

Barnfield College

Inspection Report

Unique reference number: 130599

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Last day of inspection: 27 April 2012

Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the provider

1. Barnfield College is the largest provider of further education in the Luton area and is located on three campuses in Luton, one in Bedford, and includes a hairdressing academy in nearby Harpenden. Outreach provision stretches across Luton and Bedfordshire to include higher education, apprenticeships and response to redundancy programmes. The college provides a range of full- and part-time courses across all vocational sectors from foundation level through to foundation degrees.
2. Luton is one of the UK's most diverse towns with over 140 nationalities and 100 languages spoken. Around 28% of residents are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Luton has some areas of high deprivation, with three wards in the top 10% of the most deprived in the country. At 6.1% the unemployment rate is higher than the rest of Bedfordshire and the eastern region, but lower than the national rate. The proportion of students from areas of deprivation has increased significantly since the last inspection.
3. The college leads a federation (The Barnfield Education Partnership Trust) comprising two academies in Luton, previously underperforming secondary schools, and a full-time studio school opened in September 2010. The federation is expanding further to include primary provision. The college chief executive leads the federation. Workplace provision has grown significantly in 2011/12 with around 470 apprentices in training.
4. In 2011 56.7% of young people in Year 11 in Luton gained five or more GCSEs graded A* to C, including English and mathematics, which is lower than the national average of 58.2% for state funded schools. The college's mission is 'to provide innovative, exciting and relevant learning opportunities that lead to employment and/or further study'.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - Home Training Initiative Limited (HT Group Ltd) (health and social care and business administration)
 - Explicit Solutions Limited (health and social care and business administration)
 - John Laing Training Limited (construction)
 - Aztak Solutions Limited (preparation for life and work)
 - Boss Fork Truck Training Limited (motor vehicle engineering)
 - Bedfordshire Police Authority (police cadets)
 - Inspire Solutions Limited (transport operations and media studies)
 - In Place Training Limited (food manufacturing)
 - Watford & District YMCA (Luton) (preparation for life and work)

- YMCA Bedfordshire (Bedford, Biggleswade & Houghton Regis) (preparation for life and work)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16 Further education (16 to18) Foundation learning	424 part-time learners 545 part-time learners 2,180 full-time learners 124 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	972 full-time learners 3,219 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	772 learners 447 apprentices
Adult and community learning	553 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	Grade
Health and social care	3
Motor vehicle engineering	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	4
Arts and media	3

Overall effectiveness

6. Barnfield College is a satisfactory college. Students' outcomes are satisfactory. Success rates are high for short courses and above the average for functional skills qualifications. While at the average for adults, longer course success rates for younger students have declined and are below average, particularly at intermediate level. Apprentices' success rates are improving and are now satisfactory.
7. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Good examples of lessons and training were seen on inspection, but a significant proportion did not focus sufficiently on ensuring that students were clear what they should be learning and achieving. They also failed to challenge students sufficiently well to achieve to their potential. The range of courses on offer currently meets the needs and interests of students attracted to the college. Partnership working is good. Care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory, with good support provided by teachers, which students value highly.

8. The principal has an ambitious vision for the college's future as part of the Barnfield Federation. Leadership and management are satisfactory as it is only in the current year that actions to strengthen and improve performance at the college are beginning to have a positive impact on reversing the decline in younger learners' success rates and on apprenticeships. The college's judgements of its own performance are overgenerous.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Success rates are at the national average for adults but are below for younger learners. Students' success rates on substantive, long courses declined over the past two years. They are low at intermediate level as a result of below average achievement in 2010/11. For the increasing proportion of shorter courses, success rates are high. Apprenticeship success rates were below average in 2010/11. In-year retention rates on most courses have improved at the time of inspection. The standard of students' work is at least satisfactory and good for apprentices. Attendance was low in some classes.
- The gap between male and female students' success rates is narrowing. Most groups of students with learning disabilities and/or difficulties achieve in line with those without. The success rates of minority ethnic students and their White British peers are similar. However a few gaps remain.
- Most full-time students have good opportunities to develop personal, social and employability skills through a range of short courses and other learning activities. They value the skills they develop. Achievements in English, mathematics and information technology tests are above average. An increasing proportion of students progress to higher education. Students on advanced level arts and media courses achieve higher grades than nationally.
- Students feel safe and are prepared well to lead healthy lifestyles. Most students make a satisfactory contribution to the community. A good contribution is made by health studies, child care and sports students through fund-raising activities for specific groups and charities, and by construction students involved in community refurbishing projects.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Learning resources are good. Where students learn well, they are engaged fully in interesting activities and make good progress in their studies. Teachers use direct questions skilfully to check and extend learning and understanding. However, in too many lessons, teachers dominate, the pace of learning is slow and students' learning is not sufficiently checked. Too often, activities do not challenge students sufficiently to extend their learning. The virtual learning environment (VLE) is underdeveloped.
- Outcomes from students' initial assessments are not always used effectively by teachers in planning appropriate learning activities or the work of learning support assistants, to meet the needs of individuals and to ensure that all students can progress and achieve to the best of their abilities.

