

Bowling College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58766

Name of lead inspector: Jan Smith HMI

Last day of inspection: 20 November 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Bowling College
Flockton Road
Bradford
BD4 7RH

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Information about the provider

1. Bowling College is located close to Bradford city centre. It offers programmes for adults on the main site and in five other venues across the city. Formerly part of Bradford Council's adult education service, it is now an independent company limited by guarantee. A minority of staff remain in the employment of Bradford Council.
2. Two of the three directors act as principal and deputy principal. The deputy principal is responsible for quality assurance. There are 23 staff, including 10 full-time and 7 part-time teachers.
3. The college offers courses in seven subject areas, all funded through West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council. The majority of enrolments are in foundations for learning and life, and in child development and well-being. The inspection graded programmes in both these main areas. The college has not been inspected previously.
4. Bradford Council is the fourth largest metropolitan district in England, with a population of 467,665. According to the 2001 census, 22% of that population are from minority ethnic groups. The Bradford district features prominently in the measures of social and educational deprivation; it is the 32nd most deprived district nationally. A quarter of the population has poor literacy, numeracy and language skills. Unemployment in the area is higher than the regional and national averages.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	27 full-time learners 522 part-time learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Grade 4
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	4
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	Grade
Child development and well being	3
Foundations for learning and life	2

Overall effectiveness

5. The overall effectiveness of Bowling College's provision is inadequate. There are many good features, and the college has successfully brought about improvements. However, some aspects of leadership and management restrict the college's capacity to improve further and to sustain improvement. In particular, the college does not self-assess its provision adequately in order to identify its strengths and those areas that need to improve.
6. The college has developed its programmes to meet the needs of the community, using well its links with employers and other partners. It has increased the proportion of learners gaining qualifications and improved the range of foundation level courses available at the main site and in community venues. Learners achieve qualifications well and many go on to further study, voluntary work or employment. Most teaching is good, using a variety of activities to maintain learners' interest, although lessons do not always enable

all learners to make the best possible progress. Staff support learners very well both inside and outside the classroom.

7. Arrangements to safeguard learners are satisfactory. Learners say they feel safe. Bowling College promotes equality and diversity effectively although managers do not pay enough attention to how this can be improved. Formal procedures to prevent bullying, harassment and discrimination are insufficient.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Overall success rates are satisfactory or better. Learners enjoy their learning and develop very good personal, vocational and employability skills. Many learners progress to further study, voluntary work or employment. Learners say they feel safe on college premises.
- Teaching and learning are mostly good. Most lessons are varied and interesting, and supported by good teaching materials. However, some lessons do not take enough account of the full range of learners' needs. Teachers and assessors check learning well. Teachers do not always set clear targets for learning and use them well to check learners' progress.
- The college uses its links with employers and community groups very well to develop its provision and meet learners' needs. Programmes offer learners good opportunities to progress to the next level of study.
- Teachers support learners well to help them to progress with their learning. Learners have good access to information, advice and guidance to help them plan their future work and study.
- The college has adopted a clear strategy towards developing its provision in line with local and national priorities and the needs of the local community. It has increased participation of minority ethnic residents, strengthened progression routes and extended provision for speakers of other languages.
- Very effective work with local partners has enabled the college to extend provision to centres across Bradford. It has built well on links with children's centres, and developed provision within other community-based venues.
- The college's quality improvement procedures are inadequate. It does not have a self-assessment report. The provider has not recently used its procedures for the observation of teaching and learning or for course review.
- The current management structure does not engage staff sufficiently in developing and improving provision. The college is over-reliant on the two senior managers.
- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. The college maintains an appropriate record of criminal records bureau (CRB) checks. Staff have received basic awareness training on safeguarding vulnerable adults and a designated member of staff has been appointed to take responsibility for development.

- The college is making a valuable contribution to narrowing the achievement gap for adults in the local community. The college celebrates diversity well and promotes respect and tolerance successfully within the classroom setting.
- Procedures to make sure the equal opportunities policy is implemented, reviewed and monitored regularly are insufficient. The college responds well to complaints, but there is no formal policy or procedure on bullying, harassment and discrimination.

