

Bracknell and Wokingham College

Inspection report

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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 achievement 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
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. Bracknell and Wokingham College is a medium sized general further education college situated in Berkshire. The college's mission is 'to provide the education and training that individuals, organisations and employers need to enable them to achieve their full potential'.
2. The college has two main sites in Bracknell and five other centres in Wokingham and Bracknell. In addition it provides community development projects and adult and community learning courses in 44 community outreach centres. The college is one of five colleges in the area; all local schools have sixth form provision.

3. The college provides full- and part-time courses from entry level to level 5, and degree programmes in partnership with the Universities of Greenwich, Reading and Winchester. Programmes are offered in all the subject sector areas although numbers are small in some. Work-based learning is provided for some 350 learners and there are 40 Entry to Employment (E2E) learners. The college delivers Train to Gain provision for around 120 learners and holds a significant contract from Berkshire LSC for the provision of adult and community learning. There is a growing programme for local school pupils aged 14 to 16. The college also provides employment-related training for some 800 employers through both funded and full-cost courses. The college is a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in three areas: infrastructure technology, health and social care and children's care learning and development. It holds Investor in People status, the British Safety Award, and Matrix accreditation for information, advice and guidance work with schools, learners and employers.
4. Learners are recruited mainly from Bracknell and Wokingham and, although Bracknell Forest is an area of economic prosperity, central Bracknell is an area of relative deprivation with a high proportion of young people not in education, employment or training. The number of learners has increased significantly since the last inspection. In 2006/07, the total number of learners is 11,575. Over 80% of learners are adults. There are 1,123 learners enrolled on full-time courses of whom 75% are learners aged 16 to 18. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups in 2006/07 is 8%, and 61% are female.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: Contributory grade 3</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. Bracknell and Wokingham is a good college. It is a successful community college which encourages learners to achieve high standards. Provision has expanded considerably since the last inspection. Achievement and standards are good. Learners on level 2 courses achieve particularly well. Learners make good progress and develop personal, vocational and intellectual skills. They are positive about college life.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers make good use of their vocational expertise to make learning stimulating. Assessment is well planned and support for learners with additional needs is good. Key skills and vocational teachers work effectively as teams. The use of information learning technology (ILT) is underdeveloped. There is insufficient planning to meet individual learners' needs and target setting is insufficiently specific or challenging. The college has not evaluated the quality of its teaching and learning accurately.
7. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and to social and educational inclusion is good. A wide range of courses is provided for learners of all ages and productive links with community organisations support development within the community. Progression opportunities are available from entry level to degree courses. There is excellent development of provision for students aged 14 to 16. The college's responsiveness to the needs of employers is outstanding. The CoVEs influence college improvement and respond to employer needs. Learners enjoy their time at college and participate in a satisfactory range of enrichment activities.
8. Guidance and support for learners are good. There is a comprehensive range of services for learners and thorough assessment ensures learners are on the right courses. Learners' additional support needs are identified and those receiving support achieve well. Tutorial provision is satisfactory.
9. Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers continue to raise standards whilst successfully modernising the college through a well prepared re-building programme. Curriculum management is good and performance management is effective. Quality improvement arrangements are good. Data are accurate and generally well used. Governance is satisfactory. The college provides a safe learning environment and the promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Overall, the college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college has good capacity to improve. There is a strong focus on improving achievement and standards. Management responsibilities are defined clearly, teams work effectively and realistic targets are set at college

and curriculum levels. Curriculum planning and other processes are informed by curriculum and resource needs in equal measure. The college is undertaking a significant investment to improve the college estate. Leadership is strong and supportive and there are high levels of staff commitment to raise standards further. There is excellent employer and community involvement to develop provision and support the national skills agenda.

11. Quality improvement arrangements effectively secure improvement. Self-assessment is well established and generally accurate, although weaknesses in the rigour of the college's observation of teaching and learning were not identified. In most curriculum areas, the outcomes from action plans have led to improvement.

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

12. The college has made good progress since the last inspection in 2003. During a period of growth and building of a new college, overall performance has continued to improve. Success rates have improved and value-added measures indicate particularly high achievements for learners with low prior attainment. Assessment and framework completion for work-based learners have improved and are now good for apprentices. The curriculum offer has been extended in some key areas such as level 1 provision, and the range of adult and community provision remains wide. Progress has been slow in some areas including the use of ILT, target setting, the quality of individual learning plans and monitoring of the performance of different groups of learners. Variation in the quality of teaching and learning remains an area for improvement.

