

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Bradford College  
Date of visit: 25 September 2007

### Context

Bradford College is a large general FE and HE college, based on two main sites in central Bradford with large adult education centres in the Manningham and Great Horton districts of the city, and in Ilkley. In addition courses are delivered through approximately thirty adult and community centres throughout the metropolitan district. The college offers a very broad range of courses leading to academic, vocational and occupational qualifications at all levels from pre-entry level to level 5.

In 2005/06 there were 18,700 LSC-funded learners, of whom 3,097 attended full-time. The gender profile of learners was 40 per cent male, 60 percent female. Fifty nine percent of learners are White British and 23 per cent of Pakistani origin. Fifty nine percent of the college's FE learners come from postcode areas designated as socially deprived. However, on some full-time courses the proportion is over 95 per cent.

Bradford College was last inspected in 2004. At that inspection, leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory. In curriculum areas, the college was awarded four good grades, five satisfactory grades and two unsatisfactory grades. The unsatisfactory areas (hospitality, sports, leisure and travel and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)) were re-inspected in June 2006 and both awarded satisfactory grades. Guidance and support were judged to be good, and educational and social inclusion were judged to be good.

### Achievement and standards

What further progress has been made in improving success rates at levels 2 and 3 and level 2 for adults? Have the improved levels of success in other categories been maintained?	Reasonable progress
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Success rates are continuing to improve. Overall retention rates are rising. College figures produced for the monitoring visit show continuing improvements in success rates in many categories.

There are significant increases of more than 5 percentage points in success rates for students aged 16-18 at level 1 and for adult learners at level 2. At level 2 for students aged 16-18 success rates have gradually continued to improve since 2005. At level 1 for adult learners, retention rates have improved from 80% to 85% and the college expects improved success rates when all the results are recorded. At level 3 results are similar to 2005/06 but this is largely due to low levels of performance on the two year Access to Higher Education course and in some national diplomas. The college has reviewed this provision for students who started in September 2006.

Key skills retention and success rates have improved consistently at each level over the last three years. Overall retention rates have been high since 2004/05, and were very high in 2005/06 at 96%, nearly 14% above the national average. Following the introduction of a new key skills strategy in 2004/05 overall success rates improved significantly by 14 percentage points, and in 2005/06, at 41%, were just above the national average. The college anticipates further improvement in success rates for 2006/07.

#### Quality of provision

What progress is there in implementing measures to raise the quality of teaching and learning; to increase the volume of good or better teaching?; to share good practice?	Significant progress
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The college recently enlarged its team of cross-college teaching and learning facilitators, to enhance support for its further and higher education work. Their role is effective in raising staff skills in specific aspects of teaching and learning. The individual development needs of staff are carefully identified through the observation of teaching and learning. The college places a high priority on developing its entire staff. Between 2005/06 and 2006/07 the number of teaching and learning events increased by 51%. An extensive range of strategies to improve teaching includes individual mentoring, coaching and the delivery of group training sessions in areas such as differentiation, active learning and the use of information and learning technology (ILT).

The refined process for observing teaching and learning includes detailed observation records that focus explicitly on teaching, learning and attainment. Records comment more specifically on the use of differentiated teaching and learning strategies, and the use of ILT.

Summary strengths and areas for improvement are analysed against nine criteria and this informs the planning of staff development and the identification of good practice. The process links to the appraisal system. Senior managers moderate a sample of observation records to ensure consistency. The moderation process has identified that the rationale for grades 3 and 4 are not always clearly supported by identified strengths and areas for improvement. Paired observations, shared with a partner college, have led to more robust grading. The profile of observed lessons has improved steadily in the last three years. In 2005/06, 65% of lessons were graded good or better and in 2006/07, this has risen to 72%. The proportion of outstanding lessons has increased from 5% to 11% and the proportion of unsatisfactory grades has reduced to 3%. A significantly higher number of part-time staff are awarded grades 3 or 4 by comparison with full time staff.

What progress is there in integrating key skills across vocational areas in the curriculum? What has been the impact on learners?	Significant progress
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The college has effectively introduced a whole college approach to key and essential skills, using a strategy that operates on a number of levels. The college profile of key skills has been raised. Earlier initial and diagnostic assessment at interview involves vocational staff and ensures that learners are placed on courses at the right level and given appropriate support. Key skills staff and vocational staff work closely together to develop learning materials. Dedicated key skills tutors, some with relevant vocational expertise, provide consistency in delivery. Much work has taken place to ensure that key skills are embedded into the curriculum through stimulating and relevant integrated assignments. In vocational areas, where embedding key skills is more challenging, assignments are clearly contextualised and have vocational relevance. Resources are shared amongst staff to support consistent delivery. Essential skills staff sit on course approval panels.

English as a second or other language (ESOL) learners are beginning to work towards key skills qualifications at level 1 and 2. Learners are able to get immediate feedback on their tests through increased use of on-line testing. Recent student survey questionnaires show that learners place a higher value on key skills. Success and retention rates show improving trends. All staff are receiving additional training to raise their awareness of the value of key and essential skills. This term, training for learner services, personnel and admissions is planned. An on-line module for staff training in essential skills is planned to go live very shortly. Some college materials, such as letters to learners and learners' questionnaires, have been modified so that they can be more easily read.

