

INSPECTION REPORT

Building Crafts College

15 April 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

If satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two-thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one-third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

INSPECTION REPORT

Building Crafts College

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The Building Crafts College (BCC) was founded by the Worshipful Company of Carpenters in 1893. The company retains ownership to this day with its members making up the governing board of BCC. The provider has 18 full-time staff, led by a director who is supported by a chief instructor.

2. BCC receives funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for its full-time diploma programmes in fine woodworking, stonemasonry, and part-time national vocational qualification (NVQ) provision. The college also delivers advanced apprenticeship and apprenticeship programmes on behalf of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), and inner London training. In addition, BCC delivers training in lead work, funded on a full cost-recovery basis.

3. Currently, BCC has 219 learners supported by public funding, working towards recognised qualifications in building crafts. Many learners attend on a full-time basis, often funding their own training or supported by grants. The college runs a schools link construction programme in a satellite centre and a small number of school children attend the college on a joinery taster programme. BCC achieved Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status in May 2004.

4. In 2001 BCC moved to new purpose-built premises in Stratford, East London. Stratford is in the borough of Newham which has a population of approximately 230,000, and is ranked as the third most deprived borough in Greater London. The area is undergoing significant regeneration, associated with the channel tunnel rail link. The borough has been earmarked as a location for the development of the Olympic village.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management are satisfactory. Quality improvement and equal opportunities are inadequate. Provision in construction overall is satisfactory.

6. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** BCC involved all staff for the first time in producing the latest self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the report. The report is mainly descriptive and not self-critical enough. Learners' and employers' views were not used in the report, and the process of self-assessment is not fully established as part of BCC's quality improvement process.

7. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** During a period of significant change and growth, BCC has maintained the quality of much of its provision, but current quality improvement arrangements do not ensure quality of provision throughout the college. New systems to gather accurate data about learners have been introduced recently. These systems have not been used effectively by the team

to monitor performance.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BUILDING CRAFTS COLLEGE:

- develop comprehensive formal quality improvement measures
- improve assessment practice in work-based learning
- use data in management decision-making
- promote better understanding of equality and diversity to staff, learners and employers
- maintain the very good standard of craft skills development

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		4
Quality improvement		4

Construction			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Construction crafts			
Apprenticeships for young people and OSAT	105	3	
Adult and community learning	114	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. Inspectors reported on and graded construction training. This included fine woodwork, stonemasonry, the part-time NVQ provision, and work-based learning in bench joinery and shopfitting. Provision in leadwork was not inspected. On-site assessment and training (OSAT), is a programme in which experienced workers currently working in the construction industry are visited by assessors at their place of work. This also formed part of the inspection. The inspection activity supports the judgements included in the key findings section of the report. Inspectors made one five-day visit to the college.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learners interviewed	30
Number of staff interviewed	29
Number of employers interviewed	18
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	8

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **The retention rates for apprenticeship programmes are very good.** Between 2001 and 2004, the rates were 100 per cent and 87 per cent respectively, on advanced apprenticeship and apprenticeship programmes.

10. **Achievement rates for diploma courses are very good.** For the fine woodwork programme in 2002, the rate was 100 per cent. Achievement rates for the stonemasonry diploma in 2002 and 2003 were both 100 per cent. Achievement rates on stonemasonry level 2 NVQ courses reached 100 per cent in 2002, but declined to 50 per cent in 2003.

11. **Retention rates on level 2 NVQ programmes are poor.** In level 2 NVQ carpentry and joinery, the retention rates for 2002 and 2003 were both 27 per cent and is currently 40 per cent. For level 2 NVQ stonemasonry, the retention rate in 2002 was only 6 per cent. BCC has recognised this problem and no longer offers evening-only NVQ provision. This provision was where retention problems were most significant.

12. **Learners make slow progress in completing apprenticeship frameworks.** Since 2001, only six learners have achieved the full apprenticeship framework. Administrative errors were made with the registration of learners for key skills and technical certificates.

13. **Learners acquire practical skills of an exceptionally good standard.** College test pieces are well chosen and relevant for developing learners' skills for their work in the industry. Stonemasonry apprentices learn traditional masonry skills, working with a mallet and chisel for all their test pieces in the college.