Key strengths

- overall good success rates
- strong strategic leadership
- good curriculum management
- re-building of college to modernise teaching and learning environment
- excellent employer engagement and productive partnership work
- very good range of provision
- good approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners
- good financial and resource management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- improvement of success rates to a consistently high level
- better use of data to analyse complex provision
- further development of teaching and learning
- development of rigorous and accurate observation of teaching and learning

- further improvement of the use of ILT
- improvement of the use of target setting for learners
- further embedding of equality of opportunity and diversity in the curriculum.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

13. Achievement and standards are good. Since the last inspection the college has continued to improve overall success rates. In 2005/06, success rates on all long courses were above national averages at all levels except for learners aged 16 to 18 at level 3 where they were at the national average. Pass rates were above national averages for all learners except on some very short courses. Retention rates were at national averages for all learners except at level 3 where rates were just below the national average. Success rates for key skills improved for all learners, particularly at level 2, and were significantly above national averages. Success rates for apprenticeships are improving and currently in 2006/07, achievement of full frameworks is good at 68%. Timely success rates have also risen significantly.
14. Self-assessment accurately identifies variations in success rates and particular courses where success rates are below national averages. Strategies to improve success rates across all aspects of provision have been introduced. College data for 2006/07 indicate that success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 improved by 4 percentage points at both levels 2 and 3. Retention rates have also improved for learners aged 16 to 18. At level 1, success rates for younger learners have decreased to around the national average.
15. Success rates are very good for students aged 14 to 16 and there is good progression to further education. Success rates for learners requiring additional support have increased and for learners at levels 1 and 2, success rates are better than for those learners who do not require support. Of the entry to employment learners, 75% have achieved and progressed into further education or employment.
16. Success rates for different groups of learners are inconsistent. For the largest minority ethnic group, adult black African learners, overall success rates are just below the national average. Success rates for female learners aged 16 to 18 are just below national averages. Overall attendance rates are 86% in 2006/07.
17. The college welcomes learners with low prior attainment. Value-added measures indicate that learners aged 16 to 18 on level 2 courses achieve particularly well. Standards of work are good; in particular, high standards are achieved in adult and community learning, film studies, access to art and design and in level 1 key skills. Marking of work is insufficiently detailed in some courses, particularly at lower levels. Learners develop good personal, vocational and intellectual skills. They behave very well, engage in lessons, enjoy their studies and are positive about college life. They develop good practical skills relevant to future employment through work experience and gain a good understanding of health and safety. The college values and celebrates the achievements of learners.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

18. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons in adult and community learning, teachers draw effectively and enthusiastically on their experience as practitioners in the arts and other settings. Since the last inspection, the college has improved lesson planning which is now thorough. However, as acknowledged in self-assessment, differentiated activities and individual learner profiles are inconsistently used and do not enable all learners to make sufficient progress in lessons. Target setting within individual learning plans is insufficiently specific or challenging and does not consistently influence the planning of learning. Equality and diversity are not promoted or integrated effectively within lessons.
19. The use of ILT remains underdeveloped and understanding of its potential for enhancing teaching and learning varies widely across the college. Access to technology is restricted in some classrooms. The college is developing strategies to encourage wider usage and access within the constraints of its building programme.
20. The college's assessment of the quality of lessons was not confirmed by inspectors' observations. Arrangements for observing teaching and learning are not sufficiently rigorous. Internal observations of lessons are often graded too generously and written judgements frequently do not support the final grades awarded. The college's system does not include a sufficiently wide range of evidence about the quality of learning and there is an emphasis on teaching methods rather than on the impact of these methods on learning and attainment. There are considerable inconsistencies in the quality of observations across different college areas and observations do not effectively support teachers' development. There is no internal moderation of the observation process.
21. Key skills development is well managed and key skills and vocational teachers work effectively as teams. Literacy and numeracy expertise is used effectively within key skills teaching to develop learners' reading, writing and number skills. The key skills team has developed good vocational assignments for work-based learners. These motivate learners and include materials about the environment and sustainability.
22. Assessment is well planned and feedback to learners is generally good. Teachers provide thorough and constructive feedback to raise standards. The assessment and verification systems for national vocational qualification (NVQ) learners are particularly good, involving well designed, specially developed and regularly reviewed systems, supported by very close monitoring from course managers. Tracking of learners' progress is rigorous in work-based learning. Assessor visits to workplaces are frequent.
23. The college has effective arrangements for identifying and providing for additional learning needs. These arrangements include assessment at pre-

enrolment interviews, diagnostic testing on entry, thorough tutorials and good support teaching. Learners highly appreciate the range of support.

24. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and to social and educational inclusion is good. The college is an inclusive learning community and strong policies to support mutual respect and tolerance for all learners and staff are well developed. The curriculum is diverse with clear progression routes between courses. There are some good examples of progression for learners aged 14 to 16, for learners into higher education and for adult and community learners. Self-assessment recognises the need to improve the analysis of progression across the college. The college enjoys a strong profile in the community and productive links with a range of community organisations support development within the community. Community-based programmes effectively meet the needs of local people. The provision of support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.
25. There are effective working relationships with a number of local schools to promote the 14 to 16 agenda and to provide flexibility for learners aged 14 to 19. The college has close involvement in the 14 to 19 strategy for the local area. There is outstanding development of provision for students aged 14 to 16 and programmes for these students are very successful. The programme is particularly appreciated by parents.
26. Curriculum planning is responsive to the needs of partners and learner aspirations. For example, some learners are able to achieve GCE A levels by studying both at school and at the college. Work-based learning is responsive to regional priorities and there is an extensive work experience programme. Learners participate in a satisfactory range of enrichment, including sport through sponsorship by local companies.
27. The college's responsiveness to the needs of employers is outstanding. Employer engagement and meeting regional skills needs are clear priorities and the college has fostered good relationships with a significant number of employers. Employers value the excellent communication they enjoy with the college. Improvements in work-based learning have enhanced the college's response to employer needs and the Train to Gain programme has increased across a number of curriculum areas. In 2005/06, the college earned some £450,000 from full-cost work with employers, engaged with around 800 employers and trained some 2,300 employees.
28. The quality of guidance and support is good. Self-assessment recognises the well integrated strong ethos of support, which is reflected in the wide range of services for learners designed to help them make informed choices about courses and support them during their life at college. Regular surveys help learners assess the impact of support and the results of surveys are used to improve services. The Respect programme reflects a strong commitment of mutual respect and helps learners to feel safe.

29. Initial advice and guidance offered by the college and other agencies are effective and ensures enrolment on appropriate courses. Learners are given good support when considering progression to further education, training or employment. Induction is effective. Individual literacy and numeracy needs are diagnosed and additional learning support is good. In-class support for learners with additional needs, including literacy and numeracy, is well organised. There is sensitive and effective encouragement during enrolment for learners to declare any disability. Support for Train to Gain learners is effective and includes thorough initial assessment, relevant learning plans, opportunities to gain skills for life qualifications and additional learning support.
30. The college has improved the tutorial process since the last inspection and tutorial staff have more time allocated and a wider range of resources to support tutorials. The student services team works closely with tutorial staff to support learners' health, safety and economic well-being. Not all learners have sufficiently meaningful targets to ensure effective and useful tutorials. Some of the target setting during progress reviews for work-based learners is weak and targets are insufficiently specific. Although the college has a well planned approach to introduce the system to recognise and record progress and achievement, target setting for learners on non-accredited courses remains variable.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: Grade 3

31. Leadership and management are good. The principal and governors provide a clear strategic direction for the college. Management at all levels is open, participative and supportive. Curriculum management is good. Target setting for the college and for curriculum teams is effective. Governors and the principal have led the college through change, including preparing for building a new college. The process is managed well and disruption kept to a minimum. Access to all parts of the college for those with mobility difficulties remains good. Partnerships are strong and support the college's contribution to capacity building within the area.
32. Governance is generally satisfactory. Governors play an active, challenging and significant part in developing the mission, direction and educational character of the college. They monitor the progress of the college well. One committee does not operate in accordance with the articles and instruments of governance. Arrangements to appraise the principal and the clerk are weak.
33. The college's response to equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The response of the college to legislative requirements is good and it meets its statutory requirements under race and equality legislation and the Children Act 2004. The college makes a strong contribution to the well-being of young learners,

including vulnerable young adults. Child protection procedures are robust. However, the corporation has not received training in child protection matters. The college recognises that it needs to do more to analyse performance of learners by age, gender, ethnic background and disability. The college has developed a disability equality scheme and plan. Impact assessments have been carried out on two key policies. The college recognises that it needs to do more to ensure that equality and diversity are better integrated into teaching and learning.

