

# City of Bath College

## Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 130558

Name of lead inspector: Gloria Dolan HMI

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

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## Information about the provider

1. City of Bath College is a medium-sized general further education college. It is located in the centre of Bath and serves both the population of the city and the surrounding rural area of Bath and North East Somerset. The minority ethnic population of the area is approximately 3%. The local unemployment rate is low. Around 80% of local jobs are in the service sector. While the college is located in an area of relative affluence, there are significant pockets of deprivation. The proportion of school students achieving five plus GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics is well above the national average and was 56.9% in 2007/08.
2. The college offers courses in all 15 sector subject areas, although student numbers in some areas are small. Arts, media and publishing is the largest area and accounts for approximately 20% of all enrolments. Levels of study offered range from pre-entry to degree level. Many more students study at advanced level than at foundation or intermediate levels. The college offers apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds, at 16%, is much higher than in the local population.
3. The college went into financial recovery in 2006. A new permanent senior management team was formed with the appointment of a new principal in August 2007 with other members of the senior team joining the college between September 2007 and February 2008. The college mission is 'Raising your skills, improving life chances'.
4. The college has two franchise partners, one for mainly adult provision in sport and massage qualifications and another partner which delivers Train to Gain provision in passenger transportation. The inspection included all Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded provision and the following subject areas were covered in depth: hairdressing and beauty therapy; sport, leisure, travel and tourism; art and design; literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
  - Premier Training (sport and leisure)
  - West Wing (Train to Gain)

| Type of provision                         | Number of enrolled learners in 2007/08             |
|---|--|
| Provision for young learners:<br>14 to 16 | 42 full-time learners<br>85 part-time learners     |
| Further education (16 to 18)              | 1,432 full-time learners<br>274 part-time learners |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Foundation learning                                      | 157 part-time learners                             |
| Provision for adult learners:<br>Further education (19+) | 461 full-time learners<br>1,593 part-time learners |
| Employer provision:<br>Train to Gain<br>Apprenticeships  | 280 learners<br>74 apprentices                     |

## Summary report

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

|                                    |         |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Overall effectiveness of provision | Grade 3 |
|------------------------------------|---------|

|                     |         |
|---------------------|---------|
| Capacity to improve | Grade 2 |
|---------------------|---------|

|                           | Grade |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Outcomes for learners     | 3     |
| Quality of provision      | 3     |
| Leadership and management | 2     |
| Safeguarding              | 2     |
| Equality and diversity    | 2     |

| Subject Areas  |   |
|--|---|
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy                                | 3 |
| Sport, leisure, travel and tourism                             | 4 |
| Art and design   | 1 |
| Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages | 3 |

## Overall effectiveness

6. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The gap between the college's success rate and the national average has improved significantly over the last two years. It has improved from almost 10 percentage points below the national average in 2006/07 to less than five percentage points below average in 2008/09. Students are currently making at least satisfactory progress and in art and design their progress is outstanding. The standard of students' work is at least satisfactory or better. Students' progression rates to higher level courses or employment are good.
7. Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. The majority of lessons are good or better. A comprehensive system for observing and improving lessons supports the development of staff well. The use of assessment to develop students' abilities and rate of progress is satisfactory. Initial assessment of literacy and numeracy skills for full-time students is sound and leads to timely

support. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students and employers is satisfactory but foundation and intermediate level courses are too limited or do not appropriately meet students' needs in all curriculum areas. The college provides a broad vocational curriculum at advanced level. Partnership working is good. Productive partnerships with local employers, the community, schools and voluntary organisations have been established. Care, guidance and support for students are good and students feel well cared for. Students are well supported by a wide range of services. Additional learning support helps students to be successful. Advice and guidance are generally good and being further improved.

8. Leadership and management are good. Senior managers and governors have a good strategic vision for the college which has led to a successful financial recovery in 2008/09. At the same time as managing the budget well, the college has invested successfully in resources and improved the quality of provision. Governance of the college is good. Quality improvement arrangements are good and data are used effectively.

### Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The gap between the college's success rate and the national average has improved significantly over the last two years. Success rates are broadly average for the many students studying at advanced level but they are low at foundation and intermediate levels, particularly for adults.
- Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those receiving additional learning support had a much higher success rate than the average for the college last year. No significant differences exist between the success rates of students from minority ethnic groups or male and female students and the college average. Students' progress and the standards of their work are at least satisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some lessons are exciting, challenging and involve students fully in learning. In the many satisfactory lessons, objectives are generally clear, and teachers help students progress with a reasonable variety of activities. In a few lessons, individual needs are not met due to insufficient challenge and checking of students' learning.
- A comprehensive and well-managed system of teaching and learning observations helps individual teachers to improve. Descriptions of areas for improvement on a minority of observation records are not detailed enough. Observers who are not subject specialists are not always able to identify all the strengths and areas for improvement in lessons.
- Information learning technology (ILT) is not used enough to make learning more effective and exciting. The college is well equipped and has provided many supportive training opportunities to help teachers use ILT well. These actions have not had sufficient impact. Much of the equipment and the virtual learning environment is underutilised or not used imaginatively.

- The broad curriculum at advanced level provides suitable progression routes from foundation level courses to higher levels in many areas. Work placement and work-experience opportunities are underdeveloped in areas such as hairdressing and beauty therapy. Enrichment activities are wide ranging but the college has yet to fully evaluate students' participation.
- The college has built effective and productive partnership working with the local community, schools and businesses. The college has developed proactively many partnerships to align the curriculum well with local needs. As a result, the college's reputation and standing in the community has been enhanced.
- Advice, guidance and support for students are good. The college provides good individual care and additional support for its students who have identified special needs such as sensory impairments. Support for students with literacy, numeracy or language needs is good and helps students to be successful. The good support provided helps students to cope effectively with personal problems.
- Information, advice and guidance are generally good. Students have many opportunities to learn about what they can progress onto after their courses and progression rates onto further learning or employment are good. Advice and guidance for students entering the college are being strengthened to ensure that all students are on the appropriate level course.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior managers and governors have a good strategic vision for the development and improvement of the college, which has led to a successful financial recovery in 2008/09. At the same time as managing the budget well, the college has invested successfully in resources and improved the quality of provision.
- Governance of the college is good. The quality of governance has improved significantly since the previous inspection and all aspects of the college are monitored closely. Governors are well informed and they have a good understanding of the key issues and challenges faced by the college in the future.
- Quality improvement arrangements are good. Data are used effectively. Swift actions are taken to address areas of underperformance and teaching and learning have improved. The quality of provision across curriculum areas is variable. The sharing of best practice between subject areas is not yet sufficiently effective and the quality of provision varies widely.

### What does City of Bath College need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' success rates, progress and the standards they achieve through consistently good teaching and learning.
- Improve the quality of lower performing areas by sharing good practice with higher performing areas more effectively.
- Ensure that lessons meet the individual needs of students by providing appropriate interest and challenge to stimulate students' ambition well. Incorporate ILT into lessons appropriately.

- Improve the lesson observation process by having subject specialists take part in the observations of lessons. Monitor observation records and action plans for improvement to ensure they are all specific and well focused.
- Further develop links with employers to provide work-experience opportunities in curriculum areas where it is underdeveloped.

#### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

##### What learners like:

- the enjoyable courses
- being treated like an adult
- the good support from teachers
- the good support with personal issues
- the enthusiastic and expert teachers
- the good feedback on work which helps them to improve
- teachers are always ready to help
- the common room

##### What learners would like to see improved:

- the size of the common room which is not always big enough
- the management of the smoking areas so that non-smokers are not near smoke
- the male changing rooms that need updating
- the lack of outside space

#### Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

##### What employers like:

- the flexible, innovative approach to meeting needs
- the good partnership working
- the much improved communication
- the readily available help

