good.
- Success rates for learners on child-care programmes are good. The very small numbers of learners on science and mathematics courses have excellent success rates. However, success rates for functional skills, which were high last year, have fallen in 2012/13 and now require improvement.
- Learners on social sciences and on language and literature programmes benefit from steadily rising success rates that match those gained by similar learners across the country. Success rates for learners on the business administration programme, which is a relatively new programme, have significantly improved in this second year of delivery, rising to above national averages.
- Success rates on long courses at intermediate levels have improved significantly in the last year and are now excellent. Learners on long courses at advanced levels benefit from good success

rates while learners on entry-level long courses have success rates just over those gained by learners on the same courses across the country.

- Attendance of learners on some courses has been patchy. This is improving as a result of greater monitoring of attendance and better arrangements for following up learners who fail to turn up at sessions. However, attendance still requires improvement.
- A significant proportion of learners progress to further or higher education, go into employment or voluntary work, gain promotions or positions of responsibility at work. A good proportion of learners progress internally from one course to another and from entry-level to higher-level programmes.
- Learners develop good skills that they use well at work and in home life, for example, learners on ESOL programmes use their new vocabulary and ability to use sentences in everyday settings to talk with some confidence with doctors. Learners on ESOL courses developed with Jobcentre Plus use English well for job-related tasks such as preparing to reply to interview questions.
- Learners on mathematics programmes understand particular concepts that eluded them at school. For example, learners in a mathematics class who could not understand how to calculate ratios very suddenly acquired the understanding of the concept and were jubilant about being able to apply it. Childcare learners develop the skills to create interesting games for the children in their care.
- Across all programmes learners are developing good communication skills with even beginner ESOL learners having the confidence to use sentences in front of strangers. Learners from a wide range of cultures who speak their native language work very well with each other across programmes and form lasting bonds and friendships.
- Staff have been covering for senior-management gaps over the past year and, while data on achievement gaps have been available, staff have not been systematically using this to monitor the narrowing of achievement gaps. However, they have been using local intelligence to ensure learners, for the most part, have not been disadvantaged. For example, they have improved retention on specific courses by re-designing the courses to meet the needs of learners.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall and this is reflected in the good outcomes for learners. Staff are enthusiastic, well qualified and with good knowledge that they use well to engage learners. Tutors have high aspirations for learners and promote high standards at all times. They use good questioning techniques and learning activities to motivate learners, who respond positively to their attention.
- Tutors plan lessons well with the needs of the individuals in the sessions firmly in mind. Lesson plans are very detailed, usually outlining the individual support needs of specific learners and including instructions on which learners are to be paired together to provide support and challenge to each other. Lessons are usually varied in pace and activities so learners' attention is kept throughout the session. However, tutors do not use individual learning plans sufficiently with learners.
- Initial and diagnostic assessments are thorough, with tutors using these well to plan lessons. Assessment methodologies in lessons are varied with tutors using games, quizzes and activities as well as handout completion and tutor observations to assess learner progress. Learners support and challenge each other well, giving each other motivation to succeed faster. In one beginner ESOL lesson learners actively corrected each other's pronunciation of words, making the task fun and purposeful.
- Resources for learning are of good quality with a variety of materials, books and activities. Some staff use ILT well with learners, for example, using digital recorders with ESOL learners to reinforce pronunciation of particular words. However, not all tutors integrate ILT into lessons well. In addition, the college does not yet have a virtual learning environment to extend learning outside of the classroom.

