



Bedford College

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education  
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# Re-inspection report

Audience  
Post-sixteen

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## Introduction

Bedford College was inspected in September 2004. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory or better in all areas inspected, except in hairdressing work-based learning (WBL) which was found to be less than satisfactory. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is less than satisfactory within two years of the original inspection. If inadequate areas of learning or aspects of provision remain inadequate following re-inspection, inspectors will continue to monitor progress at annual assessment visits, but the areas will not be re-graded. They will be re-inspected during the full college inspection.

The less than satisfactory WBL aspect was re-inspected on 8 and 9 November 2006. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum/WBL area/CIF aspect	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Hairdressing WBL	4	3

## Context

At the time of the inspection 21 learners were on apprenticeship programmes in hairdressing. All learners were employed and attended college for one day each week.

## *Strengths*

- good support for learners in key skill and theory lessons
- good communications aiding learners' progress
- significant management action to improve provision since the last inspection

## *Areas for improvement*

- insufficient use of work-based assessment
- limited progression opportunities to advanced apprenticeships
- weak review process

## Achievement and standards

Learners' achievements are satisfactory. Overall framework completion rates continue to improve. Success rates improved from 20% in 2003/04 to 31% in 2004/05 and to 42% in 2005/06. Timely completion rates have also improved. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Most demonstrate sound technical understanding and use salon equipment safely. Portfolios are produced to a satisfactory standard, although many contain a limited range of evidence. Learners develop key skills effectively and success rates for these qualifications are improving.

## Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners receive good support in key skills and theory lessons and make good progress. Communications to aid learners' progress are good. Key staff meet frequently to review achievement. The course satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners and their employers, although there are insufficient progression opportunities to advanced apprenticeships and insufficient assessment in the workplace. Support for learners is good. Progress is effectively monitored although some individual learning plans have not been updated for some time. Learners are well supported by their employers and workplace supervisors.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Significant management actions have improved provision since the last inspection. Communication with employers and learner monitoring have improved. However, the review process is weak. There remains insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity and learner target setting at reviews is not specific enough.

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Bedford College  
Date of visit: 08 and 09 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

How do college success rates compare to national rates? Do success rates continue to improve?

- College data for 2005/06 show an improvement in overall success rates although they remain slightly below national rates. There was an increase of 5.3% in overall success rates and of 3.6% in long course success rates. At levels 2 and 3 and across all qualification types, overall success rates improved on the previous year. However, at level 1, they declined and remain below national levels. Overall success rates for learners aged 16-18 and for adults improved on the previous year and adult success rates are now above the most recently available national averages.
- Overall success rates on NVQ courses improved significantly and are well above the national rate. Level 1 and 2 success rates rose by 9.4% and 15.1% respectively and although success rates at level 3 declined, they remain above the national rate. Success rates for long courses in 9 of the 14 sector skills areas where the college offer provision improved, with significant improvement in science and mathematics, construction, leisure travel and tourism and in education. Ten sector skills areas have overall long success rates at or above national averages with the remaining four below national rates.

What progress has been made in improving overall and timely success rates for work-based learners?

- Success rates have improved significantly since the previous inspection but remain low. Apprenticeship success rates in most vocational areas have improved. Overall framework success rates in work-based learning increased from 13% in 2003/04 to 44% in 2005/06. In the same period the overall timely success rate improved from 7% to over 19%. College

in-year data for 2006/07 shows further increased timely success rates but it is too early to make firm judgements based on these data.

## Quality of education and training

How robust is the system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning? How consistent is the process and how is this quality assured?

- The system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning continues to be refined. The college acknowledge that the profile for teaching and learning during 2005/06 is a more realistic picture than the previous year's. All staff are observed either as part of their teacher training course or as part of the college quality assurance system. Information collected through these respective processes is not yet collated and used to its full potential to inform development.
- Advanced practitioners have completed a desk based review of some observation records to provide an element of moderation to judgements made. Overall the moderation process remains underdeveloped with too few joint observations to ensure consistency between observers. The college has recognised the need to improve the moderation process and to ensure greater consistency and reliability in the judgements made. Comprehensive plans exist to use external observers to train the internal observation team, to conduct joint observations and to moderate overall observation judgements.

What actions have been taken to improve the quality and consistency of tutorials? How effective are tutorials in providing, support and guidance to learners? How effective are individual learning plans (ILPs) in aiding learner progress?

- A useful 'Tutorial Programme Tutor Guide' has been produced that provides clear guidance to tutors on their role and responsibilities. The guide includes the key activities to be included within tutorials and is cross-referenced to 'Every Child Matters' themes. A structured scheme of work has been produced centrally for use in individual and group tutorials and this is supported by detailed notes and guidance about resources available. A range of key speakers have been organised by the college to provide external and informed input to the tutorial system.

- The effectiveness of tutorials is monitored by tutorial lesson observations and auditing of tutorial paperwork. However, feedback from many observations is too descriptive with little or no recorded areas for development. Where actions are recorded at observations they are not systematically reviewed at subsequent observations. A 'Tutorial Programme Progress Report' is prepared annually for the college executive and divisional reports are produced for the assistant director of each section but these have not yet led to sufficient action to improve further the tutorial provision or to share good practice.
- The overall quality of tutorials remains variable. The college has provided staff development sessions on a range of tutorial-related activities including agreeing individual learning plans, target setting and motivational interviewing. Many targets set for learners are not sufficiently challenging and not specific enough to drive progress. Individual learning plans are not sufficiently dynamic documents. They are not systematically updated and are not consistently used to promote differentiated teaching and learning.

How effective is the provision for key-skills across the college? Have the changes to the management and delivery of key skills improved performance?

- Key skill success rates improved during 2004/05 by 15.7%, however, overall success rates remain very low. Changes made to the management of key skills have started to impact with co-ordinators within each curriculum area and course managers taking more responsibility for key skills. However, the provision for key skills remains variable across the college and there is insufficient management co-ordination of key skills at whole college level.

## Leadership and management

Has the management of work-based learning improved?

- The management of work-based learning was unsatisfactory at the last inspection. Since then a new manager and three new liaison officers have been appointed. The college training agency 'Catalyst' now oversees the work of the Bedford College Apprentices (BCA) department which is responsible for work-based learning. The college has appropriately focused on improving its work-based learning provision. Communications are now much improved and are effective. Frequent meetings take place

between the BCA manager, liaison officers, vocational trainers, key skills co-ordinators and learners.

- Employers have been issued with comprehensive documentation to ensure they are fully informed of their responsibilities to the learner and the college. Employer involvement is now evident on most reviews where they contribute to the target setting process. Training officers carry out reviews in the workplace and are suitably informed of learners' progress through liaison with vocational tutors. However, target setting in reviews is weak. Learners' progress is closely monitored and frequently updated. Success rates have improved each year for the past three years. The college acknowledges that further work needs to be done in improving framework success rates, particularly timely success rates.

How effective are quality assurance systems in monitoring curriculum area performance? Have revised procedures improved the level of compliance?

- A revised quality assurance system has been introduced. Monitoring procedures are much improved. A new 'programme area MOT' provides an extremely thorough and detailed review of curriculum area performance. The review, based on the common inspection framework, is completed over a one week period by the quality team and includes a review of performance data, lesson observations, interviews with staff and learners and a review of documentation. Following the review a detailed action plan is produced which identifies and prioritises any remedial action required. However, based on the action plans of the reviews seen it is difficult to correlate the findings from the review with the self-assessment report for the curriculum areas. It is too early to measure the impact of the system in improving compliance or curriculum area performance.