##### What employers would like to see improved:

- No common or significant issues were reported

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

9. The college's capacity to make and sustain improvements is good. Since the previous inspection new college leaders have established successfully a shared culture and ethos of improvement. Rigorous self-assessment has led to an accurate and self-critical evaluation of the college. The quality of governance has improved significantly since the last inspection. Following considerable financial instability, finance and budget management have improved greatly and are now good. Governors and leaders have been successful in guiding the college through a difficult period and assuring its financial stability, at the same time as investing in resources and improving the quality of provision.
10. The clear identification of key underperforming courses has led to several being withdrawn. In others, course teams receive strong support from managers. This has led to much improved success rates for long courses and the closing of the gap between college and national averages. Good improvements have been secured to success rates on apprenticeships. A good staff development process is helping improvements in teaching and learning. Quality improvement processes are effective. The college has made good progress towards rectifying areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. While the sharing of good practice between curriculum areas has improved, the college recognises that it still has more work to do.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

11. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The gap between the college's success rate and the national average has improved significantly over the last two years. In 2006/07, the overall success rate for long qualifications was almost 10 percentage points below the national average. In 2008/09 the college success rate was less than five percentage points below average.
12. The newly appointed senior managers discovered, in March 2008, that the college had a franchise distance learning programme which was contracted prior to their appointment. Seventy per cent of students had left early by the time it was discovered. If the discontinued distance learning provision for adults, which affected 2008/09 data only, was excluded from the long course success rates, the gap with the national average improved by eight percentage points to broadly average.
13. Success rates for students of all ages improved well in 2008/09. They were broadly average for 16 to 18 year olds and below average for adults. Most students study at advanced level. Success rates at advanced level improved to the national average for students of all ages in 2008/09. Success rates were



below average at foundation and intermediate levels, particularly for adults. Fourteen- to sixteen-year-old students had high success rates last year. Success rates on short courses are satisfactory.

14. Success rates vary widely across subject areas but the gap with the national average improved in 2008/09 in almost every area. High numbers of students take key skills and success rates improved significantly in 2008/09 to 49% from 17% the previous year. Overall success rates for apprenticeships improved well over the last two years to the national average. Timely success rates for level 2 apprenticeships are high. Success rates are satisfactory on Train to Gain programmes.
15. Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds had a success rate well above the college average in 2008/09. Students receiving additional learning support, including those with sensory and mobility impairments, had a much higher success rate than the average for the college last year. The difference in the success rates of male and female students has narrowed and success rates are now very similar. There are no significant differences between the success rates of students from minority ethnic groups and the college average.
16. Students are making at least satisfactory progress and in art and design their progress is outstanding. The standard of students' work is at least satisfactory or better. Students' progression rates to higher level courses or employment are good. Students feel safe at college and almost all demonstrate good awareness of health and safety procedures in practical lessons. Many students make a good contribution to both the college and the external community. Students participate actively in volunteering and charitable pursuits. The development of students' economic well-being is satisfactory. Most students develop skills and gain qualifications which will help them in their careers.

### The quality of provision

Grade: 3

17. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. The majority of lessons are good or better. In satisfactory lessons, teachers guide students through relevant objectives with a reasonable variety of methods. In a minority of lessons, individual students' needs are not met due to insufficient challenge and checking of learning. In the best lessons, students work on a variety of stimulating and challenging activities. Students are highly motivated in these lessons and extend their knowledge and skills most effectively. In a minority of lessons, too many students are late. They disrupt their own and other students' learning. Actions to encourage punctuality are not fully effective. Teaching and learning are satisfactory on apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes but there was a slow start to assessment and learners' progress in hairdressing.
18. A comprehensive system for observing and improving lessons now supports the development of staff well. Learning coaches are particularly effective in

providing sensitive, flexible and professional support for teachers. Outcomes from observations are analysed carefully and used well to guide improvements. Areas for improvement identified in a small number of observations are insufficiently detailed or relevant to improving learning. The pace of improvement between departments is variable but all areas continue to improve. The quality of lessons is at least satisfactory in all areas. The college recognised that it was over-grading the quality of lessons. It has revised its quality assurance and now has a more realistic profile. Teaching strengths and shortcomings have not always been noted accurately by observers who are not subject specialists. Key skills are well integrated into vocational areas.