- The lesson observation system is well organised and managed. Effective support is provided for staff whose performance is less than good. However, observations focus too much on teaching and not enough on students' learning and progress. Consequently, the quality of lessons is over-graded in some instances.
- The college offers a broad curriculum from entry level to higher education and includes apprenticeships. Changes during this academic year have resulted in a curriculum offer more suited to the needs and interests of students. The proportion of students who progress onto higher level courses at the college varies considerably across curriculum areas. A satisfactory range of enrichment activities provide good opportunities for students to develop valuable work-related and enterprise skills.
- Partnership working is good. The college takes a strategic lead in developing provision which is responsive to local community demand. Employers are very positive about the college's ability to respond quickly to their training needs. Successful participation in projects with local groups and agencies motivates young people and unemployed adults to participate in education and training. Effective links with schools enable their pupils to take vocational courses and qualifications at the college.
- Students receive good pastoral support which helps them to remain at college and complete their courses. Tutorials are effective in providing good support to students in their studies and vocational training. Initial advice and guidance is not always effective in placing students on suitable courses. Students' additional learning support needs are assessed effectively. However, targets within their learning plans are not of sufficient quality. The impact of the support students receive is not evaluated fully.
- The principal promotes a culture of innovation and ambition. Staff morale is high. Communications have improved and are good. Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Promoting equality and diversity is central to college life. Considerable improvements have been made to accommodation and resources, which are almost all very good. Financial management is good.
- Over the last three years, managers have had too little impact on increasing students' success rates and long course targets have not been met for the past two years. In the current year, managers' actions to reverse the previous decline in success rates are proving effective as shown by the increased in-year retention rates. Strengthened monitoring arrangements and an increased focus on challenging targets are in place.
- Self-assessment is insufficiently self-critical. Not enough emphasis has been placed on evaluating results data from substantive courses or on identifying the factors that have influenced underperformance. Judgements and grades are frequently over-generous and unsubstantiated by evidence. Employers' and students' views are used constructively in improving provision.

What does Barnfield College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers reflect carefully on the needs and abilities of all students when planning learning activities so that they engage and challenge all students and enable them to make more successful and rapid progress.
- Develop the virtual learning environment to support and extend learning across more courses than currently.
- Ensure that learning support assistants are prepared fully by teachers to enable them to provide the most effective support for students in lessons.
- Provide further training for lesson observers to ensure that they focus particularly on judging the extent to which students develop their learning and make progress in lessons. Moderate the outcomes of lesson observations rigorously to promote professional dialogue.
- Improve the initial advice given to students to ensure they are placed on the most appropriate course to match their needs and expectations. Maximise the skills of staff in identifying and placing students on courses better matched to their levels of ability.
- Improve the quality of target setting within students' learning plans, to promote and accelerate achievement, particularly for those with additional learning support needs.
- Increase the accuracy and rigour of self-assessment by adopting a more self-critical approach. Develop managers' skills in analysis and evaluation so that strengths and areas for improvement are clearly identified and relevant actions are put in place. Strengthen the arrangements for moderation of self-assessment reports.
- Ensure that managers and governors place a high level of emphasis on data showing students' success on their main qualification aim when evaluating provision and in analysing achievement gaps between different groups of students. Increase the evaluation of progression and destination data.
- Support curriculum managers to embed the strengthened arrangements for monitoring of students' progress and course performance. Identify and share good practice in curriculum management, particularly in target setting.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What students like:

