



East Berkshire College

Better
education
and care

Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published April 2007	Provider reference 130604
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Introduction

East Berkshire College was inspected in January 2005. 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 the curriculum area of engineering and in work-based learning provision in hairdressing and in construction which were 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 curriculum area and WBL areas were re-inspected on 13 and 14 March 2005. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum/WBL areas	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Engineering provision including work-based learning	4 (4)	2 (3)
Construction work-based learning	4	3
Hairdressing work-based learning	4	3

Engineering

Context

Courses are offered in motor vehicle, engineering and welding. These include light and heavy vehicle maintenance and repair, vehicle body repair and refinishing, engineering production, performing engineering operations, mechanical manufacturing and engineering maintenance. At the time of inspection, there were 257 students, of whom 168 were motor vehicle, and 89 engineering students following college-based courses. There were 209 work-based learners on apprenticeships. Of the work-based learners, 185 were on motor vehicle programmes and 24 on engineering programmes. The college also offers provision in both motor vehicle and engineering for school pupils aged 14 to 16. The centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) status has been awarded in motor vehicle.

Strengths

- High success rates on most motor vehicle courses
- High success rates in 2005/06 on motor vehicle apprenticeship and engineering advanced apprenticeship frameworks
- Good teaching and learning
- Very good specialist resources in motor vehicle

- Good leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Low success rate on NVQ level 1 electrical/electronic course in 2005/06
- Low success rates in 2005/06 on motor vehicle advanced apprenticeship and engineering apprenticeship frameworks

Achievement and standards

Success rates are high on most motor vehicle courses. The success rate on NVQ level 1 electrical/electronics in 2005/06 was low at only 30%. Success rates were high in 2005/06 on motor vehicle apprenticeship and engineering advanced apprenticeship frameworks at 83% and 82% respectively. Success rates were low in 2005/06 on motor vehicle advanced apprenticeship and engineering apprenticeship frameworks at 30% and 33% respectively. In both cases, the low success rates were due to the poor retention of learners. For work-based learners recruited since the last inspection, retention rates are greatly improved. Learners' practical skills are well-developed. For example, some learners on work-based programmes service complex mechanical and high voltage electrical systems.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are good. The teaching of theory is now at least satisfactory in all lessons. Teachers make particularly good use of a mix of theory and practical work to underpin theory. Learner understanding is checked regularly. The quality of learners' work is monitored closely and helpful feedback is given. The initial assessment of learners is thorough. Any additional support requirements are identified quickly and appropriately provided. All learners' progress is reviewed frequently. The range of courses and NVQ units are carefully matched to the needs of learners and local industries. Personal support for learners is good.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. As a consequence of CoVE status motor vehicle teaching resources have been enhanced. New management information tracking systems have been implemented and are being used effectively to manage learner progress. Communication is good between teachers and assessors and aids learner progress. The retention of work-based learners has been much improved. The self-assessment report is generally accurate. Inspectors agreed with its judgements.

Construction work based learning

Context

There are 240 learners in construction work- based learning programmes. 69 are on advanced apprenticeships and 171 on apprenticeships. Learners attend a range of construction and building services programmes including wood, trowel and decorative occupations, electrical installation and heating and ventilation.

Strengths

- *Improved in-year learner success in 2006/07*
- *Improved key skills achievements*
- *Good tracking of learner progress*

Areas for improvement

- *Poor learner success rates in 2005/06*
- *Some poor practice in learner progress reviews*
- *Some underdeveloped employer links*

Achievement and standards

Learner success rates were low in 2005/06 at 21% for advanced apprenticeships and 45% for apprenticeships. These have now improved and in-year success for trainees starting in 2005/06 is 61% for advanced apprenticeships and 35% for apprenticeships. The standard of learners' practical work is good, and work placements offer opportunities to develop workplace skills. Learner attendance has improved and is now good. Learners are making good progress towards key skills, these are now front loaded from the commencement of the programme and in-year achievement is 70%. Initial assessment for learners has also improved to ensure they are on the most appropriate programme.

Quality of provision

The standard of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers use a wide range of resources and activities to maintain learner interest and support learning. Dedicated assessors routinely visit learners at the workplace and assess their work. These assessments are used to inform the learner progress review and set targets, however, whilst targets are set these are often not sufficiently specific or measurable to enable learners make good progress. Some learners are able to access assessment on demand where they are working on unusual or bespoke projects at work. Employers value the training learners receive, however, some employers are not sufficiently informed about the content of training programmes to enable them support learners at work. Learners feel particularly well supported by tutors, assessors, review staff and their employers.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. A newly appointed manager has made good progress in implementing the post inspection action plan. A new tracking system has been implemented to improve the monitoring of learner progress. Equality and diversity are identified in learner progress reviews, however, this is often poorly promoted and targets do not challenge learners understanding. There is good observation of health and safety both on and off the job, however learner progress reviews do not test learners understanding of health and safety in the workplace.