What does Bowling College need to do to improve further?

- Establish a robust system for self-assessment that involves staff, builds on a wide range of evidence, and leads to planning for improvement.
- Re-establish arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning to involve more college staff in observation and moderation.
- Strengthen performance management, training and development to bring about improvement.
- Develop robust policies and procedures to strengthen the management and promotion of equality and diversity.
- Take further action to improve success rates on literacy provision at foundation (entry), foundation (level 1) numeracy and on the intermediate preparation for higher study course.
- Improve the individual learning plan processes to make the outcomes for individual learners clear, specific and measurable.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the welcoming and safe environment
- the fostering of good relationships between learners and teaching staff
- good opportunities for 'second chance' learners
- good teaching
- good personal and classroom support.

What learners would like to see improved:

- refreshment facilities at the main site
- parking at some centres
- the size of some classrooms.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the way that the college is very effective in meeting employers' needs, especially in children's centres
- the good communication with the college
- good links between learners' college work and practice in the workplace
- the outstanding progress from entry and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 1 to NVQ level 3 in childcare courses.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more consistency in the amount and standard of work demanded by the college of individual learners
- more formal input into assessment.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 4

8. The college has improved some key aspects of provision over the last three years. It has set and exceeded a challenging target to improve the overall success rate, increasing this from 71% in 2006/07 to 90% in 2008/09.
9. The provider has successfully adapted the curriculum to meet the needs of employers and the community better. In response to concerns raised by the funding body, it has improved outcomes for speakers of other languages. Internal verification procedures have been tightened and direct claims status reinstated. Recruitment and initial assessment of learners is now more thorough. Retention and attendance rates have also improved.
10. However, the provider's capacity to sustain improvement is significantly impaired by the absence of established procedures for self-assessment that involve staff and users, and the over-reliance on the roles of the two senior managers. Many of the improvements made have been in response to external factors and have not been driven by the college's own quality improvement arrangements. The college plans to expand further the college's provision at another venue carries some risk and will place further demands on staffing resources.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

11. Outcomes for learners are good. Overall success rates across the college's provision for 2008/09 are good at foundation (entry) level and advanced (level 3), and satisfactory for foundation (level 1) and intermediate (level 2). In health and social care, success rates have improved over the last 3 years. They are currently above national average at 86% for level 1 and 90% for level 3 learners. Attendance is also good. Success rates for most foundation for learning and life courses are good, particularly in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Success rates for a minority of learners on foundation for learning and life courses are unsatisfactory.
12. Learners enjoy their learning and develop very good personal, vocational and employability skills. Many learners recruited to the childcare programme start with low levels of prior attainment and significant barriers to learning, including poor literacy and language skills. They develop a good awareness of appropriate professional behaviour in the workplace, and grow in confidence when dealing with the wider community. Over half progress to further education at the end of their studies. Learners on literacy and ESOL programmes improve their abilities to speak, write and understand English. Many gain the confidence to undertake voluntary work and part-time employment. Learners report that they feel safe on college and partners' premises.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

13. The quality of provision is good. Most teaching and learning is good. Teachers make effective use of a variety of activities and resources to engage learners' interest. They link childcare sessions well to vocational requirements. There are some particularly strong features of ESOL provision. These include the lively and energetic pace, and the extensive opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills. In some foundation for learning and life classes, planned activities do not take account of the full range of individual needs. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to support learning. However, learners are unable to use computers in class following the theft of equipment from the main site several months previously.
14. The assessment of learners' performance is satisfactory or better. Childcare assessors use their good subject knowledge to carry out fair and consistent assessments and to give constructive feedback to learners. ESOL teachers use questioning very well to check learning in class. The use of target setting is not fully effective in helping learners to progress.
15. The college uses its links with employers and community groups very well to develop its provision and meet learners' needs. Programmes offer learners good opportunities to progress to the next level of study. The range of levels in ESOL is particularly wide.
16. Teachers support learners well to help them progress with their learning. Assessors provide useful information about opportunities for future development for learners who wish to progress to higher levels of education and career paths. The college makes effective use of an external agency to provide impartial information, advice and guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade 4