14. **Students' portfolios of evidence are good.** They contain thorough and detailed assessment plans and assessment documents. They also include a good range of diverse evidence such as assessor observations and narratives explaining photographic evidence. Comprehensive job knowledge documents are completed comprehensively and demonstrate good student knowledge and understanding.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Construction	1	10	0	1	12
Total	1	10	0	1	12

15. **A significant majority of teaching is good or better.** Most lessons are well planned and the learning outcomes shared and discussed with students. Good learning materials are produced by BCC. In the better lessons, teachers use an appropriate variety of teaching methods. Teachers engage learners well in relevant discussions, and include learners' prior learning experiences.

16. Courses meet the needs and interests of students and employers well. Learners are pleased with their progress and the skills that they develop with BCC. A good range of courses is offered, from level 2 NVQ to diploma level.

17. Learners receive very good additional learning support and personal support from tutors. Since 2004, all learners are initially assessed for literacy, numeracy and dyslexia. Results are formally analysed and a comprehensive and informative report is produced detailing support requirements.

18. **BCC has very good resources.** The building provides good accommodation, workshops are well equipped with up-to-date machinery and tools, and consumable materials. Stone and timber are of the highest quality. Staff have very good industrial experience and pass this on to learners.

19. **Good learning and personal support** is provided by BCC's instructors and a CITB training officer who visits learners in the workplace and at BCC to carry out formal reviews.

20. **BCC has effective links with employers.** Employers are well informed and involved in the apprenticeship training programmes.

21. **OSAT learners are following an inappropriate programme.** Bench joinery qualifications are offered to learners who are engaged mainly in site carpentry. Learners are unable to provide the range of evidence for these qualifications.

Leadership and management

22. **The development of specialist craft skills by learners is very good.** Through the college's good connections with specialist employers, learners are able to work on interesting and prestigious building projects, and the college actively promotes the participation of learners in national skill competitions.

23. **BCC collaborates very well with a very wide range of external organisation.** Staff and learners appreciate the opportunities to be involved with trade organisations. Graduates from the diploma courses are moving into prestigious jobs or establishing their own businesses.

24. The provider has successfully completed high-class building projects on its premises. It

now has excellent additional workshop space for woodwork, stone- and lead-working.

25. Strategies for the development of BCC are effectively communicated through management and training meetings, and the friendly atmosphere that is evident throughout the college. Staff readily discuss any issues or concerns at training meetings.

26. **BCC has introduced a number of programmes to widen participation.** It has recently developed programmes for 14-16 year olds, and introduced on-site training and assessment for experienced workers. A wide range of individuals now uses BCC for construction-related training.

27. **The development of processes to assure the quality of provision has not kept pace with the increase in the number of learners and resources at the college.** The weakness of no overall framework for quality assurance, identified in the previous inspection in 1998, has not been resolved.

28. BCC's management does not set or monitor performance targets. Management simply requests and receives information about learner numbers. Data is not analysed to enable management to make decisions. Staff are not involved in setting targets and no learner retention, achievement and progression targets are set.

29. The self-assessment report is descriptive and does not have sufficient judgements. Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified are statements and significant issues identified by the inspection process are not identified. Self-assessment is not used as a critical, integral part of managing BCC. The views of learners, employers and subcontractors are not used in the report.

30. Action plans do not set specific, realistic quantitative targets. Plans are not systematically monitored to ensure that all aspects are implemented on time.

31. **Staff and learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity is not developed sufficiently.** BCC does not arrange or deliver formal training. Senior management does not sufficiently recognise the need to continuously promote equality of opportunity.

32. **Assessment and internal verification practice is poor on OSAT programmes.** Evidence offered by candidates is not checked sufficiently for its validity. Questioning by assessors is not thorough enough to test candidates' understanding. Internal verification is satisfactory throughout the rest of the inspected areas.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- excellent links with external organisations
- very good skills development
- very good resources
- good widening of participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient understanding of equality and diversity by staff and learners
- inadequate quality improvement in new provision

Construction

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates on diploma courses
- very good retention rate on apprenticeship programmes
- exceptional skills development on apprenticeship and diploma programmes
- good off-the-job training
- very good resources
- very good standards of learning and personal support
- effective links with employers

Weaknesses

- poor retention rate on level 2 NVQ programmes
- slow progress in completing apprenticeship frameworks
- poor assessment practice on OSAT programme
- OSAT learners on inappropriate programmes

