



Bury College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published March 2007	Provider reference 130498
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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Bury College
Type of college:	Tertiary college
Principal:	Mrs Luran Chatburn
Address of college:	Market Street Bury Greater Manchester BL9 0BG
Telephone number:	0161 280 8280
Fax number:	0161 280 8228
Chair of governors:	Mr Fred Bowen
Unique reference number:	130498
Name of lead inspector:	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins, HMI
Dates of inspection:	5-9 February 2007

Background of the organisation

1. Bury College is a large tertiary college situated in Bury town centre. The college mission is to 'develop individual potential, inspire excellence and promote prosperity through knowledge'. The majority of enrolments are by learners aged 16-18. At the time of inspection there were 3,600 learners aged 16-18 and 2,097 aged 19 or over attending the college. Most learners aged 19 or over study on a part-time basis.
2. Bury has a population of just over 182,000. It is one of the more affluent boroughs of Greater Manchester, although there are pockets of deprivation, particularly in east Bury. Unemployment is relatively low. The area includes a Roman Catholic sixth form college, two independent grammar schools and one high school sixth form. Educational achievement in Bury is relatively high; in 2006, the percentage of school leavers who achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was just above the national average.
3. A majority of the college's learners resides in Bury, with around 40% travelling from outside the immediate area, including from Rochdale, Bolton, and north Manchester. Some 14% of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds; double that of the local community. There are 553 learners following apprenticeship programmes. The college links with 45 local schools and over 500 Year 10 and Year 11 pupils from 10 local schools study courses at the college.
4. The college makes provision in all 15 sector subject areas (SSAs). It has two satellite centres for employer-based training in Bury and Bolton and provides apprenticeship programmes in 16 occupational areas. In addition, part-time courses are offered at 30 community venues in and around the borough. The college has two Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in early years development and childcare, and in management skills and business services. The college was awarded learning and skills Beacon status in 2004.

Scope of the inspection

5. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visit; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: grade 1
Achievements and standards	Outstanding: grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: grade 1

Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning (WBL)

Good: grade 2

6. Achievements and standards are outstanding. There are consistently high and improving success rates across all levels for learners aged 16-18. Learners are set challenging targets and a significant proportion meets them successfully. For learners aged 19+ and for learners following apprenticeship programmes, achievements and standards are good and show strongly improving trends over three years. Success rates on a minority of programmes are low and some learners on a small proportion of courses do not make the progress expected of them. Most learners develop excellent levels of self-confidence.
7. The overall quality of provision is outstanding. It is good for work-based learning, where improvements have yet to impact on some learners' achievements. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned with a range of activities which are well matched to the needs of learners. The observation of teaching and learning is at the centre of the college's strategy for improvement. Learners are set clear targets which are rigorously monitored by tutors, although some individual action plans are insufficiently clear.
8. The range of provision, to meet the needs and interests of learners and the community, is outstanding. Opportunities for enrichment and curriculum enhancement activities are good. Partnership and engagement with local schools, employers and other agencies are excellent. The provision for learners aged 14-16 is highly effective. There are very good arrangements to ensure every young person matters.
9. Support and guidance are outstanding. Two innovative and very successful mentoring schemes help learners achieve their potential. Individual support is excellent. Pre-college advice and guidance for prospective learners is very good and progression advice is highly valued by learners. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. It engages with groups of learners who would not otherwise participate in education and there is strong monitoring of equality and diversity across the organisation.
10. Leadership and management are outstanding. Governors and managers at all levels have supported an unrelenting pursuit for excellence, which has been achieved over the past three years. The college's quality assurance framework has been instrumental in driving up standards. Overall, the college provides excellent value for money.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

11. The college demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve its provision for learners. The quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and have been very effective in contributing to continued improvement. Rigorous review and monitoring processes, together with swift intervention strategies, have ensured that success rates continue to rise for all age groups at all levels. Excellent use is made of data to set challenging targets for improvement. The college is successfully achieving these targets. The college self-assessment report accurately reflects the key strengths of the college. It is actively addressing improving value-added scores, work-based learning and key skills success rates.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