19. Much technology is available to aid learning, and the college provides many helpful initiatives to help staff to use ILT well. While there are good examples of it being used to support and enliven learning, it is not sufficiently widespread. The virtual learning environment is satisfactory and is being further developed. The college is piloting the use of a social networking site to improve communication and support for students.
20. The use of assessment to develop students' abilities and rate of progress is satisfactory, as are arrangements for internal verification. The quality and timeliness of feedback to students are generally satisfactory, though in a minority of cases teachers are slow to return marked work. In the best cases, students are involved fully in a conversation on how to improve. Progress reviews take place frequently and students receive relevant actions for improvement.
21. Initial assessment of literacy and numeracy skills for full-time students is sound and leads to timely support being given. Additional learning support is monitored regularly and helps students to stay on course and be successful. This is enhanced by good links with schools and effective protocols for early notification of students' needs. Teaching and learning promote equality and support diversity.
22. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students and employers is satisfactory. It has expanded its Train to Gain and full-cost work. The college has made good improvements in the last two years in meeting the needs and interests of its students. It has increased the breadth of its curriculum at foundation and intermediate levels but this is still too limited or not used to appropriately meet students' needs in some curriculum areas. A foundation level course includes tasters of a number of vocational courses. This is helpful to students who are unsure about what they wish to study at a higher level. The college has concentrated successfully on improving literacy and numeracy skills and developing employability and social skills through a range of short courses. Partnership working is good. Many short courses have been designed through consultation with local employers and the local authority. For example, two popular courses are improving the literacy and numeracy skills of local taxi drivers and courses are provided on decontamination for health service workers. While work experience is an integral component of some vocational areas it is not embedded in vocational courses throughout the

college. The college offers a broad vocational curriculum at advanced level. The college works closely with local schools on collaborative provision on advanced subsidiary level courses and specialist diplomas. They work to ensure that courses are not unnecessarily duplicated in institutions. A fresh, lively enrichment programme was introduced in 2007/08 that links thoughtfully to curriculum areas and the Every Child Matters themes. Participation in the programme has not been evaluated fully.

23. Since the last inspection the college has built productive partnerships with local employers, the community and voluntary organisations and has re-established good links with local schools. The college works with the Bath Black Families Education Support Group to improve the participation and achievement of minority ethnic students. The good relationship which the college enjoys with its local schools has led to increased vocational learning opportunities for school students. Pupils study vocational courses at college tailored to their individual needs and circumstances. The college also provides personally designed full-time courses for 14 to 16 year old students who have been excluded from school. Students with learning difficulties from a local specialist college attend college and are taught and cared for sensitively. The employability programme that the college offers to adults seeking employment, in conjunction with Jobcentre Plus, is a good example of how social inclusion is promoted.
24. Care, guidance and support for students are good and students feel well cared for. Bullying, racist or other incidents are very rare and prompt and sensible actions are taken by the college to deal with any that do occur. The support for students' additional needs such as sensory impairments is good and has improved since the last inspection. Literacy and numeracy are integrated well into vocational courses and managed effectively across the college. The range of support services for students is wide. They include a good counselling service, a supportive inter-faith chaplaincy and well-considered mentoring support. The addition of two specialist careers staff has enhanced the information, advice and guidance services. They complement the variety of approaches that have been put in place to ensure that students from college and local schools receive appropriate advice about their next steps. A skills fair, regular taster days and work with local universities are good examples of this approach. The college is further improving its entry processes, through training for guidance teachers, and in continuing to ensure students are on the right level course.

## Leadership and management

Grade: 2

25. Leadership and management are good. Senior managers and governors have a good strategic vision for the development and improvement of the college, which has led to successful financial recovery in 2008/09. At the same time as managing the budget well, the college has invested successfully in resources and improved the quality of provision. Partnership and collaborative working is good and is a key part of the strategy. The college has responded well to

meeting local needs within the community it serves. There is an open style of leadership and staff are clear about their roles and the need for change. Success rates have improved significantly over the last two years.

