

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Bournemouth and Poole College

Date of visit: 9 June 2009

Context

The Bournemouth and Poole College is one of the largest general further education (GFE) colleges in the country and the biggest provider of academic and vocational education in Dorset. It is located on seven sites. The two main sites, at Lansdowne in Bournemouth and North Road in Poole, provide over 80% of the curriculum provision. The college recruits most of its learners from across Dorset and parts of Hampshire. It offers a very wide range of provision, from pre-entry courses to higher education (HE). The college provides many short courses for industry and commerce and has substantial provision for work-based learning, including apprenticeships, Entry to Employment (E2E) and Train to Gain.

In 2007/08 the college enrolled 3,787 full-time learners and 10,113 part-time learners across the seven teaching faculties. A further 621 work-based learners were recruited in addition to the 591 already on programmes, and 222 learners started on E2E programmes. Some 408 school pupils attended the college and there were 160 international learners from overseas.

The college was last inspected in January 2007. Its overall effectiveness was judged to be good, as were the quality of provision and leadership and management. Achievement and standards were judged satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

How much progress has been made in improving success rates, particularly for adults?	Insufficient progress
--	-----------------------

The college has made insufficient progress in raising success rates above national averages. This was also the judgement at the previous monitoring visit in March 2008. In 2007/08 some two-thirds of the college's long course provision had success rates below the national average for 2006/07. At all levels the success rates for long courses have improved since 2006/07, however success rates for adults at level 2 and for learners of all ages at level 3 had fallen in 2006/07 compared with 2005/06. Taking into account the likely rise in the national averages, it is probable that the vast majority of the college's provision will be below national averages, despite the improvements in 2007/08.

In 2006/07 long course success rates for adults were below national averages at all levels and particularly low at level 1. In 2007/08 the success rate for adult learners at level 1 improved significantly and is now in line with the 2006/07 national average. At level 2 success rates for adults have fallen since 2005/06 and are now significantly below the national average. This is due in part to very poor success rates on national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes, and in particular on the ITQ programme, which replaced the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) as an adult vocational computer course. The college has re-designed the delivery of this course and applied more thorough recruitment procedures. Recruitment staff now recognise the need to ensure that future learners are fully committed to achieving the ITQ, and would not be better served by one of the adult and community learning courses offered by other providers in the area. At level 3 success rates for adults are now 1% below the national average for 2006/07.

For learners aged 16 to 18 success rates on GCE AS and A level courses remain an area for concern. Success rates in 2007/08 are around 4% below the 2006/07 national average for both AS and A level.

On E2E programmes learners progression to further education or employment is low at 52% and has declined since 2005/06. However, on work-based learning programmes success rates are good and particularly high for advanced apprentices.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made in improving the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and the contribution it makes to teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The college has made reasonable progress in building on the improvements in the use of the VLE reported at the previous monitoring visit. Managers have set targets for the use of the VLE and comprehensive monitoring arrangements are in place. The college is working hard to devise systems to measure the impact of the college's VLE on the learners' experience. Much work has already taken place to ensure that all faculties have a sufficient range of resources available on the VLE and to implement audit arrangements. All but two of the college's faculties are meeting the college target of 70% of learners regularly accessing and using the VLE. An action plan is in place to continue to develop the VLE. The college has surveyed learners and identified those activities they enjoy and what motivates them to log on to the VLE. This research has shown a clear link between the quality of resources and the degree of use by learners.

How much progress has been made in increasing the number of work experience opportunities for learners?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

Increasing the number of work experience opportunities was a key strategic objective for the college in 2007/08. Although the college has made reasonable progress, it has been slow in some areas. The number of opportunities for learners

to engage in work experience has improved in several curriculum areas. The college has not taken a co-ordinated approach to organising work experience and it has little central data on the proportion of learners who take part in work experience. Only some faculties use the services of a full-time employment engagement officer.

In many curriculum areas, learners are benefiting from working with employers. For example, learners of creative studies work with professional theatre groups and take part in master classes with skilled full-time musicians. Learners on hospitality and catering, hair and beauty, and care courses have a good range of job related experiences and work experience is a mandatory part of some programmes. Learners in these areas are encouraged to keep diaries of their work-placements and use this as evidence towards their qualification or as part of assignment work. However, this does not happen in all areas of the college. Some learners who have part-time jobs in their vocational areas are not asked to record their experiences and insufficient use is made of the knowledge they gain.

Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in improving the quality of course reviews?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The quality of course reviews was an area for development in the college's 2006/07 self-assessment report. The college has made reasonable progress in developing a more thorough system to ensure that course reviews are accurate and provide a clear indication of the quality of provision. In conjunction with other college partners, who form part of a peer referencing group, the college has developed a balanced scorecard for the performance of individual courses. This has proved very successful, providing a clear view of course performance by using colours to identify degrees of risk and success. The scorecard measures performance against a series of clearly defined targets covering all the key aspects of a learner's experience, however it does not show the relative proportion of learners on individual courses, so does not indicate the proportion of learners performing well or poorly in a particular area. The scorecard focuses on college targets, with less attention to measuring performance against national averages.

How much progress has been made in improving teaching accommodation while minimising the disruption to learners?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

Since the previous inspection the college has made reasonable progress in improving teaching accommodation. Advanced plans are in place to completely refurbish the two main college sites, however funding is currently on hold which has impacted on the amount of work the college has been able to complete. Improvements have been made to hospitality and catering provision at the Lansdowne site along with the college crèche and classroom facilities for learners of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and other language courses. These areas are bright and inviting. Although facilities have been improved, these areas are in temporary accommodation and are due to be reviewed within the next two years. Some areas of the college are

still operating in old and shabby accommodation. At the North Road site in Poole some accommodation is in poor repair and in urgent need of renovation or modernisation. The college has a clear focus on ensuring learners are not disadvantaged while they wait to secure appropriate funds for the complete refurbishment. Plans are in place to repair and redecorate the most critical areas including some outreach sites.

How much progress has been made towards achieving the new Training Quality Standard?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The college has made reasonable progress to secure the Training Quality Standard (TQS) kite mark. The college registered with TQS in February this year and has recently made an application for Part A and Part B in hospitality and catering, retail and engineering. The first TQS audit is due to be carried out in July and the college is well prepared. There is good engagement with several large employers and learner numbers on apprenticeship programmes have slightly increased in what is a difficult time for many employers. The college has recently gained a contract to provide training for learners over 25 years of age and the number of learners taking up Train to Gain provision is high. Advanced plans are in place to apply for Part B in hair and beauty therapy, construction and care.

The college has prepared an employer responsiveness strategy and service level agreements are now in place between the faculties and the college central business unit. A new central database now ensures a more consistent approach to employer engagement across the college although it is too early to judge what the impact of this might be.

How much progress has been made in developing the accuracy and usefulness of the self-assessment report, particularly with regards to the use of data?	Insufficient progress
--	-----------------------

The previous monitoring visit reported that the college's self-assessment report was misleading in its presentation of data because it made insufficient use of validated national averages. Although the college is now using national averages from the college performance report it is still not making sufficient use of the data to support its judgements. The self-assessment report's overall summary of achievement and standards still does not paint a clear and accurate picture of the college's performance. For example the poor performance of courses at level 3 and at level 2 for adults is not fully explored. The report focuses too much on progress made and too little on comparisons with national averages. The summary for achievement and standards does not recognise that two-thirds of the provision is below national averages for 2006/07 and instead erroneously reports that 'the general trend is one of achievement above the national average and significantly increasing success rates for the overall long and short qualifications'.

The college has good arrangements for collecting the views of learners but this feedback has not always impacted sufficiently on some of the judgements made in the self-assessment report.

At faculty level the self-assessment report for sixth form studies does not include sufficient analysis of the areas of poor performance. It does not include any areas for improvement in the leadership and management of the faculty relating to raising success rates.

None of the faculty self-assessment reports include an analysis of the performance of different groups of learners or an assessment of the faculty's success in the promotion of equality of opportunity. The 2007/08 summary of the college's arrangements for equality of opportunity does not support the grade proposed. No strengths or areas for improvement are identified in this area of the college's work. However, the college has recognised this omission and has taken strong action to develop its arrangements for equality and diversity during 2008/09.