

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Brooksby Melton College

Date of visit: 22 January 2008

### Context

Brooksby Melton is a small college with a land-based specialism, which offers courses in 13 sector subject areas. It has two main sites in Brooksby and Melton Mowbray and a smaller base in Melton Mowbray. In 2006/07, over 4,300 learners were enrolled, of whom 2,400 were aged 16 to 18. Nearly two-thirds of the learners were female. Nearly 5% of learners were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Most learners were on level 1 courses. About 240 learners were on apprenticeship programmes. The number of learners has decreased significantly since 2005/06. The college has a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in service engineering. The previous principal left the college at the end of November 2007 and an interim principal is in place.

The college was last inspected in January 2007. At that inspection, overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, achievements and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management were judged satisfactory. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion was judged good. In curriculum areas, the college was awarded five satisfactory grades.

### Achievement and standards

<p>What progress has been made to improve learners' success rates between 2005/06 and 2006/07? How do these rates compare with the national averages?</p> <p>What progress has been made between 2005/06 and 2006/07 to improve the success rates of males in literacy?</p>	<p>Significant progress</p>
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Success rates on all long courses, all short courses and overall provision increased significantly in 2006/07 compared with 2005/06. Those on long courses improved at each level for learners of each age group, but only level 3 for learners aged 16 to 18, and levels 1 and 3 for adults are above national averages (the latter two rates are very well above). Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on levels 1 and 2 are below national averages, especially at level 2. Managers have taken appropriate action to remove or improve much of this unsuccessful provision. Short course success rates improved in 2006/07 compared with 2005/06 and are above national averages, except for adults on courses of 5-24 weeks duration. Skills for life success rates have improved significantly over the last three years for learners aged 16 to 18 and for adults. Overall success rates for literacy improved very significantly in 2006/07 compared with 2005/06, especially for male learners.

How much progress has been made to improve work-based learning (WBL), Train to Gain and key skills success rates between 2005/06 and 2006/07? How do these rates compare with the national averages?	Significant progress
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Framework success rates and timely success rates have shown a significant improvement over the past two years. Framework completions in most sector subject areas are in line with national averages. In engineering and manufacturing technologies, the framework success rates for 2006/07 are very high. The Train to Gain success rate indicates recent significant improvement. Key skills success rates continue to improve considerably, but are still below national averages. Managers have implemented a new key skills system in engineering and manufacturing technologies very successfully. They have embedded the front-loading of key skills well. An effective specialist team to support the delivery of key skills in the workplace is now in place.

#### Quality of provision

What progress has the college made to expand the college-wide enrichment programme to all learners and has their participation rate in this improved?	Reasonable progress
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More learners now participate in cross-college enrichment activities than at the same time last year. Much of this is because staff work very closely with learners to promote these activities and to encourage learners' participation. The learners' voice has been sought and acted on to provide new activities which meet their needs. Much of the growth in participation and much of the focus on new activities are associated with being healthy, although the efforts to assist learners to cease smoking have not yet met with success. Some of the growth in participation is on short-term activities, rather than those embedded in the learners' weekly timetable. Few of the activities lead to qualifications or awards. Initial participation rates in September were below those expected, based on learners' prior indications of interest, but persistent engagement between staff and learners has led to an increased involvement.

#### Leadership and management

What progress has been made with the financial recovery strategy? Are there still significant areas of weakness? Has progress been made to improve the college's medium to long term viability? Have governors and managers worked with the LLSC to establish a robust recovery plan that addresses the operating issues and difficulties facing the college?	Insufficient progress
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The college is still in financial category C. There are significant areas of weakness in the financial situation. The medium to long term viability is not yet assured. The new interim principal has recently reviewed the delivery of the strategic improvement plan and has appointed an independent consultant to work with the college and to deliver

the plan to governors. This represents an appropriate re-alignment of the actions to promote financial recovery. All staff have been informed of the need to reduce expenditure. Several initiatives have been introduced to this end, including reductions in part-time staffing and in staff remissions. The college is well aware of the potential financial short-fall for 2007/08 and is confident that it has the right mix of internal cost savings and business opportunities to reduce this short-fall considerably. The college is working closely with the local LSC and there has been a clear focus on a robust recovery programme since January 2008. It is too soon, however, to judge the impact of these actions.

What progress has the college made with its accommodation strategy and capital scheme since the last inspection? What is the impact on learners of this strategy?	Insufficient progress
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The college had made slow progress with its accommodation strategy since the merger in 2000. Although accommodation was unsuitable in many areas and access for people with restricted mobility was unsatisfactory, insufficient progress was made to remedy these issues for several years. In 2006/07, the college spent approximately £1 million to improve access to and facilities for people with limited mobility. Progress with the accommodation strategy has been delayed by several factors, some of which were beyond the college's control.

Since the last inspection, the college has engaged architects and consultants to develop its accommodation strategy and capital building proposals, due to be completed by March 2008. They have met with staff, students and governors, so that all parties are aware of progress and requirements. It is too soon to judge the impact of this strategy on learners. If approved, the implementation of the strategy will depend on the extent to which the college will have improved its current financial situation. In the meantime, managers have improved the existing accommodation to benefit learners by zoning programme areas and updating facilities, but overall utilisation remains low.

How much progress has the college made to meet its 2007/08 recruitment targets?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress towards meeting its target recruitment for learners aged 16 to 18, but is still below the targets for 2007/08. Managers have undertaken a series of successful recruitment initiatives since September 2007, which have increased the number of learners aged 16 to 18. The college has a good potential to meet its targets for WBL and Train to Gain for 2007/08. The college is confident that it has adequate strategies to recruit more learners and is focused on reaching targets by the end of 2007/08.