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BUILDING CRAFTS COLLEGE:

- 'cannot speak highly enough of the support and encouragement from instructors'
- 'standard of tools and materials and being able to use materials'
- 'everything about this is better than my last place'
- 'one to one teaching in the workshops'
- 'the staff are very helpful'
- 'I am amazed at the skill levels I have attained'
- 'this is a really nice place to come to everyday'
- 'the stone exercises I am doing are exactly what I am doing at work'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BUILDING CRAFTS COLLEGE COULD IMPROVE:

- 'the diploma wood course would be better if it was three years'
- 'can't think of anything'
- 'be nice to have more joinery at work but that is the nature of the contracts we do'
- 'time waiting for instructor in fine wood working'
- 'more help in finding jobs'

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

Terminology varies across the range of education and training settings covered by the *Common Inspection Framework*. The table below indicates the terms appropriate to Adult and Community Learning.

Single term used in the framework		Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning
Provider	Provider	Any organisation providing opportunities for adults to meet personal or collective goals through the experience of learning. Providers include local authorities, specialist designated institutions, voluntary and community sector organisations, regeneration partnerships and further education colleges.
Learner	Learner	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
Teacher/ Trainer	Tutor Mentor	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them
Learning goals	Main learning goals Secondary	Intended gains in skills, knowledge or understanding. Gains may be reflected in the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Or they may be reflected in the ability of learners to apply learning in contexts outside the learning situation, e.g. in the family, community, or workplace. Learners' main goal/s should be recorded on an individual or, in some cases, group learning plan. Plans should be revised as progress is made and new goals emerge. These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
Personal and learning skills	Personal and learning skills	These include being able to study independently, willingness to collaborate with others, and readiness to take up another opportunity for education or training.

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

Relating the term to Adult Community Learning	
Unanticipated or unintended learning outcome	Adults often experience unanticipated gains as a result of being involved in learning. These include improved self-esteem, greater self-confidence and a growing sense of belonging to a community. Gains of this kind should be acknowledged and recorded in any record of achievement.
Subject-based programme	A programme organised around body of knowledge, e.g. the structure and usage of the French language or ceramic glazing techniques. Students could be expected to progress from one aspect of the subject to another, to grasp increasingly complex concepts or analyses or to develop greater levels of skill or to apply skills to a new area of work.
Issue-based programme	A programme that is based on the concerns, interests and aspirations of particular groups, for example members of a Sikh Gurdwara wanting to address inter-faith relations in their town, or parents worried about the incidence of drug abuse in their locality. Issue-based learning tends to be associated with geographically defined communities, but the increasing use of electronic means of communication means that this need no longer be the case. Progress is defined in terms of the group's increasing ability to analyse its situation, to access new information and skills which will help it resolve its difficulties and generate solutions and its growing confidence in dealing with others to implement those solutions.
Outreach provision	Provision established in a community setting in addition to provision made at an organisation's main site(s). Outreach programmes may be similar to courses at the main site(s) or be designed to meet the specific requirements of that community.
Neighbourhood-based work	The provider's staff have a long-term presence in a local community with a specific remit to understand the concerns of the local residents and develop learning activities to meet local needs and interests.
Community regeneration	The process of improving the quality of life in communities by investing in their infrastructure and facilities, creating opportunities for training and employment and tackling poor health and educational under-achievement. Community regeneration requires the active participation of local residents in decision-making. Changes and improvements are often achieved either directly or indirectly as a result of the adult learning activities which arise from this.
Community capacity building	The process of enabling local people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to take advantage of opportunities for employment, training and further education and to become self managing, sustainable communities.

Active citizenship	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make conscious effort to do so: the process whereby people recognise the power of organisations and institutions to act in the interests of the common good and exercise their influence to ensure that they do so. Adult learning contributes to active citizenship.
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DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- excellent links with external organisations
- very good skills development
- very good resources
- good widening of participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient understanding of equality and diversity by staff and learners
- inadequate quality improvement in new provision

33. The development of specialist craft skills by learners is very good. The management of the college have wide and varied links with organisations able to support the development of these skills. For example, through the connections with the specialist conservation and refurbishment companies learners have worked on prestigious projects such as the BBC's Broadcasting House. Particularly on the diploma programmes, the achievement of learners is very good, for example on the stonemasonry diploma achievement rates for 2002 and 2003 were 100 per cent. The college's management actively promotes the participation of learners in national skill competitions.