## Leadership and management

What progress is there in reshaping the curriculum to meet the requirements of the new skills agenda?	Reasonable progress
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The college prioritises the development of provision that meets the skills agenda and national targets for first vocational qualifications up to level 2. Of the 33 new courses approved for this academic year, 71% are courses up to level two. The number of 16-18 year old learners recruited from the "not in education, employment or training" (NEET) group has increased significantly in 2006/07 by 500 additional learners. The college has well-developed employer links in many curriculum areas, such as science, engineering, construction and early years. Work placements are available for all learners in care, community and health, construction and early years. The sixth form centre offers a programme of employment-related talks by external speakers, such as scriptwriters, from specialist industries.

The college's enterprise unit is effective in establishing and maintaining good employer links. Customised training programmes have been developed for some employers. The college is the lead partner for Train to Gain provision in West Yorkshire. The 'Fair Cities' project works to bring together employer needs to fill skill gaps with unemployed people needing work, by offering guaranteed interviews to those who successfully complete the programme. The current focus is on call centre training. Of the 150 people who have completed the programme so far, about 20 have obtained employment. Work with Education Bradford, targeting schools, has led to workforce development training for a range of school staff such as cleaners, support assistants, cooks and janitors.

The reduction in funding for adult and community learning and rationalisation of centres and provision was managed well. Good communication, through face-to-face meetings and a fact sheet, explained the prioritisation of the skills agenda. Links between the community team and the enterprise unit place an increased emphasis on the skills agenda in the programme offer; some community based Train to Gain is planned. The college has supported some community groups, who use neighbourhood learning in deprived communities funding, for staff development in processes to recognise and record progress and achievement in non-accredited learning.

What further progress is there in improving accommodation and implementing the accommodation strategy?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in continued improvements to its accommodation and in working towards its longer term plans for a new college in the city centre. The relocation of sports, engineering and construction to the former MacMillan halls of residence should be completed in May 2008 so that existing students can move in followed by a new cohort from September 2008. There is some progress in implementing a policy of relocating community-based provision to facilities owned or used by partners such as libraries. There are substantial improvements in security arrangements to safeguard students' personal safety at the main site. A detailed access audit for students with mobility difficulties is complete and this has resulted in some improvements. The Executive Directors for Corporate Services and Teaching, Learning and Curriculum work closely on designing the new facilities to ensure that learning spaces will meet the needs and learning preferences of future learners in 2012. The corporation, through its estates committee, monitors developments rigorously. There are improved facilities for learner services on the main college site to ensure the provision of an accessible and integrated service.

What progress is there in implementing quality measures to improve achievement, retention, attendance and punctuality?	Significant progress
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Through its quality team the college has implemented a number of effective measures to improve attendance and punctuality and to raise achievement and retention. Retention officers have played a key role in supporting learners who may be at risk of dropping out. Their roles focus on helping learners to return to learning rather than scrutinising why they have not attended. Teachers and programme managers have better access to laptops and are able to make better use of data to gather regular information on performance trends. Electronic registers are to be used more widely following a pilot period. The quality improvement team use appropriate research tools including learner surveys to gather information about the reasons, for example, for poor attendance and punctuality. A student tracking unit has been established. Teachers and subject leaders now feel able to request management support on courses showing poor performance. The college has been particularly successful in attracting young people who are NEETs, keeping them on courses and encouraging them to progress to further learning. These learners are able to start programmes at several different times in a year.

Learning support assistants now work closely with subject teachers to offer in-class support to learners. There have been improvements in learner punctuality but the college recognises there is more to be done. Staff development days are used to improve classroom practice. The initial assessment of learners' additional needs is held earlier in the learning programme during the admissions process. There is a significant increase of over 50% in the numbers of learners receiving additional learning support.

What progress is there in strengthening the leadership and management of the college? What improvements have resulted from the management restructure?	Significant progress
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New management structures have enabled the college to make significant progress in strengthening its action planning, performance management and strategic development. All managers have attended a customised training programme. The new management structure has created opportunities for focused job roles to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners, to raise success rates and to invest in meeting the market needs of the changing face of further education. These job roles enable a sharp focus to be given to the needs of young people, for example, and to encourage innovation. Some of these posts focus on increasing the college's capacity to engage employers and to respond to national initiatives such as the recommendations of the Leitch and Foster reports. Management action has resulted in improved teaching and learning and improvements in many success rates. The structure enables managers to take swift action to address problems. There is strong staff support for initiatives that bring together the many different aspects of the college into a single entity. Staff feel able to contribute to the development of the self-assessment report and the strategic plan. Regular staff meetings and training opportunities have improved the effectiveness of communication measures. Resources are devolved to programme managers and they are set targets for participation and success. The performance of staff is monitored rigorously.