

Barking College

Inspection Report 30 April – 4 May 2007

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievements and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. Barking College is a general further education college whose main site is on the eastern boundary of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. The college's direct provision is delivered at six sites, including community-based centres, known as 'learning villages'. The college's mission is 'to prepare young people for meaningful working lives and to upskill those already in employment'.
2. In 2005/06, the college had 21,957 enrolments by 11,130 learners, with a roughly equal gender split. Some 43% of enrolments were from non-white ethnic groups. Around 8,300 learners were aged 19 or over, largely attending part-time courses. Approximately 2,500 learners aged 16-18 and 1,500 adults attended full-time. Some 3,000 enrolments are at the college's 'learning villages' and a further 5,300 enrolments are on courses offered by franchise partners. The college also has approximately 270 school age learners. The college directly manages programmes for around 150 modern apprentices, largely in construction crafts, but with a small number in motor vehicle engineering. It has a recent Train to Gain contract with the Essex LSC. The college has been awarded Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status in three subject areas: construction, domiciliary and residential care, and manufacturing and automotive engineering.
3. The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is at the centre of the Thames Gateway, the largest regeneration area in Europe, and considerable investment is planned over the next 20 years. The borough contains significant areas of disadvantage and has one of the poorest qualified workforces in London, as measured through levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy, vocational qualifications and the proportion of residents with degrees.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievements and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Good: contributory grade 2</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

4. Inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of provision to be good. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates have significantly improved since the last inspection, with rises in both pass and retention rates contributing to improvement. Overall long course success rates are now just above national averages and for the many adult learners are above national rates at each level. They are significantly above for learners aged 16-18, at level 1, and above at level 2. At level 3, whilst improved, they are still below the national average. Success rates in key skills and achievement of apprenticeship frameworks are both good. Learners achieve good or better standards in their work and make good progress. Their attendance is satisfactory.
5. Teaching and learning are good and are much improved since the last inspection. Learners work well and participate with enthusiasm in lessons. Teachers place a strong emphasis on the vocational relevance of subjects and use their professional experience to enliven teaching. Teachers often use information and learning technologies (ILT) well, although they are under-used in some subjects. Less effective teaching is characterised by insufficient attention to learners' individual needs and capacities. The assessment of learners' work is largely rigorous.
6. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good, as is its response to the needs and interests of learners. Local needs are met well, with ready access to a wide range of courses. The college engages very broadly with the wider community. Partnerships to widen participation, to improve employer engagement, and with local schools are outstanding. Learners with additional needs are particularly well supported. The proportion of enrolments from non-white ethnic groups is significantly higher than the proportion in the local population.
7. Guidance and support for learners are good. Comprehensive college policies on all aspects of support and guidance are well implemented. Additional learning support arrangements pay particular attention to meeting individual needs. Tutorial provision is satisfactory. The completion and use of individual learning plans require improvement.
8. Leadership and management are good. Managers set a clear and successful agenda for improvement. Quality improvement is good. Achievements, standards and teaching have significantly improved. Management

information is good and enables managers to plan and monitor effectively. The thorough self-assessment report is largely accurate. The college provides a safe environment and celebrates the diversity of its learners and staff. Financial management is good.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

9. The college demonstrates a good capacity to improve. Managers know what needs to be done to improve the quality of provision. Self-assessment is thorough and the report substantially accurate. Much provision is good or better, although the college judges provision in one subject sector area to be inadequate. Quality improvement arrangements are increasingly effective as data become more readily accessible and curriculum managers monitor provision more closely.

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

10. The college has taken good steps to promote improvement since the last inspection. Success rates have improved significantly, including for key skills and work-based learning. Success rates for 16-18 year olds at level 3 are not yet sufficiently improved. The management of work-based learning is now good. Teaching and learning are now good, although a small amount remains unsatisfactory. Some poor attendance is being tackled with vigour. Target setting and recording of progress for learners need further development. The college has a rigorous implementation plan to improve the coordination of 'Skills for Life' provision.

Key strengths

- extensive and highly effective community partnerships
- successful strategies for the provision of employment-related programmes
- good quality improvement since the last inspection
- high quality work-based learning
- the vocationally relevant teaching
- the successful drive for educational and social inclusion.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the further improvement of level 3 success rates for learners aged 16-18
- the further improvement of learners' attendance and punctuality
- the rigour of target-setting and monitoring of learners' progress.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