12. The college has made outstanding progress in addressing the issues raised at the last inspection. Success rates for adults at all levels have risen, and only at level 1 do they remain broadly in line with the national average. There has been a significant improvement in the success rates for work-based learning, particularly on some apprenticeship programmes. The college has significantly invested in, and improved the quality of, the main learning resource centre. There is now a rigorous analysis of learners' entry results which is used effectively to support learner progress and improve value-added scores.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- very high success rates for learners aged 16-18
- outstanding arrangements to ensure every young person matters
- good teaching and learning
- extensive range of programmes that meets the needs of learners and the community
- very strong partnership working and employer links
- highly effective provision for learners aged 14-16
- outstanding support and guidance for all learners
- strong promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity
- highly effective governance
- outstanding leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address

- success rates and progress made by learners on a small proportion of courses
- the relatively low proportion of outstanding teaching and learning.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Outstanding: grade 1

Contributory grades:

19+ provision

Good: grade 2

Work-based learning (WBL)

Good: grade 2

13. The college's self-assessment analyses learner performance in detail and accurately judges that for learners aged 16-18, the largest proportion of the college's provision, achievements and standards are outstanding. Learners are set challenging targets and a high proportion meet them successfully. Success rates across all levels are very high and show a strongly improving trend over the last three years. Success rates in GCSE and on all levels of vocational courses are significantly above the most recent national averages. Success rates on GCE A level courses have also continued to improve and are very high, although on AS level courses they remain in line with the national average. Learners aged 14-16, on fully- or partly-accredited programmes at the college, achieve exceptionally well.
14. For learners aged 19+ and for those following apprenticeship programmes, achievements and standards are good. There are improving success rates for 19+ learners on long courses over the last three years. In 2005/06, these were high at levels 2 and 3 and broadly in line with the national average at level 1. Framework success rates for apprentices have improved steadily from 2003/04 to 2005/06. In 2006, framework success rates were generally good with the exception of the low success rates for advanced apprentices in early years and apprentices in social care and hospitality. Train to Gain success rates are high.
15. Retention rates are generally high for learners aged 16-18, particularly those studying advanced level programmes. Retention rates for 19+ learners have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now broadly in line with national averages for similar colleges. Pass rates across all ages are generally very high.
16. The majority of learners make at least the progress expected of them and in some subjects learners make very good progress based on their prior attainment at GCSE. Many learners achieve high grades on their courses. However, in a small proportion of subjects and courses, some learners are not meeting their expected grade outcomes.
17. The college analyses comprehensively the performance of different learner groups. There is no distinct underperformance by gender or ethnicity. Most minority ethnic groups achieve very well.

18. Success rates on key skills have improved noticeably over the last two years and were high in 2005/06 at levels 1 and 2. However, at level 3, key skills achievement, although improved, remains low.
19. Learners thoroughly enjoy their courses and their achievement is widely celebrated. The standard of learners' written and practical work is good. Some individuals produce work of outstanding quality. Most learners develop excellent levels of self-confidence and demonstrate good team-working skills. Learners' vocational skills are developed very effectively through a wide range of work experience and apprenticeships. This, along with high progression rates both within the college and to higher education or employment, contributes very effectively to learners' future economic wellbeing.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning (WBL)

Good: grade 2

20. The quality of provision is outstanding overall and good in work-based learning, where it has yet to impact on some learners' achievements.
21. Inspectors agree with the college that the quality of teaching and learning overall is good. Lessons are prepared thoroughly with detailed schemes of work and lesson plans which match the needs of learners well. Key skills are developed in vocationally-relevant contexts. Relationships between teachers and learners are good and classroom management is particularly good. The teachers' implementation of the college's 'hard starts and soft finishes' policy has improved punctuality. Learners are enthusiastic and work diligently to achieve the lesson objectives. In some curriculum areas, teaching and learning are satisfactory. The college has rigorously monitored teaching and learning through its lesson observation process. Developmental observations which are not graded are an important part of the strategy to improve teaching and learning. Advanced practitioners and learning coaches provide very good support for teachers.
22. Assessment, internal verification and moderation are well organised. The best assignments and lessons are carefully planned to meet the assessment criteria at different levels. This has improved the learners' achievement of high grades on some courses. Marking is regular, but some learners receive insufficient information on what they can do to improve. Initial assessment of learners includes written exercises to assess literacy, but there is no initial assessment of numeracy for some courses.
23. All learners are set targets based on their prior achievements, expressed as minimum acceptable grades. Targets and learner performance are monitored regularly by tutors. Tutors develop action plans with learners but some of

these lack clear deadlines, specific outcomes and longer-term actions. Few targets are revised as a result of individual learner circumstances or performance at college and work.