34. BCC has excellent links with a very wide range of external organisations. These include professional bodies, government agencies, specialist conservation training bodies and construction departments of further education colleges. The recent establishment of BCC as a CoVE in May 2004 has widened and improved these links, especially with employers. Staff and students appreciate the opportunities to be involved with trade organisations. BCC has been successful in meeting the targets set for its first year as a CoVE. Major building works have been carried out on the premises. Excellent extra workshop space is now available for woodwork, stone- and lead-working. A very clear strategy is identified in the CoVE development plan to implement different aspects of building crafts such as timber-framed buildings, and sheet lead and historic joinery modules, together with advanced programmes on heritage and conservation management.

35. BCC encourages staff to gain teaching qualifications and to attain master craftsman status, all funded by the CoVE development programme. Two instructors have full teacher training qualifications, two have just achieved the full level 3 direct training and support qualification, and most other training staff have completed appropriate training and assessor qualifications.

36. Strategies for the development of BCC are effectively communicated through management and training meetings, and the friendly atmosphere created at BCC. Staff are able to discuss any issues or concerns at training meetings. Considerable efforts are made to promptly resolve matters such as the repair or replacement of equipment. The management team has created an environment which promotes a very high standard of

skills through the craftsmen working in the college.

37. The quality of hand tools and machinery is exceptional, as is that of the consumable materials. Learners are able to use a wide range of soft and hard woods, and different varieties of stone. Examples of learners' projects and commissions are on display throughout the building, such as the bookcases and tables in the library which were built by a former furniture student.

38. Governors successfully support the growth of BCC. The Worshipful Company of Carpenters owns and supports BCC with a substantial monetary grant each year. The governors, through the carpenters' company, enabled BCC to move from old premises in Central London to brand new purpose-built premises in September 2001.

39. Learners receive very good additional learning support and personal support from tutors. Since 2004, all learners are initially assessed for literacy, numeracy and dyslexia. The results are analysed and a comprehensive report details the learner's support needs.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

40. A number of programmes introduced by BCC are widening participation. BCC has appointed two female instructors, one in stonemasonry, the other in woodwork. These instructors provide a positive role model for learners, challenging traditional stereotypes of a male-dominated industry. In fine woodwork and stonemasonry, 9 per cent of all current learners are women. The workshops provide a positive working environment and inappropriate behaviour is challenged by staff.

41. BCC encourages a wide range of learners to use its services. For example, a school links programme has been established. This provides effective, simulated work experience for 14-16 year olds. In addition, a local school sends a small number of pupils on alternative education programmes to BCC to experience a joinery taster programme. The on-site assessment and training programme has a number of candidates from Eastern Europe working towards an NVQ. This will provide them with the construction skills certification scheme card. An increasing number of construction sites require this certification from workers.

42. BCC has three policies covering equal opportunities, complaints, and harassment and bullying. These were produced in January of this year, and have not been shared sufficiently with staff or learners. The learners' induction pack contains a very brief three-line statement about the maintenance of a positive work environment.

43. BCC's three-year development plan contains targets to increase the number of women and learners from minority ethnic groups.

44. Data is produced about types of learners by gender and ethnic background. This data has not been used effectively to plan strategies to meet the targets identified in the development plan. BCC does not check whether managing agents monitor equal opportunities in the workplace.

45. Staff and learners do not understand equality of opportunity and the wider issues of equality and diversity sufficiently. Equal opportunities is not covered during induction, and there is no planned development of learners' understanding of equality and diversity

throughout their period of training. Staff receive no training on equality and diversity. Some staff confuse equal opportunities with the employers' rights and responsibilities package which is delivered as part of the apprenticeship framework. BCC's senior management does not recognise sufficiently the need to develop staff's and learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Insufficient attention is given to this aspect of BCC's provision.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

46. The quality of long-standing diploma programmes delivered in the college is good. Staff expertise in this area of work ensure high-quality provision, and over time the college has maintained this quality, through improved facilities and resources, and also in the mentoring and support of new staff by experienced teachers. The internal verification procedure works satisfactorily on diploma programmes ensuring that the quality of work and the way it is assessed is adequate.