- Learners benefit well from the detailed feedback they receive from staff in tutorials, they have a good understanding of what they have to do to improve and use this information well to develop. Learners on childcare courses gain good feedback on their work, including in their employer placements with activities such as designing play activities for the children. However, not all tutors correct spelling or grammatical errors on written work for learners.
- Staff develop good enrichment activities for learners that extend their learning well. ESOL learners visit museums, parks and places of local interest helping them to understand British history and cultural 'norms'. Learners on access to higher-education courses benefit well from a range of guest speakers to their sessions as well as visits to local universities.
- Staff give good information advice and guidance to learners. Tutors are very accessible and seen as 'critical friends' by learners who trust them and respond well to them. Tutors have a good understanding of local providers and progression routes for learners. Learners also benefit from a specialist advice and guidance provider that gives individual IAG sessions. Many learners use this service and benefit well.
- Learners receive good pastoral support from the college. Learners with small children benefit from free crèche provision. The provider pays for taxis to transport learners who find it difficult to travel to the venues. The college manages a discretionary fund to which learners can apply. Many learners benefit, gaining funds for food, travel, childcare, books and excursions.
- Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity. Health and care learners have a good awareness of equality and diversity in relation to the children in their care. Learners across the provision benefit from stimulating discussions on equality and diversity issues that tutors skilfully integrate into sessions. The wide range of ethnic and cultural groups mix together seamlessly, supporting each other well.

English for speakers of other languages 19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, matching the good success rates for learners. ESOL learners' progression within the college is good. Many progress between levels and over half of learners working at entry level have moved onto functional English courses. Learners grow in confidence and social skills with those on Jobcentre Plus courses developing good language skills related to work.
- The well-qualified tutors plan their lessons thoroughly and carefully to ensure that learners are engaged in a wide variety of learning activities that match their individual needs, making use of attractive and well-produced learning resources. Tutors motivate learners well, setting high standards and giving good individual support. Learners have high aspirations. They enjoy working with their peers, providing good challenge to each other.
- Lessons engage learners in stimulating learning activities: matching cards or pictures to words; role-play; or moving around the classroom to access different resources. In one lesson, learners followed instructions and used digital music players to listen to a song from which they identified verbs to complete the lyrics. They went on to learn the grammar rules underpinning the use of the verbs. In another, learners practised the vocabulary they would need to describe illnesses to a doctor.
- However, while teaching, learning and assessment are good, too few learners experience outstanding teaching, learning and assessment. The college does not yet have a virtual learning environment to further support learners working from home. While some tutors use ILT well in lessons, not all learners benefit from this. Tutors do not always correct the pronunciation of learners or correct spelling or grammatical errors in written work systematically.
- Tutors use initial and diagnostic assessment processes well to plan sessions and to assess language skills to place learners in appropriate classes. They use good recapitulation and questioning techniques to consolidate and check subsequent learning. However, staff and

learners do not always use individual learning plans effectively to set individual targets or as a tool to track individual progress.

- The regular tutorials are very effective in supporting learners to understand the progress they are making. Tutors give good, detailed feedback to learners, clearly showing learners what they need to do to improve. Learners appreciate the individual time with their tutors and the chance to reflect on their achievements and any further gaps.
- Learners participate regularly in valuable enrichment activities that tutors carefully design to develop language skills as well as to extend their appreciation of their own environment. For example, a group of ESOL learners followed directions to make their own way to a local photography museum.
- Learners receive good information, advice and guidance from their tutors, and from local specialist agencies that provide group guidance with follow-up individual interviews, which a high proportion of learners attend. One tutor was able to respond positively and signpost a learner to information about taxi-driving courses. Another gave information about the progression routes from ESOL classes to functional English skills.
- Lessons have a positive and purposeful atmosphere into which tutors integrate equality and diversity issues well. One learner spoke enthusiastically about working alongside learners from different cultures. She helps her study partner with spoken language who in turn helps her with written work. In one lesson with learners from very diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, learners were engaged in a stimulating debate about gay adoption.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Interim operational management while the previous Principal was on long-term sick leave was good. Managers have improved the quality of provision and outcomes for learners well. A wide range of quality improvement systems are in place and managers use these very effectively to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, some policies and procedures require updating.
- Curriculum management is good with staff taking effective actions to improve provision. For example, on one programme success rates declined significantly in the previous year. After investigating the causes, managers re-organised the curriculum so that learners could achieve the first part of their award more quickly. This motivated the learners to succeed. Learners who were previously at risk of leaving the programme stayed. Success rates improved to good.
- Staff are well-qualified and experienced. They provide good role models and set high standards for learners. Learners are encouraged to progress onto higher-level qualifications at the college and many do so. A good proportion of leavers go on to employment or further study elsewhere. High numbers of learners on access to higher-education courses go on to study at university.
- The new Principal, although a very recent appointment, has a good understanding of the provision and the areas that require some further development. Together with his deputy, the Principal has communicated a strong strategic vision for growth to staff. Staff are enthusiastic about the proposed developments and are becoming increasingly involved in decision-making. However, strategic planning is insufficiently developed.
- Managers have recently changed membership of the board of directors. Members have suitable backgrounds in education. However, the board is not sufficiently representative of the ethnic mix of the local community. It lacks expertise in local employability skills. Directors are insufficiently rigorous in holding the provider to account for the quality of provision or outcomes or for giving specific support and guidance to improve.
- Performance-management arrangements are effective. Arrangements for using the observation of teaching and learning as a performance tool are rigorous. Observations of classroom teaching are frequent and place sufficient focus on learning. Action points are not always sufficiently detailed or time bound; however, following support, teachers improve the quality of their teaching and learning. Teaching and learning have improved and are now good.

