



Brooklands College

Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published February 2008	Provider reference 130825
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Introduction

Brooklands College, Ashford Campus (formerly Spelthorne College) was inspected in January 2006. Inspectors carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory or better in all areas inspected, except in skills for life, which was found to be inadequate. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is inadequate.

Skills for life was re-inspected on 22 and 23 January 2008. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Skills for Life	4	3

Context

At the time of the reinspection 675 learners were enrolled on skills for life programmes. Most learners, 517, are full time and 16-18 years old. Full time learners study level 1 and 2 courses in communications, application of number, literacy and numeracy alongside their vocational programme. Part time courses at entry level and level 1 are offered in language (ESOL) to 158 mainly adult students.

Strengths

- Good target setting for language learners
- Effective management of change

Areas for improvement

- Poor accommodation

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates in key skills application of number, communications and literacy have improved significantly and are above national rates for level 1 and at national rates for level 2. Entry-level qualifications for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners have rising success rates over a three year period but are still below national rates. The quality of learners work is satisfactory. Learners' targets are specific, closely monitored and regularly reviewed. Learners are positive about their learning experience and make good progress.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Thorough diagnostic assessment contributes to good lesson planning and learner records are now detailed and up to date. Teachers use information and communications technology (ICT) and audio-visual resources effectively. In ESOL lessons learners contribute well to discussion and show good development of language skills. Teachers use topic-based material which interests learners in key skills and literacy and numeracy lessons.

Support for students is good. Initial assessment is thorough and support is targeted effectively. Topic based workshops, for example 'Its hell to spell', are well attended by learners and improve specific skills. The range of courses meets the needs of learners, although too few learners undertake key skills application of number.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Effective strategies are in place for quality improvement. Communication between staff is good. Systems for quality assurance are robust and focus on achievement. ICT resources are good and staff are well trained. Accommodation is poor. Classrooms are unattractive and learners' work is not displayed. However, the college has a comprehensive accommodation improvement strategy in place.

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Brooklands College
Date of visit: 22 and 23 January 2008

Context

Brooklands College is a further education college operating from two sites and in community venues and workplaces across Surrey. It merged with Spelthorne College, a sixth form college, on 1st August 2007. The new college has two campuses; the Weybridge campus at the former Brooklands College site and the Ashford campus at the former Spelthorne College site.

In 2005/06, there were 3,497 Full time equivalent (FTE) learners at Brooklands College, of whom just over 50% were aged 16-18. For the same year, Spelthorne College had 766 FTE learners of whom around 70% were aged 16-18. Around 70% of learners at Spelthorne College were working towards qualifications at level 3.

Brooklands College was last inspected in January 2006 when all aspects of its provision were found to be at least satisfactory. Achievement and standards were judged to be good. Of the six curriculum areas inspected provision was good in three and satisfactory in three. The college had an annual assessment visit in November 2006. Spelthorne College was last inspected in February 2006 when all aspects of its provision were found to be satisfactory except for child care which was judged to be good, and skills for life which was inadequate. The college had a reinspection monitoring visit in July 2007.

Achievement and standards

What progress has the college made in improving success rates, particularly at level 3?	Reasonable progress
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Broadly speaking success rates pre merger improved for both colleges for 2006/07. Prior to merger Spelthorne College had made considerable improvements to its management information system and greatly improved the accuracy of its data. Success rates at Spelthorne College had been improving over a three year period, although at all levels improvement was

more significant for 16-18 year olds than for adults. For Brooklands College, in 2006/07 success rates for 16-18 year olds are above the 2005/06 national rate at all three levels, although at level 3 they are only just above it.. They have not improved significantly over the last three years. For adults the data is more difficult to interpret as significant changes to funding, a move towards full cost provision and changes in the Skills for Life provision have skewed the data. The college has made careful analysis of any apparent downwards trend in success rates and in each case has identified the cause and taken appropriate action. For example, level 2 success rates for students aged 16-18 were depressed by the poor performance of two first diploma courses, and level 3 success rates for adults by the poor completion of learners working towards A1 assessor qualifications. The success rates for 14-16 year old school pupils on increased flexibility programmes are particularly good. They have improved significantly since 2004/05 and are consistently high for all subject sector areas offered. Progression rates are also high. Currently some 380 school pupils attend these programmes offered in partnership with around 18 schools. Plans to introduce the new 14-19 diplomas are well-developed and on target for their introduction in 2009.

Quality of provision

What progress has the college made in improving the provision of key skills across the college?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress in improving key skills provision during the past eighteen months. Overall, the success rate for key skills has risen by around 28%, and was 57% during 2006/07. Success rates for all individual keys skills at levels 1 to 3 are now above national rates. In some cases, for example in application of number at level 1, success rates are more than 20% above national rates. However, increases in success rates for adult key skills qualifications are significantly lower than those for 16-18 year olds. The college has successfully devolved responsibility for key skills to curriculum and vocational areas. Key skills are now provided within a highly successful and popular employment skills programme for which learners receive either external awarding body or college certification.