47. The development of processes to assure the quality of provision has not kept pace with the increase in learner numbers and resources. No overall framework for quality assurance was identified as a weakness in the previous inspection in 1998. This weakness has not been resolved. BCC does not have enough simple processes to ensure that the very good quality of provision delivered in some areas is sustained across all activities. A very recent questionnaire to work-based learners has identified concern regarding the development of skills in the workplace. This concern has not been dealt with. The management information system is very new. The system is not used by managers to gain information. Only a request from inspectors promoted the discovery that a significant amount of information about the achievements and retention of learners is available. BCC's management does not set or monitor performance targets. Management simply receives information about learner numbers. Data is not analysed to enable management to make decisions. Staff are not involved in setting targets and there are no learner retention, achievement and progression targets. A part-time consultant has recently been appointed to assist BCC in corporate planning and the use of management information systems.

48. A system of observation of training staff was introduced in September 2004. A plan exists to ensure that all staff and programmes are observed. The outcomes of observation have not been analysed and no targets have been set for improvement. All observations are made by one member of the senior management team who also teaches. Staff appraisals were introduced in January 2004, but no appraisals have taken place since then.

49. The most recent self-assessment report involved all staff for the first time. The process consisted of staff completing a questionnaire about each key question. Many of the responses were not analysed to any great extent. Many of the staff could not make a judgement about a question regarding the setting and use of targets. This is not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The report is too descriptive, although inspectors did agree with a number of strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. Self-assessment is not used as a critical, integral part of the management of the organisation. The views of learners, employers and subcontractors are not used in the report. Action plans do not set specific, realistic, quantitative targets. Plans are not systematically monitored to ensure that all aspects are implemented on time.

50. Internal verification is satisfactory throughout most of the inspected areas. BCC has only two internal verifiers, of whom one is the director. Internal verification is unsatisfactory

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in the OSAT programme.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Construction crafts		
Apprenticeships for young people and OSAT	105	3
Adult and community learning	114	2

51. At the time of inspection, there were 114 adult and community learning learners. All are working towards qualifications in the construction crafts of woodwork and stonemasonry. These qualifications include NVQs at level 2 and 3, a fine woodwork diploma, a stonemasonry diploma and an intermediate construction award. Twenty-nine learners were on diploma courses, eight on level 3 courses, 47 on level 2 courses, and 30 on intermediate construction award courses. The fine woodwork diploma course is a full-time course run over two years. The diploma stonemasonry course takes one year full-time. Learners in stonemasonry attend Woodchester Mansion in Gloucester for on-site training.

52. BCC has 105 learners following work-based learning programmes. Twelve advanced apprentices and 61 apprentices are following programmes in carpentry and joinery and stonemasonry. The remaining 31 learners are following NVQ programmes in carpentry and joinery under the OSAT scheme. Sixty of the apprentices are subcontracted from the CITB and the remaining apprentice is from Inner London Training.

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates on diploma courses
- very good retention rate on apprenticeship programmes
- exceptional skills development on apprenticeship and diploma programmes
- good off-the-job training
- very good resources
- very good standards of learning and personal support
- effective links with employers

Weaknesses

- poor retention rate on level 2 NVQ programmes
- slow progress in completing apprenticeship frameworks
- poor assessment practice on OSAT programme
- OSAT learners on inappropriate programmes

Achievement and standards

53. Achievement rates on diploma courses are very good. All of the learners on the fine woodwork programme in 2002 achieved their diploma, and 60 per cent achieved it in the following year. For the stonemasonry diploma, achievement rates for 2002 and 2003 were

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100 per cent in each case. Achievement rates on stonemasonry level 2 NVQ courses were also very good at 100 per cent in 2002, but the rate declined to 50 per cent in 2003.

54. Retention rates on diploma courses are good. Retention rates on apprenticeship programmes are very good. In the period from 2001 to 2004, 16 learners began the advanced apprenticeship programme. Four have completed it and the remaining 12 are still in training. During the same period, only two of the 31 learners who joined the apprenticeship programme left without completing the framework. Retention rates over this period were 100 per cent and 87 per cent, respectively. Retention rates on OSAT programmes are equally good.