- Managers have recently introduced a structured appraisal system for staff. This is giving staff the opportunity to reflect on their practice, celebrate their successes and plan for individual improvement. Staff appreciate the individual support they gain from managers. However, while staff receive updates with regard to course and programme performance, managers are not yet using data sufficiently to set individual or team targets for improvement.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Staff are fully involved in self-assessment and make judgements about the performance of the courses they teach. However, the board, employers and local community groups are not sufficiently involved in self-assessment. Managers and staff use the quality improvement plan well to keep track of actions taken and to assess their impact on the quality of provision.
- The college seeks learners' views regularly through surveys, evaluations and a learner forum and uses them well to make improvements. Managers changed the start and finish times of classes so that learners working different shifts at work were able to attend. Following feedback, they re-organised the timing of classes in provision held in children's centres to allow parents the time to drop off older children at school and settle younger children in the crèche.
- The college works well with local communities and a small range of partners to provide learning opportunities in local neighbourhoods. Learners gain confidence by attending classes in familiar surroundings. Staff identify venues with crèche facilities to help learners with young children to participate. Staff work well with local higher-education providers to ensure that access to higher-education courses provide learners with appropriate skills and knowledge to successfully progress.
- The college promotes equality and diversity well through the display of posters and active discussions in classes. Diverse groups of learners work well together often providing good peer support in collaborative working. The equality and diversity policy however, focuses on staff rather than on learners.
- Managers use their knowledge of the diverse learner population appropriately to make changes to provision to meet individual and group needs. However, they do not sufficiently analyse data systematically to check on success rates of different groups to ensure they always understand any achievement gaps and take actions to narrow them.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners and learning takes place in safe environments. Staff promote health, safety and safeguarding well to learners. However, not all staff have recently completed safeguarding awareness training.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Bowling College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	19+ Learning programmes
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
ESOL	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Not for profit organisation								
Age range of learners	19+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 17								
	Part-time: 894								
Principal/CEO	Mr Steve Cross								
Date of previous inspection	December 2011								
Website address	www.bowlingcollege.co.uk								
Provider information at the time of the inspection									
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above		
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
Full-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17	N/A	N/A	
Part-time	N/A	620	N/A	252	N/A	22	N/A	N/A	
Number of traineeships	16-19			19+		Total			
	N/A			N/A		N/A			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A								
Full-time	N/A								
Part-time	N/A								
Number of community learners	N/A								
Number of employability learners	N/A								
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	■ Not applicable								

Contextual information

Bowling College operates from a former textile mill in the heart of Bradford. It uses a range of partner premises around the city, including children's centres, premises close to Jobcentre Plus offices and a refugee reception centre, that allow staff to reach learners within the community. Unemployment rates are high and great deprivation can be found. The area has a high percentage of people from Black and minority ethnic communities that require language support from beginner levels onwards. In 2012-13, around half of all learners were recruited onto ESOL programmes.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

June Cramman HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Chief Executive Officer as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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