What progress has been made in improving the quality of work-based learning?	Insufficient progress
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Although there have been improvements in the quality of work-based learning programmes, success rates remain poor overall and well below national averages. For 2006/07, success rates were 23% for apprentices and 30% for advanced apprentices. These rates do represent a considerable rise in success rates since 2004/05 when the success rates were only 4% for apprentices and

11% for advanced apprentices. However, the rise in rates has not kept pace with a strongly improving national trend. Although more learners achieve the NVO element of the apprenticeship frameworks these rates are also still well below the national rates.

The best performing area of work-based learning is engineering apprenticeships and here success rates for 2006/07 were satisfactory. Engineering apprenticeships accounted for about 25% of work-based learning apprenticeship leavers in 2006/07. Timely success rates are particularly poor and slow to improve. Overall the timely success rate for all apprenticeships was only 13% in 2006/07 compared with 40% nationally. The previous annual assessment visit reported that following a review of the status of apprentices on work-based learning programmes, some learners, after counselling and guidance, left the scheme. However, since then too many learners are still failing to complete either their NVO or the full framework. Improvements in assessment practices, the co-ordination of work-based learning programmes, target setting and reviews of progress have all been made but as yet have not impacted sufficiently on the low success rates.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made since the merger in addressing the poor accommodation at Spelthorne?	Significant progress
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The college has a carefully-planned and well-managed accommodation strategy to deliver new campus accommodation at the Ashford site, and several new buildings at the main Weybridge site. Long-term curriculum planning and the college's accommodation strategy are clearly and thoughtfully linked. New and re-furbished buildings are planned to maximise the college's ability to meet local and regional skills shortages. Much consideration has been given to environmental sustainability and resource utilisation for the new buildings. Consultation has been thorough and there has been effective involvement of local councils, schools and employers in planning. Careful consideration has been given to temporary relocation of provision at Ashford in order to minimise disruption to learners during building.

What progress has been made since merger in ensuring compliance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act across both college sites?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in meeting the requirements of recent disability and race relations legislation. An effective equal opportunities committee meets termly, and has good levels of representation from

curriculum and support staff, and from students and governors. An appropriate range of policies and procedures are in place to support, protect and ensure representation of all learners. Managers and governors have recently received impact assessment training, and cross-college staff training in equality and diversity is planned for the end of the current year. Good use is made of focus groups to gather views and consult on issues affecting particular student groups. Very good consideration has been given to every child matters themes, and all curriculum teams are required to comment on these during their annual review and self-assessment activity.

What progress has been made in developing effective self-assessment across the newly merged college?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made in establishing effective self-assessment across the college since merger in August 2007. A careful audit of quality and self-assessment systems was carried out prior to unification activities, and existing best practice from each college was adopted wherever possible. Senior managers engaged in good levels of consultation with curriculum managers and teams about the shape and functioning of new review and quality systems. Good use is made of the college virtual learning environment to provide staff with access to data and evidence for course team reviews and self-assessments. Very effective workshop arrangements exist to prepare curriculum area reviews from course team reviews, and moderation of subsequent self-assessment reviews and reports is good.

What progress has been made in developing the use of lesson observations?	Significant progress
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Since the 2006 annual assessment visit, the college has made significant progress in the accuracy and effectiveness of its lesson observation scheme as a mechanism for improving teaching. A comprehensive range of support mechanisms are available to teachers including peer observations, mentoring schemes and a 'stepping up programme' specifically designed to help teachers move their teaching from satisfactory to good. Very clear policies, comprehensive guidelines and thorough moderation processes help to ensure consistency of observers' grading, feedback and approach to carrying out the observations. Analysis of data resulting from the observations is used particularly well to identify common themes both in strengths and in areas for improvement. This allows the college to devise targeted plans for staff development both at an individual and cross college or curriculum level. Strong links have been identified between better teaching and higher success rates, for example, on entry and level 1 programmes. Connections have also been made between an over reliance on sessional teachers, poorer

observation grades and weaker success rates for adults. The college is now action planning against these issues. Particularly good use of the lesson observation data is made at a curriculum level to help to make judgements about teaching and learning in the self-assessment report. Specific projects for improving teaching include staff development in the use of ILT which is specifically tailored to individual curriculum teams to meet the needs of their subject and learners.

What progress has been made in improving the speed of quality improvement and ensuring consistency since the merger?	Significant progress
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Senior managers have taken a particularly well-measured and thoughtful approach to the practical aspects of the merger which took place in August 2007. A restructuring of staff roles and responsibilities has been carried out since merger and although the new team are not yet fully in place there is a strong focus on ensuring that the senior management team has sufficient resource for quality improvement. There is now a much stronger emphasis on the monitoring and review of the quality improvement plan. Quality administrators whose role was being piloted in 2006 are now working effectively to help improve quality and ensure consistency in specific identified areas of the college's work. Careful attention has been paid to prioritising actions to harmonise working practices between the two colleges, to rationalise curriculum and to minimise disruptions to learners. Senior managers have a clear vision for the future of the new merged college.