

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Bromley College of Further and Higher Education

Date of visit: 1 April 2008

### Context

Bromley College is a medium sized further education college with its main campus located south of Bromley town centre. There are two local centres in Beckenham and Penge. The college is predominantly vocational, providing full and part-time courses from entry to degree level as well as work-based learning and Train to Gain programmes. Provision is offered in 12 of the 15 sector/subject areas with by far the highest number of enrolments in the skills for life area. In 2006/07 there were 1,729 16-18 year olds and 4,838 adults on roll, which equated to 1,566 and 1,862 full-time equivalent students respectively. Of the students who enrol at the college, 76% follow further education programmes at level 2 or below.

The London Borough of Bromley is relatively prosperous and at 2.5% unemployment is low. All but one of the 17 secondary schools located in the borough have sixth forms and the proportion of young people achieving 5 or more GCSEs grade A\*-C at age 16 is 71%. Only 43% of 16-18 year old students attending the college live in the London Borough of Bromley and 36% live in areas of relatively high deprivation. Significantly more males aged 16-18 attend the college where as the reverse is the case for adults. Some 47% of the college's students are from black and minority ethnic groups compared with 12% of the local population.

The college was inspected in December 2004. Two curriculum areas were judged good and seven satisfactory. English for speakers of other languages was unsatisfactory but was re-inspected in November 2006 and judged good. Guidance and support for students were good and leadership and management satisfactory. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion was good.

## Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving success rates since the last monitoring visit?	Reasonable progress
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The college has been successful in identifying poorly performing courses, clarifying the causes of underperformance and taking appropriate action which is improving outcomes particularly for 16-18 year olds. Targeted support for individual students has been effective as well as more rigorous monitoring of their progress.

Overall success rates for 16-18 year olds on long courses improved to 67% in 2006/07 compared to 61% the previous year. Success rates improved for these young people at all levels, and are in line with the national average for similar colleges. For adults enrolled on level 1 courses success rates also improved significantly and are at the national average. The improvement was a more modest three percentage points at level 3. In 2006/07, adult enrolments at level 2 were reduced to half those of the previous year in response to LSC priorities and success rates declined by a percentage point. Rates for adults at both levels remain at the national average. Work-based learning success rates improved in 2006/07 and both framework and timely success rates were good.

The proportion of 16-18 year olds from minority ethnic groups completing long programmes successfully improved very significantly in 2006/07 from 58% to 71%. The improvement for those young people who describe themselves as white British was considerably less. Rates for males aged 16-18 also showed a significant improvement from 61% to 69%. The overall progress made by 16-18 year olds is in line with that which would be predicted on the basis of their qualifications on entry to the college.

## Quality of provision

What action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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The college has a clear focus on improving teaching and learning and on ensuring that lesson observations identify strengths and areas for improvement consistently across curriculum areas. A scheme for exchanging observers with other colleges has been introduced since the last monitoring visit and is helping consolidate practice. Much attention has been paid to internal moderation of observations.

The implementation of an electronic system for recording observation judgements is enabling more systematic and effective identification of strengths and areas for improvement and better targeting of actions to improve the quality of teaching. Clear themes have been identified such as improving the use of information and learning technologies (ILT) during lessons, more differentiated teaching in response to varying needs and implementation of strategies to address the challenging behaviour of students, in particular young people enrolled on level 2 courses. The system enables judgements about the extent of students' learning to be recorded but the use of such evidence does not feature strongly in the self-assessment report (SAR). The college is increasingly analysing and challenging judgements where there is disparity between student success rates and observers' views of the quality of teaching and learning.

The observation team is relatively small and peer observation is beginning to be implemented more systematically across curriculum areas to promote the sharing of good practice. Targeted support is provided for those whose lessons have been judged unsatisfactory and action planning following observation of satisfactory lessons has been strengthened. A good range of development opportunities are available for staff including surgeries, individual coaching and group activities. Internal audits are helping to promote improvement.