Hairdressing work based learning

Context

The college offers both apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships within Hairdressing work-based learning. At the time of inspection, there were 27 apprentices and 7 advanced apprentices. The college places learners in salons in the Berkshire area.

Strengths

- *Significant management action to improve work-based learning*
- *Good communication and teamwork for the benefit of learners*
- *Much improved delivery of key skills*

Areas for improvement

- *Poor review practises*
- *Insufficient monitoring and quality assurance of training in the workplace*
- *Missed opportunities for assessing learners*

Achievement and standards

The overall success rate for apprentices in 2005/06 is around 60% overall and timely achievement is 57% both of which are satisfactory and above the national average for apprenticeships. The overall rate is a significant improvement from 21% overall in 2004/05. There are low numbers of advanced apprentices and they have poor success rates with only one learner out of eleven achieving the full framework in the last 3 years. Current learners demonstrate a good level of skill for the amount of time that they have been on the programme. Teachers give satisfactory feedback on marked work.

Quality of provision

The quality of provision is satisfactory. There is much improved delivery of key skills and the learner support given in key skills lessons is satisfactory. Employers are aware of the importance of key skills for framework completion. The college has purchased laptop computers which are used to facilitate completion of occupationally relevant assignments. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Targets set during the learner review process are not sufficiently specific or measurable and jargon is used. Equal opportunities, diversity and health and safety are not reinforced sufficiently at review. Although the assessment process is satisfactory there are missed opportunities for assessing learners. None of the salons used by the college have salon based assessors. In college sessions the college offers insufficient opportunities for learners to practise on clients.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The significant management action taken to improve work-based learning is starting to impact. There is good communication and teamwork for the benefit of learners. Staff meet formally and informally on a regular basis. Salons are given an overview of the college training programme. Employer engagement has improved through employer evenings and competitions. There is insufficient monitoring and quality assurance of training in the workplace; the review process is not observed in the workplace. Some salons do not offer regular structured training in the salons and this has not been identified by the college in its self assessment report

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: East Berkshire College

Date of visit: 13 and 14 March 2007

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

Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 and adults have risen steadily over the 3 year period to 2004/05, however in 2005/06 the adult success rate has declined and the success rate for young learners has slowed. What does analysis of college performance report (CPR) data for 2005/6 show by level and subject sector area?

- Success rates of learners aged 16 to 18 are around national averages on long courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. This is a slight improvement. Success rates for adult learners remain below the national average at level 1. At level 2 the success rate has fallen to below the national average because retention has fallen. At level 3 the retention rate has fallen while the achievement rate has risen and the success rate is around the national average.

What strategies are in place to improve adult success rate?

- There is good analysis of course performance by the management team including validation panels for self assessment and course 'MOT' panels at which managers scrutinise the outcomes of each course and agree appropriate action if there is underperformance. As a result specific improvement strategies have been agreed with curriculum leaders which will impact on both adult and young students' success. Additionally the college has instigated a range of strategies to improve attendance and retention of students of all ages. These have been successful and in-year attendance and retention are both higher than in previous years.

Overall success rates in work-based learning have risen sharply in 2005/06. What does analysis of provider performance report (PPR) data show by level and subject sector area?

- Overall success rates in apprenticeships have risen sharply and are now at or above the national average except in construction. In year achievement suggests that this will also meet its target in 2006/07. However for advanced apprenticeships improvements to programmes have yet to fully impact on success rates. Construction and motor vehicle timely success rates are low. In hairdressing, however both the overall and timely success rates have improved, and almost all apprentices who achieve their NVQ also achieve a framework. The college is confident that the improving trends will be maintained and this is evidenced through monitoring data.

What impact have changes in work based learning made to achievements on longer apprenticeships?

- Procedures to monitor attendance have been tightened. Retention has improved and is good on all programmes. Measures to accelerate progress are beginning to have a noticeable effect for instance in early achievement of key skills. Greater flexibility through online testing gives learners more chances to succeed. Stepped accreditation and more specific initial assessment are helping staff to plan programmes better so that learners can achieve. Other factors identified through effective analysis of trainee progress have been dealt with through enhanced support.

Quality of education and training

A major objective in the college self assessment report is improvement in the capacity to respond to employer need? What action is being taken and how successful is this college in meeting its targets?

