

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Bury College  
Date of visit: 4 October 2006

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

### Achievement and standards

#### Learners' achievements in 05/06

*Using unvalidated data from 2005/06 from kitemarked software, and comparing to 2004/05 national averages*

- Overall in 2005/06 the college has sustained the high success rates achieved in 04/05. Success rates for 16-18 year olds at levels 1, 2 and 3 are already at or above last year's levels, with achievement data currently incomplete. Success rates for 19+ learners are broadly in line with those of last year, with results at levels 2 and 3 at national levels and level 1 below national level. However, there is still a great deal of achievement data for adults to be processed, which is likely to have a positive impact on success rates. The number of high grades achieved at advanced level has increased. An internal analysis of value-added data shows an improvement from last year, and continues the upward trend from 2003/04. External value-added data is not yet available.

The variation in achievement across levels and subjects in Key Skills has been cited as an area for improvement in the 2004/05 SAR.

What progress has been made in this area?

- The college recognises that achievement rates in key skills are an area for improvement. Overall, the success rates in 2004/05 for 16-18 year olds in key skills are good at level 1, satisfactory at level 2 and low at level 3. For adult learners, success rates in 2004/05 are low being at or below the low national averages. However, learner numbers are small. The college is developing and implementing a series of useful strategies to improve key skills achievement all levels. For example, in work-based learning key skills achievement rates are much improved and are good overall.

Has the progress made in work-based learning, as reported in the last AAV been maintained?

- The level of progress in work-based learning has been maintained at the level identified in the last annual assessment visit. The overall success rates are at least satisfactory. They show much improvement on previous years and are above the national averages. In care there have been

marked improvements in both advanced apprenticeship success rates and apprentice success rates in 2005/06. Success rates in business administration and law remain good. In hairdressing there are good apprenticeship success rates in 2005/06 but low achievements in advanced apprenticeships. Current data show that learners' progress in achieving their qualification by the expected achievement date is satisfactory. There has been a significant improvement to timely success rates in care, which accounts for over 50% of provision in work-based learning.

## Quality of education and training

What strategies are being used to ensure teaching and learning meets the needs of all learners, particularly those of higher ability? How is the overall impact of these initiatives measured?

- There is a strong focus on differentiation, which is tracked through schemes of work and lesson observations. The sharing of good practice is at the forefront of developments in teaching and learning. Assessment has recently been targeted to ensure all learners are clear on what is expected of them and how to improve their work. There are specific initiatives to support more able students such as 'mentoring for excellence' and master classes. Student feedback is used both to inform practice and as a measure of impact. In addition, the college monitoring programme is used to evaluate initiatives in teaching and learning and for intervention where necessary. Achievement data is also used to assess the impact of the focus on differentiation and initiatives to support the more able. Results for 2005/06 show the number of high grades achieved has grown markedly from 2004/05.

In the last inspection a key strength of the college was 'wide range of courses that meet community needs.' What strategies are being used to ensure the curriculum offer continues to meet needs?

- The college has a wide range of effective strategies to ensure that the curriculum offer meets present needs. These include careful analysis of employers' vocational needs, local community and youth needs, and employment and training needs for industry. A good range of flexible courses are offered from pre-entry level with clear progression through to level 4 in five areas of learning. In eleven areas of learning they provide for levels 1 to 3 courses, with a further two areas with courses from entry level to level 3 and in eight areas of learning for work-based learning. The college has good and productive links with other training providers to reduce duplication of provision and to meet community needs. The curriculum is frequently and effectively reviewed to ensure new courses

are appropriate, meets learning needs and supports the college's strategic direction. Where necessary under-performing courses are reviewed and some discontinued or modified if they are not meeting the college's performance criteria. The college recognises the need to extend its curriculum for construction and retailing to meet regional skills demands. Developing and extending its many links with employers is an on-going strategic objective.

## Leadership and management

MIS and the use of data are cited as strengths in a number of areas in the SAR. How is the impact of the use of data monitored and evaluated?

- All staff are given training on the use and importance of data throughout the college. Data is used to support the college in its improvement agenda and is integrated into college processes, in particular the monitoring of progress where it is used to highlight areas for intervention. The impact of data and MIS is monitored and evaluated in a number of ways. Firstly, through staff feedback on the usefulness of data and to make suggestions for improvements. In addition, where data is used as evidence to support initiatives, its impact is monitored when the initiative is assessed. Finally, data is used for showing trends and modelling, with the accuracy of the models produced used as a measure of the usefulness of the ingoing data.

In comparing the curriculum self assessment grades in the SAR from 03/04 to 04/05 8 areas have moved up a grade and only one moved down. What strategies are being employed to assist areas in moving up and in supporting those already with top grades in maintaining them?

- Aspirational targets are set at all levels with everyone in the college having a clear understanding of what is expected of them. There is a rigorous monitoring process which works to highlight good practice and identify under-performance so it can be addressed quickly. Data is used widely to assist in the evaluation of initiatives. Good practice is shared to support weaker areas. The learner is at the heart of the process with all developments linked effectively to support the learner in achieving success.