34. Data are accurate and regular reports are received by managers who use them effectively. Managers receive appropriate training. The college does not make full use of the management information system to analyse and report on some key areas, such as progression of students.
35. Arrangements to improve the quality of provision are effective. Arrangements to share good practice across the college are satisfactory. Staffing resources are outstanding, with excellent recruitment and selection processes. Staff are well qualified. A range of staff development activities is informed by appraisal, self-assessment and lesson observations. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and generally accurate. Quality improvement plans are well established and monitored regularly. Most lead to improvements. Inspectors were able to confirm most of the strengths identified by the college. However, the report did not identify some weaknesses found by inspectors, including insufficiently accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.
36. Financial management is good. Budgets are delegated to curriculum budget holders, who receive appropriate training and support to manage budgets effectively. Curriculum planning is sound and makes effective use of information on resources. Staffing and other costs are controlled well. Resources are well deployed. Facilities for staff and students are generally satisfactory and sometimes good. The college provides good 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	238	61	61	0	1435	71	59	12
	04/05	176	73	65	8	1471	71	62	9
	05/06	206	80	69	11	1262	74	65	9
GNVQs	03/04	28	93	65	28	-	-	-	-
	04/05	8	100	68	32	-	-	-	-
	05/06	16	81	72	9	2	0	-	-
NVQs	03/04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	04/05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	03/04	210	56	60	-4	1435	71	59	12
	04/05	168	71	64	7	1471	71	62	9
	05/06	190	80	69	11	1260	74	65	9

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	430	69	56	13	1283	69	54	15
	04/05	427	69	61	8	1028	71	60	11
	05/06	423	74	66	8	1207	77	66	11
GCSEs	03/04	110	57	61	-4	93	62	59	3
	04/05	129	61	64	-3	98	68	63	5
	05/06	135	70	68	2	69	70	67	3
GNVQs	03/04	56	71	63	8	6	33	59	-26
	04/05	15	80	67	13	-	-	-	-
	05/06	5	80	69	11	-	-	-	-
NVQs	03/04	16	81	51	30	113	61	53	8
	04/05	13	54	57	-3	161	78	60	18
	05/06	32	63	65	-2	240	72	67	5
Other	03/04	248	72	54	18	1071	71	53	18
	04/05	270	72	61	11	769	70	59	11
	05/06	251	78	66	12	898	79	65	14

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	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	03/04	599	66	64	2	1058	58	54	4
	04/05	628	70	68	2	771	67	58	9
	05/06	735	70	70	0	864	69	63	6
A/A2 Levels	03/04	152	80	84	-4	50	66	66	0
	04/05	108	79	86	-7	57	72	69	3
	05/06	143	85	87	-2	38	74	72	2
AS Levels	03/04	238	60	63	-3	79	52	50	2
	04/05	287	66	66	0	64	53	52	1
	05/06	321	65	67	-2	65	54	55	-1
GNVQs	03/04	105	71	53	18	14	21	45	-24
	04/05	93	74	61	13	12	58	54	4
	05/06	70	67	66	1	5	60	57	3
NVQs	03/04	3	33	54	-21	297	39	48	-9
	04/05	4	75	63	12	174	64	56	8
	05/06	2	100	71	29	286	66	63	3
Other	03/04	101	55	57	-2	618	68	56	12
	04/05	136	71	60	11	464	70	59	11
	05/06	199	68	65	3	470	72	64	8

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2005 to 2007

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No. of learners *	College NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate **	College framework rate **	National framework rate **
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	52	27	48	19	34
		timely	51	14	31	6	21
	05/06	overall	45	31	54	27	44
		timely	45	9	34	9	27
	06/07	overall	48	68		66	
timely	29	41		63			
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	36	53	50	42	38
		timely	86	10	29	9	22
	05/06	overall	90	69	58	63	53
		timely	73	23	38	21	33
	06/07	overall	96	71		71	
		timely	34	35		35	

* 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'

Table 5

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the college
2005 to 2007

Year	Number of starts in year	Achieved Objectives *	Progression **	Still in learning
04/05	31	30	22	4
05/06	33	28	15	0
06/07	23	20	17	0

* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period