11. The achievements and standards of learners are good. The college has significantly improved success rates since the last inspection, with both rising pass and retention rates contributing to improvement. Overall long course success rates improved consistently between 2002/03 and 2005/06, from below national averages to just above. Long course success rates, at each level, for the many adult learners are all at or above national rates. For learners aged 16-18, at level 1, they are significantly above the national average and above at level 2. At level 3, they have improved since the last inspection, but are still below the national average. Retention rates on all long courses have steadily improved to around the national average, with higher retention of adult learners than of learners aged 16-18. Key skills success rates, at 66% overall, are now good, having improved consistently over the last three years.
12. Overall framework success rates for work-based learning apprenticeships are good and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Overall framework achievement was 57% in 2005/06 and 66% of learners achieved either the framework or an NVQ.
13. The standard of learners' work in lessons and in practical activities is good. In practical sessions for motor vehicle engineering and food production it is very good, with learners displaying excellent vocational skills.
14. Learners progress well both into employment and to other courses in the college. The progression of learners to higher education is improving; more learners are applying to university, and more applications are successful.
15. Learners' attendance is satisfactory and improving, although it is still low in some curriculum areas. Overall attendance for 2006/07, up to the time of the inspection, was 86%; it was highest in health and social care, and arts, media and publishing, and lowest in science and mathematics, and languages, literature and culture. Punctuality is also improving, but not consistently across the college.
16. The college successfully celebrates the achievements of learners. Learners' work is attractively displayed throughout the college and their achievements are recognised in college publications and at various awards ceremonies.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

17. Teaching and learning are good. Comprehensive and rigorous quality assurance, including the college's scheme of lesson observation, is leading to an improvement in the quality of lessons. The self-assessment report presents an accurate picture of key strengths and areas for improvement. The high profile given to teaching and learning is supported by a broad range of staff development and training activities.
18. Learners work well and participate with enthusiasm in lessons. Teachers place a strong emphasis on the vocational relevance of subjects and use their professional experience to enliven the topic being taught. Learners demonstrate high levels of practical competence. For example, engineering learners were observed by inspectors manufacturing and repairing motor vehicle body panels to an exemplary standard. Teachers use ILT more frequently, and in a greater variety of ways, to promote learning, both within lessons and through the college's virtual learning environment. However, the use of ILT is underdeveloped in some subjects.
19. As acknowledged by the college, less effective teaching is characterised by a lack of strategies to address learners' individual needs and capacities. Too many lessons begin without a planned activity to quickly focus the learners' attention. Poor punctuality detracts from the quality of learning in some areas.
20. Since the last inspection, the teaching of key skills has been successfully integrated into the main course of learners. This enables teachers to demonstrate the vocational relevance of key skills.
21. The assessment of learners' work is rigorous in most curriculum areas. Internal verification systems are robust and operate effectively. Most assessors provide valuable feedback to learners, with very helpful comments on how their work might be improved.
22. Learning support assistants work well in lessons to ensure that supported learners gain the maximum benefit from lessons. A well resourced learner support centre provides good support for learners with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
23. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. It is excellent in meeting local needs and ensuring that provision is readily accessible to all learners. It makes good use of community venues and franchised provision. The curriculum offers a broad and well structured

range of qualifications to enable progression within the college, to higher education or employment. The college has very good educationally and socially inclusive policies and practices that effectively widen participation.

24. Work-related learning for learners aged 14-16 is very effective. There are excellent close links with local schools and with the local authority. Initial information for learners and parents is good and staff are well prepared to cater for the different age groups.
25. Links with employers are highly productive and firmly embedded in college courses. The college has very effective partnerships with other training organisations and community groups.
26. The college encourages a wide range of enrichment activities. The extent to which learners take up these activities varies significantly. In some, but not all, departments the programme of activities is substantial and responsive to interests expressed by learners. In a few departments, learners also make a positive contribution to the community through voluntary activities.
27. The guidance of, and support for, learners are good. College policies on support and guidance comprehensively cover all phases of learners' progress through college and are well implemented. The full range of services is readily accessible to all learners, both on the main site and at community centres.
28. Good quality initial advice and guidance are promptly available through specialist support services staff. Learners have ample opportunities to discuss their choice of course with college staff before they enrol. There are well organised open days and popular taster days. Guidance services are particularly supportive to prospective learners from under-represented groups and learners with disabilities.
29. Additional learning support has significantly and effectively expanded since the last inspection. Individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed and learners have access to effective additional support throughout their studies. Working links between teachers, personal tutors and learning support services staff are improving, to the benefit of learners. Staff make effective interventions to refer learners to specialist help outside the college. Insufficient data are held to help the college to measure the effectiveness of its support packages.
30. Regular tutorial sessions are available in groups and for individual learners, although some learners do not sufficiently benefit from their tutorials. The

college has good arrangements for the provision of funds to help learners with personal support issues.

