

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Brooksby Melton College

Date of visit: 21 June 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

What actions have been taken to improve key skills success rates and the management of key skills? Have these actions had any measurable impact? What are the latest key skills success rates by key skill and by level? Are they different for different groups of learners (gender, age and black and minority ethnic background)?

- Managers have piloted arrangements which include a clear allocation of time for a mixed model of delivery including the discrete teaching of the three key skills, and an enlarged key skills teaching team. Firm plans exist to introduce policies on skills for life and key skills in 2007/08, and to appoint three 'key skills champions'. Several of the key skills actions in the post inspection action plan are scheduled to occur in the next academic year. However, key skills' success rates are improving, albeit from a very low base. The overall key skills success rate has risen from 4% to 15% in the last two years and in the current year, the college predicts that the rate will rise to 45%. In 2005/06, females performed better than males in information technology at level 1, and learners aged 16-18 performed better than adults. There are too few learners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds for the data to be significant.

What is being done to improve the framework and timely completion success rates on apprenticeship programmes? What evidence is there that these actions are having a positive impact?

- The college has continued to implement a range of actions designed to improve achievement and standards in work-based learning. These include ensuring that staff apply entry criteria correctly and use initial assessment more effectively to place learners on the right level of course. In the last year managers have improved the monitoring of work-based learners' progress and the arrangements for observing assessment and reviews.

- Data for the last three years suggest that there have been significant improvements in the overall success rate. This has risen from 15% to 45% in the last two years and college data for 2006/07 indicate that the rate is 55% and may rise further by the end of the year. Actions to improve success rates in work-based learning are having a positive impact, particularly in the land-based engineering area.

Quality of education and training

What actions have been implemented to:

- cover thoroughly the Every Child Matters (ECM) topics and issues in group tutorials
- promote and encourage learners to adopt a healthy lifestyle regarding food, drink, exercise and smoking?
- Managers aim to change the delivery of group tutorials significantly through a new team of 10 learner mentors/coaches to replace the existing 50 tutors. These mentors will deliver a thorough and consistent approach to the delivery and integration of ECM topics in group tutorials.
- The college has purchased 'healthybites' to link all college computers used outside lessons to national topics on healthy lifestyles. The college can include its own messages and make links with its website. Managers wish to make more use of this facility and to produce their own materials on bullying and harassment.
- Refectory staff have reduced unhealthy and increased healthy food options. Drinks machines still contain unhealthy drinks and will do so until current contracts with suppliers end.
- The new learner liaison officer has initiated many improvements in sporting provision and learners' participation. The college intends to introduce a wider range of enrichment activities and to increase learners' involvement.
- Managers have decided that smoking will be banned from 1 July 2007 on all college premises and campuses. This policy will be difficult to enforce, given the nature of the Brooksby campus.

What impact does the internal lesson observation system have? Are all teachers observed at least once annually? Do the lesson observation outcomes inform appraisal and staff development? Does the college moderate the observation outcomes rigorously and ensure standardisation of the outcomes?

- The internal lesson observation team intends to observe all teachers at least once every year. In 2006/07, 11 teachers will not be observed due to exceptional and personal reasons and a further 3 are yet to be observed. Internal lesson observation outcomes inform appraisal and staff development. Areas for improvement in teaching and learning include assessment for learning, improved liaison between teachers and learning support staff and a more holistic consideration of learners' needs. Internal staff and external advisers moderate lesson observations and grades and any amendments usually raise the grade of the lesson. New advanced practitioners have had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The impact of the internal lesson observation system has been to:
 - increase learners' satisfaction with the quality of lessons
 - increase the importance teachers give to teaching and learning
 - raise the lesson observation profile compared with the previous year (although this is still low at approximately 50% good or better lessons and 50% satisfactory lessons)
 - increase staff development in key areas for improvement in teaching and learning
 - raise the numbers of teachers self-referring for assistance on teaching and learning
 - raise the expectations on teachers to be more accountable for the quality of their lessons

What is being done to improve the quality and the consistency of the tutorial programme and individual learners' target setting and action planning?

- Managers had concerns regarding the inconsistent implementation of group tutorial policies and procedures. After considerable discussion with staff, the college has decided to take significant action to remove the delivery of group and individual tutorials from teachers and to appoint a new team of learner mentors/coaches (as above). Managers have purchased 'profiler' to integrate learners' information and data electronically and to link to individual learning plans (ILPs), leading to improvements in consistency and transparency.
- The individual tutorial discussion has been useful and is well liked by learners, but recording of these meetings and target setting practices have been inconsistent. The learner mentors/coaches will be responsible for these tutorials and will liaise closely with subject specialists who will have a termly subject tutorial with learners. Individual tutorials will take

place four times a year. Internal surveys found that the quality of individual learning plans and the quality of formative feedback on assessments were inconsistent. Since inspection, managers have taken actions to address these concerns.

Leadership and management

What is the college's financial category? What is delaying the improvement in the college's financial position? What actions are in place to ensure full financial recovery?

- The college is in financial category C. It is well aware of the urgent need to reduce its costs in order to lower its operating deficit. The college has a significant amount of surplus space and this adds a financial burden of about £400,000 per annum. The accommodation strategy (see below) is therefore an important aspect of the college's financial recovery plan.
- The college is seeking to reduce the proportion of its income spent on pay from 63% to around 55%, and so managers are reviewing the college structure. Managers also have proposals to address the inherited pay differentials, which will incur short-term costs but eventually should lead to a reduction in staff costs.
- The college expects to meet the income target for its further education provision in 2006/07, but does not expect to meet its income targets for Train to Gain and work-based learning contracts. This is a matter of serious concern. Brooksby Natural Resources, however, is starting to provide income which could have a positive impact on the college's financial position.

What strategy does the college have to improve its accommodation? Why is the implementation of this strategy delayed?

- Progress in implementing a new accommodation strategy to address issues in the post-merger period has been slow. It has been affected by internal considerations as the college sought to rectify weaknesses, and external factors as the college awaited the outcomes of strategic reviews.
- An accommodation strategy submitted in July 2005 had to be withdrawn in order to comply with revised Learning and Skills Council (LSC) guidance. Further detailed work was put on hold pending the outcomes of the Leicestershire local authority's review of education in Melton Mowbray. The college's accommodation strategy has now been finalised and approved by governors. Its preferred option is to retain a presence in both Brooksby and Melton Mowbray with significant rebuilding and

redevelopment in both locations. The total value of the capital bid will be approximately £32 million. It will be considered by the full council of the LSC in July 2007.

How effective is the college's involvement in the area's 14-19 strategies and partnerships? What changes as a result to benefit young people?

- The college has been involved in the increased flexibility project for four years and approximately 200 learners aged 14-16 engage in vocational courses and benefit from facilities and resources that are unavailable elsewhere in the locality. They enjoy this provision and are mostly successful. A smaller number of learners follows motor vehicle courses and a GCSE manufacturing course. The college is the lead partner in two specialist diplomas in the Melton area and one in the Rutland area, due to start in September 2008.
- The college is involved in the 13/14-19 strategic partnership with the local learning and skills council and the city and county local authorities. The impact of this group has been more noticeable in the last six months. Barriers to increasing collaboration and partnership are being broken by smaller local groupings co-operating better and because of increasing trust between partners.