- The business development unit created in 2005 is now fully operational. The consistent approach to employer contact is well coordinated across the college using a new database. Standardised procedures and protocols are in place. The college has built on existing relationships as well as identifying a considerable number of new opportunities to expand the offer to employers. For instance, innovative projects provide training for low skilled workers with local authorities and large employers. Feedback from employers is constantly used to improve the offer. Train to Gain provision is on track after a slow start. The college is a lead partner within an established consortium which has a newly negotiated common

approach and well defined protocols. Good partnership arrangements provide a one stop shop for employers. However some employers with apprentices identified that they have insufficient understanding of the content of their trainees' learning programmes.

The level of participation and learner achievement in key skills has improved considerably in 2005/06. How has this improvement been brought about and is this success consistent across curriculum areas for all learners?

- Key skills success rates are very high and are continuing to rise. Good contextualised projects engage learners. Good centralised support for curriculum staff is flexible in its approach and learning and assessment is differentiated well to reflect learner needs and staff capabilities. New arrangements to share good practice and pool materials through the virtual learning environment (VLE) are appreciated by staff and learners alike. In work based learning many strategies are having a noticeable effect. Early introduction and testing motivates learners and assignments are clearly cross referenced to alert learners and staff to opportunities to accredit their skills. Monitoring is rigorous and effective.

The previous annual assessment report identified positive action in learner target setting and individual action planning. How effective is this both for full time learners and apprentices?

- A range of actions has been taken since the last inspection to raise the profile of target setting and individual action planning for all students. There is now a college policy and procedure and a programme of embedding across the college. Each programme has an agreed process appropriate to the level and mode of attendance of learners. Evidence from full time and part time learners confirms the college's view that significant progress has been made in this area.
- Comprehensive systems monitor progress in work-based learning (WBL) with frequent and rigorous checks and clearly flagged risks that enable early intervention to resolve issues. Regular reviews are centrally recorded and targets are set and monitored. However some practice in reviews in hairdressing and construction is poor. Motor vehicle targets are very clear, but in other sectors the college recognises that they are not specific. Equality of opportunity and health and safety are not adequately promoted through these reviews.

Leadership and management

The college has put in place a number of measures to bring about a faster rate of improvement in achievement and standards. How effective are these judged to be?

- The principal and senior management team set a clear direction for quality improvement. The quality assurance system is robust and quality issues are identified through a variety of means. Actions agreed are appropriate and closely monitored. Student achievement is closely monitored. Challenging targets are set and these are well understood within the college. The publication of length and level adjusted benchmarks has resulted in more stringent achievement targets being set in order to bring about a faster rate of improvement in achievement and standards.
- Actions have been agreed across the college and within each curriculum area to raise achievement and standards. There is a stronger focus on attendance and retention, the curriculum offer has been re-engineered in some areas, and there is extensive and targeted continuing professional development. Early indications and in year data suggest that these have been successful and improved achievements are predicted for 2006/07.

At the last inspection the quality of management of work based learning was judged to be poor. The previous annual assessment visit noted significant improvements. Have these improvements impacted on the quality of provision of work based learning?

- Since the last inspection WBL has a more prominent profile in strategic planning. Curriculum staff have clear accountability. Many actions to improve are now having demonstrable impact. Communication is good and a clear quality assurance framework ensures that staff and learners are fully aware of progress and motivate learners to succeed. Initial assessment and support for learners have improved so that all are on appropriate programmes. New and effective measures to monitor and record progress have been introduced. Guidance for college staff and employers has been developed. However learning in the workplace is not quality assured and the visibility of work based learning in curriculum SARs is poor.

The previous annual assessment visit identified a renewed emphasis on teaching and learning. Has this impacted on the quality of teaching and learning across the college?

- The systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning have been improved since the last inspection. All teaching staff are formally observed and graded by a member of the quality improvement team over a two

year period and an action plan agreed. Additionally more frequent observations are conducted by the line manager and improvement is monitored. Targeted action is agreed if graded observations are less than good. The profile of lessons through the college's lesson observation scheme shows incremental improvement and there are now very few unsatisfactory sessions. Through joint observations inspectors judge the quality of monitoring to be good. The college has increased the use of peer observation and sharing of good practice in order to improve lessons further and increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons. Each curriculum area is subject to an annual internal inspection which assesses teaching and learning through a broader range of measures. This informs self assessment grading and validation.

How effective has the college been in post inspection improvement planning?

- The college agreed a range of targeted improvement strategies following the last inspection. These have been successful. All areas which were judged inadequate at the last inspection have improved and are now judged satisfactory or better. Effective action has taken place on all cross college areas requiring improvement at the last inspection.

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

Since the previous annual assessment visit the college has successfully opened a new campus in Windsor. This was completed on time with new students starting their course in September 2006.

The college has decided to close the Maidenhead campus in July 2007 and has been involved in partnership discussion to ensure that the needs of existing and future students are met. Provision will either be provided by a neighbouring education provider or will continue to be offered by East Berkshire College in alternative accommodation.