17. The college has adopted a clear strategy towards developing its provision in line with local and national priorities and the needs of the local community. It has increased participation of minority ethnic residents, strengthened progression routes and extended provision for speakers of other languages. It no longer offers courses for learners aged 16 to 18. The principal has set and exceeded a challenging target for overall achievement.
18. Very effective work with local partners has enabled the college to extend provision to centres across Bradford. It has built well on links with children's centres, and developed provision within other community-based venues.
19. The college's quality improvement procedures are inadequate. The only self-assessment report produced was an incomplete draft for 2006/07. This did not contain sufficient evidence or judgements to identify improvements needed. The provider consults widely with learners and responds promptly to their individual concerns. However, the college does not use learner views in a systematic way to inform self-assessment. The provider has not used its

procedures for lesson observation or for course review recently. The Deputy Principal normally conducts these. Following the departure of several key teaching staff, she has taken on a more substantial teaching role and has been unable to fulfil her quality role.

20. The current management structure does not engage staff sufficiently in developing and improving provision. There are few formal systems or records. The college is over-reliant on the two senior managers and there is very little delegation of responsibility to other staff. The development plan and internal policies do not provide an adequate framework for improvement. The college has no formal systems in place to manage staff performance or plan training.
21. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. The college carries out criminal records bureau (CRB) checks and maintains an up-to-date record. Staff have received basic awareness training on safeguarding vulnerable adults and a designated member of staff has been appointed to take responsibility for development. All venues have locked doors and a procedure for signing visitors in and out. Learners are advised to wait inside the main site after evening classes when being collected.
22. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory overall. However, there is insufficient management to monitor and improve this area. The college is making a valuable contribution to narrowing the achievement gap for adults in the local community. It has significantly increased the proportion of minority ethnic learners to better reflect the needs of the local population. Provision for speakers of other languages has been strengthened. The college has extended provision to a variety of venues across Bradford, including some that work with vulnerable adults. It has continued to improve outcomes for all learners, including many with few formal qualifications. The college analyses data on achievement to make sure this continues to be the case. The college celebrates diversity well and promotes respect and tolerance successfully within the classroom setting. Staff ensure that learners are aware of the college's equality and diversity values, and of their rights and responsibilities at the start of their programme. The college has not invested in any training to increase and update staff awareness of the equality and diversity issue. The equal opportunities policy in the staff handbook is not supported by an implementation plan and is not regularly reviewed. Staff respond effectively to complaints in general. However, the college's approach to bullying, harassment and discrimination is insufficiently documented or formally communicated to users.

Subject areas

Child development and well-being

Grade 3

Context

23. One hundred and seventy-four learners are working towards qualifications in social care, children's care and direct learning support. Of these, 118 are following child development and well-being courses. All learners are funded through employer responsive funding. Some are employed and others are on work placement. Training and assessments are carried out on the main college site, four community venues and in the workplaces.

Key findings

- Success rates are high and have improved steadily over the last three years. They are currently above national average at 86% for intermediate level and 90% for advanced level learners. Attendance is also good.
- Learners develop very good personal, vocational and employability skills, frequently from a starting point of low prior attainment and significant barriers to learning. Learners are highly motivated, and develop good professional skills and confidence in dealing with the wider community. A significant proportion progress to further education.
- Teaching and learning programmes are satisfactory. Sessions engage learners' interest well, and are very relevant to the vocational qualification and to work. Teachers use appropriate teaching methods and resources to promote and extend learning.
- The assessment of learners' performance is satisfactory. Assessors use their good subject knowledge to carry out fair and consistent assessments and give constructive feedback to learners.
- Individual learning plans are not effectively used to support and monitor learners' progress. The plans contain too little detail and are not routinely updated. For example, results of initial assessment are not recorded. Progress reviews do not measure progress against clear targets. Comments give insufficient guidance to the learner on how to progress.
- The college makes very good use of its links with a wide range of local employers and community groups to promote and recruit to childcare courses. Employers have a high regard for the quality of vocational training provided by the college.
- Induction is used effectively to ensure learners have a full understanding of all aspects of their training, including the college's equality and diversity values and approach to ensuring their safety.
- Learners receive effective guidance and support. Well-qualified and experienced assessors provide useful information about career paths and study at higher levels. They provide sensitive support to learners to overcome social and

personal barriers to learning. Learners value the support they receive and recognise that it helps them to stay on programme and achieve.