26. Governance of the college is good. The quality of governance has improved significantly since the previous inspection and all aspects of the college are monitored closely. Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of the key issues as well as the challenges faced by the college in the future.
27. The college gives high regard to the safeguarding of all its students and the promotion of safeguarding is good. The newly formed safeguarding panel has helped to identify appropriate interventions for students where needed. The college has very good links with external agencies who share responsibility for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The college records and responds to all incidents well. Risk assessments and frequent monitoring visits of work placements and sub-contracted provision lead to suitable actions where required. The college has completed obligatory Criminal Record Bureau checks and has a single register of all those required. The college is well prepared for the future new legislative requirements. All staff and governors have received training in safeguarding and are fully aware of their responsibilities. A very small number of students in hairdressing do not always demonstrate full awareness of good health and safety practices.
28. The college provides satisfactory value for money. Accommodation and learning resources overall are satisfactory with some areas that are good. It is good in art and design although some areas of the college and some teaching rooms are tired and in need of refurbishment.
29. Quality improvement arrangements are good and data are used effectively when planning. Swift action is taken to address areas of underperformance and good staff development has helped to improve teaching and learning. Although the quality of provision across the curriculum areas remains variable, the college has taken appropriate actions to rectify this. The college's self-assessment process is robust and the report gives an open and accurate account of the key strengths and areas for improvement. However, there is insufficiently clear identification of key issues in work-based learning or some subject areas such as hairdressing. In most curriculum areas, students' and employers' views are used well. The college has a clear understanding of the work it has to do to improve further. The sharing of good practice is not sufficiently effective.
30. The promotion of equality and support for diversity is good. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of equality and diversity. The college has strong links with a local black families' education support group, and the proportion of minority ethnic students in the college is well above the local average. More staff now declare a disability due to an ethos of respect arising from an overt commitment to equality and diversity. The college is tackling successfully the stereotyping associated with gender, and gender imbalance in curriculum areas such as construction, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and

hairdressing. The equality and diversity committee is particularly active in raising awareness and monitoring effectively the performance of different groups of students. Prompt action has eliminated the gap in success rates for minority ethnic students. Students with learning difficulties now perform above the average for the college. The promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum is particularly strong in sport, ICT, early years, and art and design. A good range of cross-college and themed events promote equality and diversity effectively. This includes the regular celebration of cultural differences. The recent appointment of an equality and diversity officer is further strengthening the promotion of equality and diversity across the college.

## Subject areas

### Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 3

#### Context

31. Some 252 students take full-time courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy and complementary therapy at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Most students are aged 16 to 18 with 69 students aged 19 and over. Another 59 students, mostly adults, are studying part-time courses in massage, anatomy and physiology, reflexology and Indian head massage. Of the 29 apprentices in hairdressing, 25 are on the level 2 apprenticeship programme and four are on the advanced apprenticeship programme.

#### Key Findings

- Success rates are satisfactory and improving. They improved sharply in 2008/09 when most qualification success rates were well above national averages. Overall success rates for apprentices are satisfactory. They are good for level 2 apprentices and timely success rates are good. Success rates are below average for the small number of advanced apprentices.
- The standard of students' work is good in beauty and complementary therapies and satisfactory in hairdressing. Beauty and complementary therapy students present a good professional image and complete practical work in massage and therapies to a high standard. Students' written work is good. Progression rates to higher level courses are satisfactory.
- Students' development of good professional standards is insufficiently robust. Hygienic practices are not always implemented by all hairdressing students and a minority of students do not automatically use protective gloves when colouring hair.
- Students make a positive contribution to the community. They are involved in many local and national fund-raising events. Students and staff work with mother and baby groups and other organisations and offer reduced treatment rates for people from specific low income client groups.
- Students feel safe and enjoy the wide variety of enrichment and social activities the college offers. Students are proud of their college and enjoy the social aspects of college life.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, good questioning skills are used frequently by teachers to check learning. Students are involved actively in lessons, the pace of lessons is good and students are challenged appropriately. In less successful lessons, students are not challenged or involved in their learning enough and they make insufficiently productive use of their time.
- Teaching lacks ambition in lessons for apprentices. Much practical work is completed on blocks. There is a late start to assessing hairdressing skills.