24. The quality of learning resources, including information and learning technology (ILT), is good. Most teachers make effective use of new technologies to support learning. The virtual learning environment is well used, but ILT is not always used to its full potential in lessons. Parents and employers speak very positively about the information they receive on the progress of learners.
25. The college provides an outstanding range of provision, which meets the needs and interests of learners and the community. This includes a wide choice of vocational, academic, apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. The management CoVE, in particular, has been successful in attracting adult learners. Progression routes in most areas are good. The college is highly responsive to the needs of under-represented and vulnerable groups such as pupils facing exclusion, teenage mothers and Asian women's groups in Bury. The college has strong partnerships with local schools and other providers. Last year, around 60% of learners aged 14-16 successfully progressed to courses at this college alone. Its approach to social and educational inclusion is outstanding.
26. The range and take up of enrichment and curriculum enhancement activities are good. There are excellent opportunities for learners to contribute to the college and community. Learners can devise and run their own enrichment activity; for example, one learner successfully runs a 'circus skills' programme. Learners have a strong voice in the college through the student action group, chaired by the student governor, and actively participate on a number of key college sub-committees. Learners feel very safe in and around the college sites and are encouraged to pursue healthy lifestyles.
27. The college has excellent strategic links with employers through the local strategic partnership and employer networks. The business solutions department assists local employers to identify their business training needs and advises on available funding and training, including skills for life training for employees.
28. Support and guidance are outstanding. Support is comprehensive and includes excellent pastoral support through group and individual tutorials and access to counselling, advice and other forms of support through student services. Additional support needs are effectively identified and high quality individual support for all learners, including those with specific or complex learning difficulties and disabilities, is put swiftly into place. There are two innovative and very successful mentoring schemes. 'Mentoring for excellence', to help high achievers reach their full potential, has been further developed since the last inspection, and 'mentoring for success' has been recently introduced for those learners at risk of under-achievement. Learning and student support are

seamless and well managed; self-assessment is effectively used to review their impact.

29. Course information is attractively presented and actively promotes equality and diversity and progression routes, and includes case studies of inspirational role models. The college's 'best for you' policy ensures that learners take the courses which are best suited to their needs, which may involve referring learners to other organisations. Initiatives include successful and well received annual careers events for local school children and their parents. Advice and guidance are excellent. Progression advice for learners at the end of their courses is individual, well organised and highly valued by learners.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

Work-based learning (WBL)

Good: grade 2

30. Leadership and management are outstanding. Since the last inspection, the college has continued to improve success rates at all levels and for all age groups, with the overall long course success rate now in the top 10% of colleges nationally. The principal's strategic pursuit of excellence in all aspects of college life permeates the whole college. The senior management team has high expectations for all staff and learners. Staff are consulted widely on the college's strategic direction and the values which underpin this. There is a very effective and embedded culture of continuous improvement, with governors and managers setting challenging targets to maintain or achieve excellence through rigorous quality assurance and business review processes. High quality management information is readily accessible to all staff and this is used effectively to closely monitor performance and to intervene in a timely manner. The revised performance management system focuses on targeting improvements in teaching and learning.
31. The quality assurance framework has been instrumental in driving up standards. The self-assessment report is very comprehensive and is supported by measurable targets for improvement at curriculum level; though some of the links between curriculum self-assessments and the summative self-assessment are not explicit.
32. The management of work-based learning is good overall. There are some high success rates and these have risen steadily over the last three years. Effective strategies are in place to continue improvements. Train to Gain has been implemented very effectively and has high success rates. Links with partner schools, employers and community organisations are extensive and the college is held in high regard by the local community.
33. Governance is very effective. Governors closely scrutinise underperforming courses and monitor management actions to improve performance. They play an active role in the validation of the self-assessment process. The response to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special

Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002, has been excellent. Governors closely monitor implementation plans and the performance of learners by ethnicity. Success rates for learners of Pakistani origin, the largest ethnic minority group in the college, are consistently very high.