55. Learners acquire practical skills to an exceptionally good standard. College test pieces are well chosen and relevant to developing the skills required to work in the industry. Stonemasonry apprentices learn traditional masonry skills, working with a mallet and chisel for all their test pieces in the college. These traditional skills are complemented by the on-the-job skills development which is designed to allow the learners to reach the commercial standards of skill and speed required in the industry. For example, inspectors observed learners in the workplace using power tools to cut, shape and replace stone as part of a renovation contract. The work was very similar to college projects, but used current industrial techniques and equipment to achieve similar results. Carpentry and joinery learners develop an advanced ability to critically evaluate their own work. They are set challenging projects that develop their skills. Some learners are supported by their employers to add to their skills. Many learners work on prestigious contracts in locations such as Broadcasting House and 10 Downing Street. Learners' skills and achievements are celebrated through entry to national and international skills competitions and through various awards and prize schemes and events.

56. Students' portfolios of evidence are good. They contain thorough and detailed assessment plans and assessment documents. They also include a good range of diverse evidence such as assessor observations, narratives explaining photographic evidence, and comprehensive job knowledge documents. These documents are completed comprehensively and demonstrate good student knowledge and understanding. Learners know how well they are progressing. Their attendance is excellent. Great importance is attached to health and safety matters.

57. Stonemasonry learners on diploma courses learn how to set out stone exercises that involve complex geometry, such as curved and twisted rising surfaces. Learners also work on team projects, such as a Gothic two-light window with complex mouldings, that are typical of commercial work.

58. Retention rates on level 2 NVQ programmes are poor. For level 2 NVQ carpentry and joinery, the retention rates for 2002 and 2003 were 27 per cent in each case. The rate is currently 40 per cent. For level 2 NVQ in stonemasonry, the retention rate in 2002 was 6 per cent. In 2003 it was 19 per cent. It is currently at 36 per cent.

59. Learners' progress towards completion of the full apprenticeship framework is slow with only six full completions since 2001. Errors have been made in learner registration and the reporting of results.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		1		11		4	100								
Retained*	0		0		0		4	100								
Successfully completed	0		0		11		4	100								
Still in learning	1		0		11		0	100								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	34		23		4		4									
Retained*	0		20		4		4									
Successfully completed	0		0		0		2									
Still in learning	34		21		4		2									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

The quality of provision

60. Most of the teaching is good or better. Most lessons are well planned and learning outcomes are shared and discussed with students. Lesson plans and schemes of work are satisfactory. Good learning materials are produced by the college. In the better lessons, teachers use an appropriate variety of teaching methods. They engage learners in relevant discussions, and include learners' prior experiences. Teachers successfully integrate background knowledge and work practice in many lessons by looking at good examples of work and holding many of the background knowledge sessions in the workshops. In practical sessions, teachers set very good standards and support learners in achieving them. In stonemasonry, the practical tasks carried out by learners in the college are chosen well to reflect the demands of the workplace. Learners are required to develop their skills using traditional mallets and chisels rather than files and sandpaper. Many sessions are dedicated to developing learners' practical skills. During these sessions, they receive excellent individual support and individual coaching. Many of the practical exercises generate considerable noise however, and this affects other learners working in the area.

61. Resources are very good. A sufficient number of staff have relevant industrial experience. Classrooms are spacious and well equipped. The training areas provide good accommodation, and the workshops are very well equipped. Equipment is of very good quality and is less than four years old. Stonemasonry resources are very good. Top-quality Portland stone is used for learners' exercises. Plenty of very good-quality hand tools are available. Fine wood resources are also good. The wood machine shop is equipped with well-maintained machinery and includes a bandsaw, lathes, planers, thicknessers, a spindle moulder and a vertical panel saw.

62. Assessment on apprenticeship programmes is generally fair, accurate and reliable. On-site evidence, which includes witness testimonies and work signed-off by trained

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work-based recorders, is generally scrutinised adequately by assessors. There is, however, an over-reliance on photographic evidence. Not enough direct observations are carried out in the workplace by assessors. Assessment in college is generally satisfactory. Assessments are well planned and conducted and provide useful feedback for learners.