- Marked work contains positive and constructive feedback for college-based students and apprentices which helps them to improve their performance.
- Information learning technology is not used often enough to promote learning in lessons. Teaching rooms have appropriate equipment and the college offers development courses for staff; however, most hairdressing and beauty teachers have not taken up this training.
- Support is good. Vocational teachers and specialist additional support teachers provide good support for students. Specialist support teachers work well with vocational teachers to enhance students' learning in practical and theory lessons.
- Entry criteria for level 1 and level 2 hairdressing and beauty therapy courses are inappropriate. Students are recruited mainly according to their GCSE results. This is unnecessarily narrow and does not take sufficient account of learners' aptitude and practical capabilities. Not all students are on the right level course.
- Resources are satisfactory. Hairdressing salons are spacious, with sufficient natural light. There are few images or displays of students' work on walls. Beauty salons are satisfactory and contain appropriate equipment; however, in some rooms there are not enough couches for the number of students.
- In 2007 a new curriculum manager was appointed who reorganised the area and introduced new courses to better meet students' needs. The curriculum is still under review. Refurbishments and the introduction of staff uniforms have improved the professional image of the area; but high professional standards are not demonstrated by all students in lessons.
- Self-assessment is insufficiently detailed in reporting on work-based learning.

What does the City of Bath need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that good professional practice is embedded in all practical lessons by developing a culture of high professional standards and by monitoring the implementation of good health and safety procedures.
- Strengthen initial advice and guidance to ensure all students are on the appropriate level course by reviewing the selection criteria for level 1 and level 2 courses.
- Increase the use of information learning technology to enhance learning in lessons by ensuring that teaching staff have the necessary skills to use it effectively.
- Improve work-based learning by ensuring detailed and accurate self-assessment and by including more work on clients at an earlier stage of the course.

## Sport, leisure, travel and tourism

Grade 4

### Context

32. Some 374 students study full-time vocational courses, including BTEC qualifications, in sport and travel at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18. A further 64 students, who are mainly adults, study personal fitness training, exercise to music and sports massage with a local training franchise partner.

### Key Findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. Success rates on most college-based courses are low. Success rates are high on short courses at the franchise provider. The quality of students' work on franchise courses is good and those students develop good employability skills. The standard of students' work is satisfactory at college and they develop satisfactory skills for employment. Students feel safe and work safely.
- The progress made by students in lessons is satisfactory. Students demonstrate appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. Students have a good understanding of personal health issues and healthy lifestyles.
- Lateness by students disrupts lessons and those who arrive late miss important information at the start of lessons. Most students are challenged about lateness by teachers. In one lesson, late students missed an instruction about the need for confidentiality about personal information which was being discussed.
- Students' attendance is satisfactory in both travel and sport lessons. Attendance rates on franchise provision are good.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in sport lessons is good. Lessons cover aspects relating to disability, race, religion and gender. Students show good development and understanding of issues around equality. Discussion is well focused to explore issues in lessons. Religious differences are discussed effectively including, for example, how fasting might influence performance in sport.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Good classroom management and stimulating activities engage students well in the better lessons. In weaker lessons, students spend too much time taking notes and pair or group work is not used for discussion and to develop students' knowledge.
- Innovative use of video, music and active learning in a minority of lessons motivate and engage students very well. Teachers in most lessons refer students to learning materials, assignments and key dates that are available on the intranet. The college is piloting the use of a social networking site for teachers and students to communicate quickly about students' performance.
- There is too little checking of learning in theory lessons. Students spend too long listening to teachers. Students' progress is not recorded so that students at



risk of failing assignments are not identified early and set extra work. Students are not always attentive and in some lessons talk while the teacher is giving instructions.

- The assessment of students' work is satisfactory and enables them to improve. The feedback provided is encouraging.
- The range of provision in sport and travel is satisfactory. Students have access to a range of enrichment activities relevant to their programmes in sport and travel and uptake is satisfactory.
- Support and guidance for students are satisfactory. All students are interviewed prior to beginning their programme and are made aware of the standards expected of them. All students receive weekly tutorials.
- Curriculum management is inadequate. However, a new curriculum management team has set a realistic agenda for improvement and has begun to monitor standards effectively. Communication has improved and students' progress towards the achievement of qualifications is improving, yet staff are not routinely implementing the development plan to drive improvement.
- Observations of lessons are carried out as part of quality assurance. Actions identified for improvement are not always implemented quickly enough. Evidence of follow-up by managers is weak. Lesson observation judgements are insufficiently moderated to reduce unacceptable variability.

