



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



## RE-INSPECTION OF BARKING COLLEGE

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### OUTCOME OF RE-INSPECTION

The overall provision in construction work-based learning is now **good**.

The overall provision in engineering is now **satisfactory**.

### BACKGROUND

Barking College was inspected in March 2003. 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 construction work-based learning and in engineering which were found to be less than satisfactory.

Ofsted and the ALI have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum and/or work-based learning (WBL) areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or where leadership and management are unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory leadership and management, or less than satisfactory provision in solely WBL, inspectors from Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of the less than satisfactory areas. As a result of the re-inspection monitoring visits, inspectors may judge that previously less than satisfactory areas of provision, or leadership and management, are now satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Where leadership and management are satisfactory, but there is curriculum provision that is less than satisfactory, there will be no monitoring visits. All less than satisfactory provision will be re-inspected, normally during one week, within two years of the original inspection.

If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum or WBL area or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grade for the area that continues to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection within the cycle. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and the reasons why.

### **Date of the re-inspection**

In accordance with the above procedures, re-inspection of construction work-based learning and of engineering took place during the week of 14-18 March 2005.

### **Construction work-based learning**

In the March 2003 inspection, the quality of the work-based learning in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses relating to work-based learning were identified in the inspection report:

#### **Strengths**

- high levels of attainment in practical sessions
- good use of demonstrations in construction craft lessons
- good specialist resources.

#### **Weaknesses**

- poor achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework
- unsatisfactory teaching in some theory lessons
- ineffective management of work-based learning.

Following the re-inspection, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses relating to work-based learning construction. The overall provision in this area is now **good**.

The number of apprentices on work-based learning has increased significantly since the original inspection. At the time of the re-inspection there were 122 apprentices, 81 of whom were following the level 2 plumbing framework. The provision overall comprises level 2 and 3 frameworks in

plumbing, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, plastering and brickwork

Retention rates for level 2 and level 3 frameworks have increased significantly since the original inspection and are now good at 95 per cent and 100 per cent respectively. Most apprentices who complete their courses achieve their frameworks and do so within their planned training period. Since 2001, 9 out of 12 apprentices who have completed their courses have achieved their framework. If this trend continues for those apprentices starting their course in 2003, the achievement for the frameworks at level 2 is likely to be significantly higher than the national average.

Teaching and learning in college lessons are now satisfactory or better. Opportunities for the development of practical skills in the workshop are good. Good work placements for apprentices maximise the development of their practical skills in an industrial setting. Apprentices' portfolios are enhanced by extensive use of work-based evidence, which is obtained through the collaboration of college staff and employers. Apprentices have good assessment opportunities in the workplace and assessment evidence includes photographs of completed work. However, the college does not give sufficient recognition to apprentices' prior experience to enable them to achieve their qualification at the earliest opportunity.

Monitoring of apprentices' progress is good and ensures that they achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales. Progress reviews are carried out regularly. Tutors and assessors maintain good records of progress and apprentices and employers both receive a copy of the records. The development of apprentices' key skills has improved and is now satisfactory. Some short-term individual targets set for apprentices, however, are not sufficiently challenging.

The support for apprentices in the workplace is good from both the college and employers, and apprentices appreciate this. Employers provide apprentices with a variety of experiences to ensure that they cover the full range of competences required for their qualifications. Off-the-job training takes place within the Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) and all workshops are well resourced with industry standard equipment. Health and safety are strongly emphasised in all aspects of college-based training but are less rigorously enforced in the workplace. The increased use of work-based assessment and evidence collection enables apprentices to complete their qualifications successfully. Assessment plans do not, however, include target assessment dates to assist with the measurement of apprentices' overall progress.

Following recent organisational changes the management of work-based learning has significantly improved and is now effective. Employers value the support they receive from the college and are engaged in the training programme from the start. The college keeps them fully informed of apprentices' attendance, punctuality and progress. As a result of feedback from employers, the college is planning to extend the range of programmes to include heating engineering.

## **Engineering**

In the March 2003 inspection, the quality of provision in engineering was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses for this area were identified in the inspection report:

### **Strengths**

- outstanding pass rates on the GNVQ advanced courses offered at the CoVE

- effective use of ILT in motor vehicle lessons
- good motor vehicle and electronics resources.

### **Weaknesses**

- very poor pass rates on level 1 motor vehicle and engineering programmes
- unsatisfactory teaching in too many lessons
- poor engineering workshop facilities on the main site
- inadequate attention to health and safety in engineering workshops on the main site
- many unsatisfactory aspects of curriculum management.

Following the re-inspection, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses. The overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

Pass rates are satisfactory or better on most courses. The best achievements are on the motor vehicle programmes where pass rates have improved to above the national average. Pass rates on the NVQ1 performing engineering operations have, however, declined to well below the national average. Most retention rates are at least satisfactory with the exception of those for the Institute of the Motor Industry motor vehicle programme.

Much teaching is good or better. In practical lessons, students work with interest through planned programmes of practical tasks, progressively developing their confidence and engineering skills. In theory lessons, most teachers explain complex engineering concepts simply and clearly with the aid of diagrams and ILT resources. In the most effective lessons, high levels of student activity maintain the students' interest and promote learning. In one motor vehicle lesson on transmission, learners were involved from the start, fully contributing to a discussion on power flow through the gearbox. Learning was then further developed and checked through a class exercise in which all learners demonstrated a good understanding of the topic. In the weaker lessons, students sit for too long listening to the teacher and become bored and disinterested. In some lessons teachers have not planned sufficiently to meet the needs of all learners.

The college has made significant improvements to engineering resources with the move to a new purpose built technology centre. The centre includes mechanical and motor vehicle engineering

workshops and a suite of well appointed classrooms. Resources for motor vehicle are extensive and are of a very good standard. The mechanical workshop is also well equipped and the college has approved plans for further updating to more closely meet industrial standards. Classrooms are furnished to a good standard and all are fitted with an interactive electronic whiteboard and PC workstations. The layout of some of the classrooms is not suitable for the teaching of theory lessons.

The range of programmes offered is satisfactory. Learners have a good choice of programmes at level 1 and can progress through to level 3 and above. Teachers do not, however, make sufficient use of initial assessment and information on prior achievement in planning students' key skills programmes. The use of individual learning plans is inadequate. Learning plans only identify the overall qualification aim as the learning outcome and fail to set any short-term learning targets for measurement of progress. Teachers do not rigorously evaluate students' performance against targets at progress reviews or tutorials, and action plans from reviews are not always challenging enough to lead to improvements.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Pass rates on most courses are improving and managers have taken effective action to address weaknesses in teaching and learning. Self-assessment is evaluative and accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses. Managers do not, however, sufficiently analyse trends in performance and do not make sufficient use of achievement and retention data for target setting at curriculum level. Strong links with local employers have led to major improvements in the engineering facilities. A leading local motor vehicle manufacturer has provided financial assistance, vehicles and equipment to significantly expand and improve the engineering resources. This partnership between employer and college has also resulted in substantial additional funds from the local regional development agency to further develop the engineering facilities.

There will be no further re-inspection of the college because there are no remaining unsatisfactory areas.