63. Courses meet the needs and interests of learners and employers well. Learners are pleased with their progress and the skills they develop. BCC offers a good range of courses, from NVQs at level 2 to diploma level. Entry routes to BCC are offered through taster and 10-week introductory courses. The provider has recently opened a construction training centre for local schools. A full-cost evening programme is offered in both wood and stone working. Many learners have progressed into employment, some into self-employment and others at prestige locations such as cathedrals, or conservation work.

64. Learners receive very good additional learning and personal support from tutors. Since 2004, all learners are initially assessed for literacy, numeracy and dyslexia. Results are formally analysed, and a comprehensive and informative report is produced, detailing support requirements. An abridged version of the report is issued to each learner for their information. Support is provided shortly after the learner enters training. All learners who request support or are identified as needing support receive it. The whole process is well managed. The support needs of individuals are discussed and decided by the support tutor, working in conjunction with craft instructors. Comprehensive records are kept up to date. Learning support sessions are well documented, with registers and comments for each learner about session content, and an account of their progress. Clear, achievable and measurable targets are set for each learner receiving support. Records for each learner are updated.

65. Formal referrals are made to external agencies where necessary, for example to request readers for learners with dyslexia. Tutors use appropriate performance indicators, such as external test results, to monitor the effectiveness of the support. The whole process is guided by schemes of work for the programme of individual support, and by lists of learners currently receiving support. Good personal support is provided by BCC's tutors and a CITB training officer who visits learners in the workplace and at BCC to carry out formal reviews.

66. Assessment practice on the OSAT programme is poor. OSAT programmes constitute 30 per cent of the work-based learning provision offered by BCC. The programme is largely independent from the apprenticeship programmes. The OSAT programme is staffed by dedicated assessors and employs different work-based recorders and different assessment methods to the bulk of the work-based provision. The assessor generally conducts two visits to each candidate after which an entire NVQ at level 2 in bench joinery is signed off and candidates are declared competent. During these visits learners are unable to demonstrate adequate range coverage as their site experience does not cover the requirements of the qualification. Assessors' interpretation of suitable activities to cover the competency range for the qualification is inaccurate. For example, assembling flat-pack furniture and constructing door frames and pipe boxes is incorrectly accepted as suitable evidence of joinery manufacturing. Assessors do not ask sufficient and appropriate questions to adequately test and confirm the validity of the evidence presented, or the knowledge and experience of the candidates. Assessors rely too much on photographic evidence, some of which is signed off wrongly by work-based recorders.

67. Inspectors observed an initial meeting between two candidates and an assessor, at which the candidates simultaneously presented portfolios containing identical, hand-written evidence, nominally collected from different contracts and signed off by the same work-based recorder. Despite overt copying, the assessor accepted the evidence and gave feedback to the candidates that they had made a good start and expressed confidence that the whole portfolio would be signed off at the next and final visit. The assessor did not question the competence or authority of the work-based recorders who had made obvious errors in signing off the evidence. The whole process demonstrated a superficial approach to an unreliable assessment methodology.

68. Candidates on the OSAT programme are working towards an NVQ in bench joinery. This is inappropriate given the nature of their jobs. Candidates are working on-site carrying out a range of first- and second-fix carpentry tasks. They are unable to provide evidence from the workplace which adequately meets the performance criteria in the bench joinery qualification. This qualification is designed for operatives working in a workshop environment producing joinery items for the building and shopfitting industry.

Leadership and management

69. BCC has recently introduced new strategies. Retention rates are beginning to improve on NVQ courses. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but the process had not involved all stakeholders and had not identified a number of strengths and weaknesses. Internal verification for BCC-based programmes is satisfactory.

70. BCC has effective links with employers who are generally well informed and have a good knowledge of the occupational standards and apprenticeship frameworks. This allows them to co-ordinate some of the learners' activities in the workplace with off-the-job training. Communications between BCC and the employers are good. Some employers visit BCC to see the facilities and take part in events, and some have joined the recently formed liaison group. Employers receive useful weekly reports about the progress, attendance and off-the-job training activities of their learners. They value and build on the skills acquired by learners at BCC.

71. Managers have not paid sufficient attention to the quality of assessment on OSAT programmes. The internal verification methodology applied to the OSAT provision has not detected the serious weaknesses that exist in the OSAT assessment process. The effect of the poor assessment practice is restricted to this provision, as its systems, assessors and work-based recorders are employed only in this programme area.