

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Barnet College  
Date of visit: 2 November 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

What do performance data for 2005/06 indicate about overall trends compared with 2004/05?

- Achievement data for 2005/06 is still subject to change as results continue to be recorded onto the system. The college is projecting a slight decrease in the headline success rate for 2005/06. The decrease is planned and has been discussed with the LSC; the college has nevertheless achieved beyond the headline target agreed with the LSC. The decrease is due to the significant changes made to the college's ESOL curriculum which represents approximately one third of overall provision. The college no longer offers certificates of achievement but has been successful in transferring all of its ESOL provision to externally-validated qualifications.

Value added data (ALIS) indicate students on AS level courses make very good progress; subjects that performed particularly well were accounting, biology, economics, law and Spanish. Overall progress on GCE A level courses is in line with expectations. Although value added has been more positive in previous years the college attributes the impact of staffing issues in one curriculum area and disciplinary problems to a slightly disappointing performance.

Success rates in NVO 2 in hairdressing were identified as poor (and slow) achievement of frameworks for WB learners. What action has been taken to address these issues?

- This area currently has a rundown contract with the LSC and there are now only 21 students. A decision about whether to re-contract next year will be made towards the end of this year. However, based on very small numbers the overall success rate is at the national average and the timely success rate is above the national average. The department has developed a clear action plan which has been implemented. For example, there is an active scheme of work which

includes all the resources for every part of the programme and has an emphasis on students being actively involved with the work. The department has a lunchtime club for students to receive extra help with theory. There have been considerable efforts to involve employers more closely. There is some evidence that this work is being successful in motivating students. The post inspection action plan is being implemented in its entirety.

The success rates for work based learners are well below national averages up to period 12 2005/06. Overall 42% against a national average of 50%; timely 19% against a national average of 30%. What is being done to improve this? The inspection report states that the WBL is being scaled down to be re-introduced later. What is the rationale for this, and its current status?

- Work base learning has deliberately been scaled down because the college feels that it is not doing as good a job as it would wish. The only area which now has apprentices is in hairdressing. The current overall success rates are at the national average and the timely success rates are above the national average. However, this is based on 21 learners. The intention is to work with others to re-introduce apprenticeships in a year's time. The PIAP is appropriate and is being implemented in full. There is some evidence that actions are being effective.

The CPR shows significant variability from year to year in success rates for adults on level 4 provision (see below). What do 2005/06 show for success rates for adult learners?

- Variation between years is partially explained by the unreliability of data for years 2003 and 2004. The success rate for adult learners on higher level provision in 2005/05 is judged to be accurate and was broadly average. Qualifications for legal executives (ILEX) that traditionally have had weak results are now run on a full cost basis. Provisional data for 2005/06 shows the success rate to be higher than average.

Is there evidence of improved retention in hospitality and catering and some construction courses?

- There is clear improvement in retention on provision in hospitality and catering. A new level 1 programme was offered in 2006 and retention improved by 15 percentage points, however there is still room for improvement. Success rates on level 2 provision in hospitality are now higher than average. Retention rates on construction courses also show improvement.

Achievements in key skills have doubled, but remain low in some areas. What do 2005-06 data show about trends in key skills achievements? Is the college's Skills for Life strategy impacting on learners' achievements in key skills?

- Students' achievements in key skills are higher than in most colleges. Their performance in level 3 IT key skill qualifications has been weak and this is no longer offered. Student achievements in application of number are strong and results in level 2 communication key skills were much improved in 2005-06. The overall success rate for key skills improved only marginally in 2005-06, however the college has subsequently undertaken a very detailed and thorough analysis by course and teacher level to identify where there is specific underachievement. This analysis provides a very powerful tool for further improvement and the key skills managers are now in a position to isolate individual problems and apply the appropriate solutions to raise standards.

The college's strategy for key skills is working well and is managed by a highly effective and supportive team of managers. As a result an increasing number of vocational teachers have acquired the skills and confidence to contextualise key skills within their teaching and learning strategies. There are imaginative and interesting resources available to support teachers in the delivery of key skills.

## Quality of education and training

There were two outstanding areas at the previous inspection. How has that good practice been shared with other areas in the college?

- Good practice is shared through the Learning and Development Advisors. The number of these has been increased to 12 since the inspection. Each works within a department but has a cross college brief to share good practice. They meet regularly to allow good practice from one area to be shared with other areas. The college managed learning environment MLE is also seen as an effective means for staff to share good ideas with each other across the college. Use of this facility has expanded greatly since the inspection.

The last inspection identified that an area for improvement in engineering was the insufficient work experience for college-based learners despite the college having "an outstanding reputation with many employers." How has this been addressed since then?

- The engineering department has plans for the introduction of two weeks of work experience for level 2 students at the end of their

programme. This is in line with the PIAP. This will be reviewed and decisions will be made about whether to include work experience for level 3 students. Currently the only engineering programmes being offered are the BTEC 1<sup>st</sup> diploma and the BTEC National Certificate in electronics.

The report identifies that ILPs do not always have sufficiently clear or demanding targets (eg: leisure, travel & tourism, preparation for life & learning). A new system was due to be introduced with better monitoring by managers. Has this been fully implemented and how does the college know if greater consistency has been achieved in the quality of ILPs? What action has been taken to support staff in recording more accurately the progress made by learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities?

- The college has run courses on writing SMART targets in ILPs. The college has a standard format as a minimum, but many areas use a modified version of this. These must be approved by the quality group. The quality of ILPs is monitored by managers within each department and a log kept of the outcomes of monitoring. There are well advanced plans to introduce electronic ILPs in the next academic year.

Enrichment activities were described as limited and work experience underdeveloped in some areas. How has the college followed this up?

- The college has had some discussion about this area and has demonstrated a commitment to making improvements. It has recently taken a new building to expand the range of enrichment activities on offer. The college budget for enrichment activities has also been increased.

## Leadership and management

Taking into account the outcomes of the Ofsted survey of June 2006 'Safeguarding Children' (HMI 2647) a follow up letter was sent to colleges on 17 July 2006 setting out the arrangements for improved record-keeping of checks on staff. What action has the college taken in relation to these proposals, is there a single central record in place?

- The college has undertaken a through audit of safeguarding checks undertaken both prior to and post 2002. The outcomes of the audit indicate that records of CRB checks are not comprehensive. There have been many changes of staff within the HR department and the college has had significant problems in recruiting to senior level posts

in HR. However the interim director has been highly effective in stabilising personnel functions and administrative systems. Arrangements are now in place to systematically carry out CRB checks on all volunteers and consultants which had not previously been the case. Although the college does not as yet have a single central record of all checks carried out on identity, qualifications and criminal convictions. The HR database is being updated so that by early 2007 the college will be able to produce a single electronic report that will comply with the government's requirements.

The report states that the college is aware that more needs to be done to develop and monitor actions related to equality and diversity in a few departments. What has happened since then?

- The college's approach to monitoring the impact of the various policies that relate to race and equality is exemplary. Since the inspection the LDA's have worked with specific departments to help them analyse and evaluate trends using the wealth of data that is made available to them.