What does Bowling College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates by setting more challenging targets and introducing more formal quality improvement procedures.
- Make sure that learners' targets are realistic, precise, and take account of the needs identified in initial assessment. Strengthen the use of these targets in progress reviews.
- Consider how the development of partnerships with other childcare providers might be used to improve practice.

Foundations for life and learning

Grade 2

Context

24. The total enrolments in this area are 227. Of these, 119 learners are enrolled on ten ESOL courses in seven centres. One hundred and forty-seven are enrolled on nine literacy and numeracy courses in three centres. Daytime and evening provision is available at levels ranging from foundation to intermediate levels. Twenty learners are enrolled on an intermediate preparation for a higher study course. Learners can progress from this to an advanced level course to prepare for higher education entry.

Key findings

- Success rates for ESOL and for most literacy and numeracy courses are good. ESOL success rates are all above the national average with very high success rates of 100% for the foundation level speaking and listening qualifications. Success rates for adult numeracy at foundation and intermediate levels, and for adult literacy intermediate and advanced levels are also above national average.
- Learners' develop good personal, social and employability skills across all programmes. They improve their ability to speak, write and understand English. Many gain the confidence to progress to further learning, undertake voluntary work or secure part-time employment.
- Success rates for a minority of courses are unsatisfactory and are well below national average. These are the intermediate level preparation for higher study, foundation (entry) level literacy and foundation (level 1) numeracy courses. The college has taken action to address this by improving the use of initial assessment and assignments to support progress.
- Teaching and learning on ESOL is good. High quality materials and resources, and varied activities such as group work and games support learning well. The lively pace and extensive use of spoken English in ESOL lessons is particularly effective. Teaching staff on most courses make good use of whiteboards but learners have too little use of computers following the theft of equipment from the main site.
- Teachers support learners well to help them achieve their potential. They receive very good personal and academic support through regular individual and group tutorials. Teaching staff are very accessible to learners at other times, including in the evenings and holidays.
- Overall, teachers monitor learners' progress well. However, some individual learning plans contain targets that are unclear or too imprecise to help the learner understand the progress they are making.

- Some lessons do not address the range of individual needs within the class. Lesson plans do not make clear how teachers will meet the full range of individual needs. This means that weaker learners may receive too little support while others are insufficiently stretched.
- The range of provision meets the immediate skill needs and longer-term aims of learners well. The college offers classes at a variety of times and venues across Bradford. The courses offer good opportunities to progress from foundation (entry) level through to higher education.
- Enrichment activities across all provision add to learners' enjoyment, social interaction and understanding of British culture, and give opportunities for project work. These include visits to libraries, museums, seaside resorts and university open days.
- The ESOL curriculum team has worked very effectively to extend the range of provision, strengthen initial assessment and improve the use of teaching and learning resources.

What does Bowling College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the planning and delivery of lessons to include activities appropriate to the full range of individual needs.
- Improve target setting, so that learners understand clearly what they need to learn and how well they have progressed.
- Continue to address the poor success rates on a minority of courses by strengthening the use of initial assessment and assignments.

Information about the inspection

25. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's deputy principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans and data on learners and their achievement.
26. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails. They looked at the outcomes of questionnaires that learners had completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions and assessments. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Bowling College

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	276		46
Full-time learners	174	230	174
Part-time learners			
Overall effectiveness	4		
Capacity to improve	4		
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	3		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?*</i>			
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>			
Quality of provision	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
Leadership and management	4	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	4		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>			
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	4		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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