31. The college recognises that the completion and use of individual learning plans is inconsistent. Many targets contained within them lack precision and do not aid the tracking and monitoring of learners' progress. New internet based learning plans are currently being piloted.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

32. Leadership and management are good. The senior management team provide very effective strategic leadership and have developed outstanding local partnerships to widen participation and improve employer engagement. Communications are good. Staff and governors are fully consulted and involved in the college's planning processes, which reflect national and local priorities well. Success rates have increased significantly since the last inspection.
33. Quality improvement is good, with particularly effective use of management information to monitor learners' progress. Course targets are closely monitored and increasingly, team leaders effectively interrogate the data to improve the accuracy of annual course reviews. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. The rigour of the observation of teaching scheme has been improved by the involvement of external moderators. Much teaching and learning are good. More needs to be done in some curriculum areas to improve provision.
34. The college's response to equality and diversity is good. The college has a very diverse population. The campus is welcoming and friendly. Learners and staff feel safe. Staff, including security staff, strongly promote an ethos based on respect and tolerance, and whole college events celebrate diversity. Learners are clear about the behaviour expected of them, and recognise that discriminatory or anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated. Achievements are analysed by race, gender and disability, and action taken to explore reasons for variations in outcomes for different cohorts. The college has largely met its diversity targets and has successfully extended its provision to work with diverse community groups.
35. The college has responded appropriately to recent equalities legislation in its policy development. It meets its statutory requirements under race and

equality legislation and the Children Act 2004. Staff are trained in safeguarding and the college maintains a central record of CRB checks. However, sufficient updating of teachers about the implications of the legislation for their practice has yet to be implemented across the college.

36. The college has a comprehensive professional development programme, linked to performance reviews. Staff are well qualified. The workforce development strategy identifies the skills needed to fulfil the college's targets. There are robust recruitment and selection procedures. An effective mentoring scheme supports all black staff.
37. The college continues its long history of very sound financial management. Curriculum managers control budgets well. Governance is good, although there is a potential for conflict of interest in the current clerking arrangements. The accommodation strategy has resulted in incremental improvements to the site. Resources, in particular electronic resources, are good. The college provides good value for money.

Learner's 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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	03/04	1182	59	59	0	1764	47	59	-12
	04/05	1105	65	62	3	1793	53	61	-8
	05/06	1125	70			1507	60		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	54	74	64	10	11	82	52	30
	04/05	65	72	63	9	*			
	05/06	31	71			*			
NVQs	03/04	90	68	61	7	113	67	66	1
	04/05	130	58	66	-8	13	54	70	-16
	05/06	147	68			35	66		
Other	03/04	1037	57	59	-2	1640	46	68	-22
	04/05	949	66	61	5	1779	53	61	-8
	05/06	1034	71			1486	59		

* too few learners to be significant

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	<i>Diff</i>	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	03/04	1012	49	56	-7	1036	56	54	2
	04/05	949	56	60	-4	851	53	59	-6
	05/06	1005	64			1079	64		
GCSEs	03/04	236	50	64	-14	116	56	58	-2
	04/05	241	66	65	1	67	52	63	-11
	05/06	270	61			72	63		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	115	57	60	-3	22	68	56	12
	04/05	88	44	66	-22	23	30	63	-33
	05/06	11	82			15	53		
NVQs	03/04	102	35	50	-15	386	64	54	10
	04/05	106	66	56	10	224	77	62	15
	05/06	102	80			276	71		
Other	03/04	559	49	53	-4	512	49	53	-4
	04/05	515	51	58	-7	535	44	57	-13
	05/06	620	61			721	61		

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	1098	49	61	-12	1058	58	53	5
	04/05	1054	54	65	-11	1104	58	56	2
	05/06	1087	56			1073	60		
A/A2 Levels	03/04	81	79	85	-6	31	65	71	-6
	04/05	74	84	85	-1	20	50	74	-24
	05/06	116	64			43	81		
AS Levels	03/04	334	30	60	-30	42	31	50	-19
	04/05	345	52	63	-11	25	64	53	11
	05/06	380	46			50	52		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	194	51	50	1	47	60	43	17
	04/05	130	51	59	-8	29	55	53	2
	05/06	53	64			10	60		
NVQs	03/04	43	65	50	15	232	60	48	12
	04/05	45	36	53	-17	334	60	54	6
	05/06	64	50			292	64		
Other	03/04	446	56	51	5	707	59	54	5
	04/05	483	56	56	0	702	57	56	1
	05/06	524	64			684	58		

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college in 2004/05 and 2005/06

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2004/05	Apprenticeship	57	44	38	53	50
	Advanced	18	6	34	39	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	87	64	53	70	58
	Advanced	29	34	44	55	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 **
2004/05	Apprenticeship	61	10	22	13	29
	Advanced	16	6	21	25	31
2005/06	Apprenticeship	89	58	33	69	38
	Advanced	30	33	27	53	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'