What does the City of Bath College need to do to improve further?

- Raise success rates through the effective identification of students' progress in lessons and timely interventions to improve their performance.
- Engage students more actively in lessons by developing a range of learning and assessment strategies to better meet students' needs. Use and monitor target setting for students more effectively.
- Improve students' punctuality in lessons by setting appropriate expectations and personal targets for improvement.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by embedding and monitoring the use of the development plan and its targets across all provision.

## Art and design

## Grade 1

### Context

33. There are some 210 full-time students and 79 part-time students study a range of one- and two-year courses including BTEC, GCE A level and craft qualifications. Full-time students are mainly aged 16 to 18 and those on part-time courses are adults. Most courses are at advanced level. The college offers one intermediate level course in art and design.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for students are outstanding. Success rates on many courses are high and students make outstanding progress in lessons. Students really enjoy their courses, feel safe and work safely. Students make a positive contribution to the community through many activities such as running an annual art fair. Students have highly developed skills which contribute to their economic well-being.
- Students demonstrate high standards of work, especially in drawing and in their personal sketchbooks. The development of good drawing skills by students is reinforced as a key aspect of all studies. Students produce outstanding and expressive work in studios and sketchbooks. They create extensive and high quality visual and three-dimensional portfolios of work on all courses.
- Students display and present their visual research to a high standard. Many sketchbooks show exciting and creative achievement. Part-time creative glass students present thorough and well-researched studies, indicating wide-ranging and diverse experimentation. Students' work is well researched leading to high standards of expressive work and well-designed solutions to live and client-based assignments.
- Teaching and learning are highly effective. Teachers provide excellent instruction, supplemented with much informal help. Lessons are well organised and students receive detailed and supportive comments from teachers to help them improve their work. Students are fully engaged in their learning.
- Well-qualified and experienced staff teach a wide range of disciplines very effectively in teams. Most staff are creative practitioners and bring valuable professional expertise to their teaching which has a direct impact on students' engagement and the high standards they achieve.
- The range of courses at advanced level is extensive but only one is offered at intermediate level. Advanced level courses include national diplomas in fashion and clothing design, graphic design and the foundation diploma, along with specialised creative crafts. Courses often involve a variety of media such as digital photography, printmaking, sculpture, craft design, multimedia design, life drawing and contextual study.
- Students have very good opportunities to extend their learning with additional qualifications in printmaking, art and life drawing. High quality part-time

advanced vocational courses in design, silversmithing and creative glass are provided for adult students.

- Students receive highly effective and skilled support which enables them to produce creative and independent work. Students speak highly of the tutorial support from staff. Experienced staff nurture students with enthusiasm and challenge students to achieve ambitious targets. Feedback is thorough and students' progress is reviewed frequently. Students' self-identity and personal confidence benefits greatly from very well focused support.
- Leadership and management are outstanding and innovative. The complex programme of full-time and part-time provision is managed expertly to allow both small-group instruction and extended all-day assignments for intensive visual study to operate well. Resources are used effectively for the many specialist courses provided.
- A strong team ethos amongst staff promotes high standards and creates compelling learning experiences for students. Course teams work effectively to promote high professional standards in teaching and learning and high standards of students' work. Staff vary assignments to include external briefs, visiting lecturers and artists, and external and directed personal enquiry.
- Effective communication channels have been developed for the many staff who teach across courses. Teams and individual teachers, with different expertise, operate together sensitively to allow innovative teaching which meets students' needs.
- The college provides good specialist facilities in all main art, design and craft disciplines. There is particularly high quality specialist provision in three-dimensional design crafts. Highly developed teaching in ceramics, glass and silversmithing is underpinned by rigorous programmes of visual and personal research by students. This enables students to experiment with a variety of media and progress to professional standards in craft design.

What does the City of Bath College need to do to improve further?

- Develop progression pathways for greater numbers of students from foundation to advanced levels by expanding provision at foundation and intermediate levels.

## Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages

Grade 3

### Context

34. Literacy or numeracy courses are taken by 129 students. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses are taken by 290 students. The level of these courses ranges from entry level to intermediate level and most students are adults. Some 1,295 students on vocational courses take key skills communication and 490 students take key skills application of number at foundation and intermediate levels. Most of these students are aged 16 to 18.

### Key Findings

- Good improvements to success rates in key skills have been secured, at both foundation and intermediate levels, but the overall success rate is still below average. Overall success rates increased from 17% in 2006/07 to 49% in 2008/09. The success rate for communication at foundation level is now good. It has increased from 26% in 2006/07 to 69% in 2008/09. The success rate for application of number at intermediate level has increased significantly from 3% in 2006/07 to 40% in 2008/09.
- Retention rates are low on many courses. For example, the certificate in adult literacy and the certificate in adult numeracy courses at foundation level had low retention rates from 2006/07 to 2008/09. The entry level 3 ESOL course had a low retention rate in 2008/09.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned using a combined scheme of work and lesson plan. Learning materials are appropriate and well produced and a minority of teachers make good use of video clips to engage students and enhance learning. However, insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning. Teachers do not plan sufficient activities to meet the varied needs of students.
- Actions to improve teaching and learning, following lesson observations, are occasionally slow to be fully implemented. A minority of recorded comments are insufficiently specific to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Insufficient use is made of information collected about students during their initial interview to plan lessons more individually and schedule courses. Opportunities are missed to strengthen individual learning plans and ensure that targets meet students' short- and long-term study, work or life goals.
- Key skills are well integrated into vocational courses. Assignments are well designed. They develop students' skills well by being linked closely to vocational subjects. Vocational teachers and specialist literacy and numeracy teachers work very effectively in teams to ensure that key skills are meaningful to students. Students are making good progress in developing their key skills and their performance is monitored rigorously.
- Additional learning support and pastoral support for students are good. Students' needs are assessed carefully and promptly by tutors. Support

arrangements are communicated most effectively to vocational tutors. Teachers adapt their teaching accordingly and work very effectively with additional support assistants. Tutors support students who have personal problems well in tutorials.

- Recent initiatives to improve the quality of courses are good. A well-designed policy and strategy for Skills for Life are in place. Key and functional skills are integrated fully into college programmes. A comprehensive professional development programme ensures that many staff are working towards the new professional qualifications. Rigorous course audits take place each term. Internal communication is good and staff work well as a team.

What does City of Bath College need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention rates by reviewing students' attendance patterns and timetabling courses flexibly so that students can more easily combine study with other commitments.
- Make more effective use of information collected about students to develop lessons which better meet their needs and interests. Make individual learning targets and plans more meaningful to students by relating them more effectively to students' life and work goals.
- Ensure that action points for improvements resulting from lesson observations are better focused and implemented in good time. Develop a greater variety of active learning opportunities and make better use of ICT in the classroom.

## Information about the inspection

35. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's deputy principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
36. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**City of Bath 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<br>1: Outstanding; 2: Good;<br>3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate                                     | Overall | 14-16 | 16-18<br>Learner<br>responsive | 19+<br>Learner<br>responsive | Employer<br>responsive |
|--|---------|-------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Approximate number of enrolled learners  | 1,935   | 42    | 1,432                          | 461                          | 354                    |
| Full-time learners   | 2,289   | 85    | 374                            | 1,593                        |                        |
| Part-time learners   |         |       |                                |                              |                        |
| Overall effectiveness  | 3       | 3     | 3                              | 3                            | 3                      |
| Capacity to improve  | 2       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| Outcomes for learners  | 3       | 3     | 3                              | 3                            | 3                      |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?   | 3       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals?  | 3       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How well do learners progress?   | 3       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?                              | 3       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How safe do learners feel?   | 2       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*   | 2       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*   | 2       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| Quality of provision   | 3       | 3     | 3                              | 3                            | 3                      |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?   | 3       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?  | 3       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| 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  | 2       | 2     | 2                              | 2                            | 2                      |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?                     | 2       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*                                | 2       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?  | 2       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? | 2       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?  | 2       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?                             | 2       |       |                                |                              |                        |
| 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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