34. Child protection monitoring processes are thorough and all staff and governors have had comprehensive training. There is very strong promotion of, and commitment to, equality and diversity.
35. The college has made significant investment recently to improve the learning facilities for learners. Resources are good, with some excellent specialist facilities. Learner access to information technology (IT) facilities is particularly good. The college's finances are well managed and the college has been in the LSC's strongest financial category since 1995. With high and rising success rates, rigorous deployment and monitoring of resources and an above average class size, the college offers excellent value for money.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2004 to 2006, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	03/04	821	64	60	4	1,916	50	59	-9
	04/05	974	74	64	10	1,009	56	62	-6
	05/06	1061	78	*	*	862	59	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	103	77	65	12	0	0	0	0
	04/05	105	82	68	14	1	100	58	42
	05/06	83	82	*	*	2	100	*	*
NVQs	03/04	89	53	61	-8	15	73	62	11
	04/05	81	69	67	2	20	50	67	-17
	05/06	80	83	*	*	8	75	*	*
Other	03/04	629	64	60	4	1,901	49	59	-10
	04/05	788	74	64	10	988	56	61	-5
	05/06	894	77	*	*	852	58	*	*

* The 2005/06 national rates were not released at the time of this inspection

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2004 to 2006, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	03/04	1,132	65	56	9	1,285	57	54	3
	04/05	1,470	70	61	9	1,277	63	59	4
	05/06	1,404	74	*	*	896	65	*	*
GCSEs	03/04	286	75	61	14	127	55	59	-4
	04/05	327	75	64	11	149	64	62	2
	05/06	319	71	*	*	78	76	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	312	72	63	9	17	71	57	14
	04/05	299	80	67	13	24	67	70	-3
	05/06	257	82	*	*	13	62	*	*
NVQs	03/04	214	54	52	2	227	48	54	-6
	04/05	264	62	57	5	291	59	60	-1
	05/06	225	67			294	68		
Other	03/04	320	56	54	2	914	59	53	6
	04/05	580	66	60	6	813	65	59	6
	05/06	603	75	*	*	511	62	*	*

* The 2005/06 national rates were not released at the time of this inspection

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age 2004 to 2006, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	03/04	4,962	70	64	6	957	57	54	3
	04/05	5,133	74	68	6	951	63	57	6
	05/06	5,403	74	*	*	895	66	*	*
A/A2 Levels	03/04	1,350	86	84	2	58	76	66	10
	04/05	1,144	91	86	5	81	91	69	22
	05/06	1,233	93	*	*	72	82	*	*
AS Levels	03/04	2,806	63	63	0	113	56	50	6
	04/05	2,959	68	66	2	91	64	52	12
	05/06	3,081	67	*	*	118	58	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	457	74	52	22	28	71	44	27
	04/05	470	79	60	19	36	81	53	28
	05/06	261	77	*	*	24	71	*	*
NVQs	03/04	34	65	54	11	290	53	47	6
	04/05	29	76	62	14	169	54	54	0
	05/06	40	85	*	*	188	54	*	*
Other	03/04	315	59	56	3	468	57	56	1
	04/05	531	65	60	5	574	60	58	2
	05/06	784	68	*	*	493	70	*	*

* The 2005/06 national rates were not released at the time of this inspection

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2004 to 2006.

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	266	47	32	68	47
	Advanced	102	34	31	54	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	241	44	38	60	50
	Advanced	100	34	34	67	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	282	63	53	66	58
	Advanced	192	44	44	63	54

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	228	26	16	43	24
	Advanced	103	30	19	47	30
2004/05	Apprenticeship	245	38	22	47	29
	Advanced	94	34	21	57	31
2005/06	Apprenticeship	277	34	33	36	38
	Advanced	221	22	27	34	34

* The number of learners who planned to complete their learning programme in the given year

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'