Are the actions taken to improve the provision and timeliness of additional learning support having an impact?	Reasonable progress
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The proportion of the college's 16-18 year old students gaining key skills or literacy/numeracy qualifications has improved considerably between 2004/05 and 2006/07, from 17% to 50%. Success rates for students aged 16-18 receiving additional support was 80% in 2006/07 compared to 68% for the age group overall. In-class support for entry and level 1 students has improved with pass rates improving from 80% in 2005/06 to 85% in 2006/07. Success rates are very high for level 1 programmes provided with in-class support for literacy and numeracy. Initial diagnosis of language support needs at enrolment is now more rigorous leading to more timely provision of support. Staff development has been used well to train basic skills tutors to support students with language needs. The use of skills for life coaches has been effective in developing teachers to help students improve their literacy, numeracy and language skills. New skills for life specialist roles

have been established and a skills for life handbook developed to support teachers and help them access teaching materials.

What progress has been made in improving the consistency of tutorials, target setting and action planning?	Reasonable progress
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The introduction of an electronic system for tracking the progress of full-time students has helped rationalise procedures for monitoring students' progress and target setting. Although the development is in a relatively early stage of implementation, it is proving effective in providing easily accessible information for teachers and personal tutors as well as curriculum and cross-college managers. The information system clearly records targets for individual students, the degree to which students are achieving their potential in set work and action plans for improvement. Information is accessible to both students and parents and is effective in motivating students to monitor their own progress. Audits conducted by senior managers are effective in ensuring that the tracking of students' progress complies with college expectations and is effective in driving up success rates. Although compliance rates for electronically recording data on students' progress have continued to rise and are generally good, the college recognises that some curriculum areas have been slow to implement the student tracking and audit procedures.

Regular and clearly structured student progress reviews are beginning to be used well by course teams in most curriculum areas to monitor the progress of individual students and set targets. Easy access to information has improved the consistency of review and target setting. Staff development and training to support target setting and review for individual students is good and is linked to the introduction of a well thought out tutorial curriculum. Advanced practitioners are providing good mentoring support to improve the quality of one-to-one and group tutorials.

#### Leadership and management

Has action been taken to improve the consistency of the use of data in course reviews and across sector/subject areas?	Reasonable progress
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Since 2007 the college has required all staff to make full use of a single college information system to provide data to support course review and self assessment. A separate database is used for attendance monitoring

purposes. This requirement has resulted in a more consistent approach to the use of course data across curriculum areas. Standard sets of reports are available for different purposes and specific team meetings, and staff can generate their own reports as required. Routine use of value-added data by course teams and curriculum managers is at a relatively early stage of development. In conjunction with initiatives to improve the use of data, the college has implemented a programme of curriculum area reviews which mirror inspection practice. Poorly performing courses are identified and action to bring about improvement closely scrutinised. These initiatives have been appropriately supported through the introduction of a quality handbook which gives clear guidance on the use of course level data.

What progress has been made in integrating the teaching of key skills within curriculum areas?	Reasonable progress
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Success rates in key skills had shown significant improvement from a very low base in recent years, but improvement stalled in 2006/07. Strategies are being implemented to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the preparation of portfolios coupled with support to prepare students for key skills' tests. Key skills specialists have been introduced successfully to support teachers in each of the eight college schools. There is good integration between key and basic skills with different strategies adopted to meet the needs of different curriculum areas. All key skills assignments are co-ordinated and appropriately contextualised within the vocational curriculum. Students' individual learning plans have been strengthened to incorporate agreed targets for learning, assessment and achievement of key skills. A team of key skills assessors has been trained to work with vocational teachers. Clear time scales have been set to encourage the earlier completion of portfolios by students and planned contingency time for possible subsequent remedial work. Teachers are well supported through portfolio surgeries and previously disparate guidance and information is now clearly set out in a handbook. Information about students' progress in achieving key skills is currently held on different databases. The cross-college student tracking system does not currently incorporate details of the progress made by students towards achieving key skills.