

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Barnsley College

Date of visit: 8 May 2008

### Context

Barnsley College is a large Tertiary College in South Yorkshire. The college typically recruits learners from areas of high deprivation. The College was formed through an amalgamation of Barnsley College of Technology, Barnsley College of Art and Design and Barnsley Sixth Form College, to become the main provider of post-16 education serving Barnsley Metropolitan Borough. The percentage of young people achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A–C including maths and English is 31.5%, compared with the national average of 59.3%. Employment rates in Barnsley are low. The number of students the college enrolls from minority ethnic backgrounds reflect the local population. The college caters predominantly for young people aged 16-18. It has growing provision for younger people aged 14-16 and a small adult provision for people aged nineteen and over. Most students are enrolled on long courses. At the previous inspection, overall effectiveness of provision and achievement and standards were satisfactory. Capacity to improve, quality of provision, and leadership and management were good.

### Achievement and standards

To what extent has the college improved success rates?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in raising success rates across most areas. Success rates for key skills have risen from 19% to 44%. Completion of apprenticeship frameworks have improved significantly, from 27% in 2005/06 to 62% in 2006/07, though timely completion remains an area for improvement. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 on long level 2 and 3 programmes have not improved at the same rate as those for level 1, but still show improvement overall. Success rates on very short courses are below national averages in most cases.

What particular actions has the college taken to improve success rates for learners?	Reasonable progress
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The college has taken significant actions to improve staff's awareness of improvement targets and their accountability in improving success rates. The college

has implemented an effective strategy that supports sector subject area managers and programme tutors in setting realistic and challenging targets. Progress is monitored frequently and effectively. Under-performance is quickly identified and supportive interventions taken. Newly-introduced and improved recruitment practices support learners in making the most appropriate programme choices to improve retention. All applicants benefit from initial individual interviews with specialist guidance staff who provide information and advice and identify any additional support the learner might need before sector subject area interviews take place. This information is used by sector subject area leaders and teachers to provide appropriate support and learning opportunities. The college has taken good and effective actions to improve key skills success rates. Improvements include the development of key skills performance targets for each department. A newly developed key skills database is linked to the college management information system. Accountability at curriculum level for monitoring progress is clear, with staff supporting key skills improvements throughout the college.

What actions have been taken to improve work-based learning provision?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant improvements in work-based learning provision. Success rates for advanced apprentices have improved by 28%, and are currently slightly below national rates. Apprenticeship success rates have improved by 14% and match national averages. Early indications are that these improvements will be sustained during 2007/08, with in-year success rates currently standing at 72% for apprentices and 62% for advanced apprentices. Entry to employment success rates are also much improved from 52% during 2005/06 to 61% for 2006/07. This improvement trend extends to the Train to Gain provision with 2006/07 success rates standing at 81%, some 29% higher than in 2005/06.

Since the previous inspection the college has restructured work based provision to provide employers with clear lines of contact while ensuring that sector subject areas leaders monitor quality and progress against performance targets. A small central team effectively co-ordinates employer engagement, contractual compliance and additional support, and closely monitors progress against global targets. Newly formed specialist sector subject area teams work both on- and off-the-job, providing good training assessment and support. The college has introduced effective practices to improve employer engagement and to improve success. Tripartite agreements clearly identify employers' and learners' responsibility in training and development. Additional learning support is identified early and intervention is timely. Staff have had intensive development in setting clear and appropriate targets, and monitoring learners' progress against the targets is frequent. Much of the documentation has been improved, including the employer's handbook, induction material, assessment practices, and reviews. Equality of opportunity is effectively monitored with a bank of

questions. Timely success rates remain an area for improvement. However, the number of out-of-time learners has reduced from a very high 160 two years ago to 21 currently.

### Quality of provision

What has been done to improve the effectiveness of target setting at course and department level?	Reasonable progress
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College structures have been revised to ensure that target setting and monitoring is central to raising the quality of experience for the learner. Key performance indicators have been introduced that are well understood and effective. Management information has improved in quality, and this information is now better shared with staff. Targets for retention and achievement are set at course level and monitored at all levels. Staff have had effective training on smart target setting, and individual learning plans have been redesigned and are now more effectively used to record and monitor learners' progress. The thorough system of observation of teaching and learning is a major tool in setting targets and monitoring outcomes. The results of observations are monitored for thoroughness and accuracy and used in appraisal and staff training.

### Leadership and management

What has been done to improve the consistency of the implementation of policies to promote equality and diversity?	Significant progress
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Cross-college initiatives have been implemented to promote equality and diversity at all levels. Interesting, relevant and challenging materials have been developed and introduced into lessons and tutorials. Staff have had appropriate training and continuous updating on current legislation. The college values its learners and their opinions. Learners have a strong voice in the college, and a number of changes have been made in response to learners' feedback and requests. The college has succeeded in challenging employers' preconceptions, for example, by persuading them to take females instead of males. Staff are good role models for students, with several departments showing a good gender balance in areas where this is not typical. Recent recruitment drives have focused on minority ethnic groups, resulting in an increase of 46% in applications from these groups. All schemes of work, lesson plans and observations of teaching and learning maximise opportunities to raise equality and diversity issues in the curriculum. Learners are active in raising issues through their forum and other groups. A cross-college equality and diversity group meets regularly to discuss issues. The college encourages learners to join this group, though so far it has not been successful in doing so. All staff have had training in

safeguarding, and specific additional training has been given in relevant sector subject areas. The college places high importance on the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*, and an ethos of mutual respect exists throughout the college.

How are quality systems improving provision, and in particular, the quality of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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The college is actively promoting an integrated quality improvement strategy. The college focuses clearly on disseminating good practice, and this is enhanced by clear communication practices and meeting schedules. Links between departments, partnership working with other colleges and effective use of advanced teachers all help to improve the quality of provision.

The college places significant focus on improving teaching and learning. A senior manager's primary responsibility is to embed good practice. Newly introduced processes include a more focused approach to action planning and sharing of good practice. Observation reports are detailed, the reports are moderated, and if the text does not match the grade, this is effectively challenged and reviewed. The observations take good account of skills for life, *Every Child Matters* and equality and diversity within the reports. Any areas for improvement are clearly targeted with details on how progress will be monitored. The college has recently introduced a system of peer observations with particular focus on disseminating good practice. This supplements the system of observations of teaching and learning and gives greater ownership to teachers in their personal development.