- developing valuable skills for employment
- the staff, who are very knowledgeable, supportive and treat them as adults
- improving their confidence through their studies so they become capable of greater things
- the good learning facilities and resources, and the relaxed environment in which to learn
- the variety of work they do and the activities in lessons

- the courses, which prepare them well for progression after college
- the pastoral support they receive from the college that keeps them on track and helps them progress
- work-based learning assessors who cater well for the needs of apprentices when planning assessments.

What students would like to see improved:

- the lack of social activities on some sites and lack of promotion of activities at others
- the time it takes for work to be assessed and returned in a few subjects
- the quality and price of food in refectories
- the behaviour of a few students in the refectory on the main site
- access to computers and printing facilities in the library.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the good development of skills at the college by their apprentices
- high standards of training at the college
- the ease of communication with the college and the fast response to any issues raised.

What employers would like to see improved:

- nothing of significance noted.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

9. Managers' substantial and targeted actions, in beginning to reverse the decline in long course success rates in the current year, provide evidence of capacity to improve. Prior to this point, insufficient emphasis had been placed on improving results on students' main qualifications and the college's track record is unimpressive in this important respect. Self-assessment has not been rigorous enough in identifying the issues and providing a basis for improvement actions; however, managers' frank and largely accurate appraisal of issues at the start of the current year superseded the self-assessment report. While challenging targets have been set, they have largely been unmet for students' performance on substantive courses.
10. A number of changes have been made in a short space of time and, because of high staff morale and good team work, these changes are already showing an impact. In-year retention is increased and some achievements are already completed. Governors have increased their focus on scrutiny of data about students' performance. Managers are largely experienced and staff turnover is low. Middle managers are responding well to the recent challenges to raise standards. The college's financial management of accommodation and resources is very good.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

11. Students' outcomes are satisfactory. Success rates are high on the increasing proportion of short courses students undertake to develop their health, social well-being and employability skills. However, success rates on more substantive, longer courses have declined. While at the average for adults, they are below for students aged 16 to 18. Success rates on intermediate-level courses for younger students were low in 2010/11 as a result of below average pass rates. At advanced level younger students' success rates rose due to a rise in pass rates. However, they remain below average. The standard of work seen on inspection was at least satisfactory and good in curriculum areas such as in art and media studies. Attendance was low in some classes. Pass rates for school pupils who attend the college to follow vocational courses are satisfactory.
12. Outcomes for apprentices are satisfactory. Most apprentices are now making good progress, with many completing frameworks in a shorter timeframe than previously, for example in engineering. Success rates were below average in the last two years. The standard of apprentices' work is high. Their skill development is valued by employers as it benefits their businesses. Apprentices work to professional, industry standards and enjoy their training. They are prepared well to work independently and understand the demands of their courses well.

13. The gap between males' and females' success rates is narrowing successfully with little difference between them. Most groups of students with learning disabilities and/or difficulties achieve in line with those without. However, success rates for students identified with dyslexia declined last year. Most students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve in line with or above their White British peers, although the achievement gap increased on longer courses for a few groups.
14. A high proportion of full-time students have good opportunities to develop personal, social and employability skills through a range of short courses and other tutorial-based activities. For example, students have been able to gain an accredited qualification in health and safety, develop their knowledge of healthy living and drug awareness, and gain valuable industry-recognised qualifications, such as the airline 'cabin crew' award. Students' achievements in functional skills tests are above average. An increasing proportion of students progress to higher education. Although high grade achievement is below average, students on advanced level arts and media courses achieve above average higher grades.
15. Students feel safe in college and in the workplace. They use safe working practices. Full-time students are prepared well to lead healthy lifestyles while at college. Most make a satisfactory contribution to the community through opportunities provided within their curriculum areas. A good contribution is made by health studies, child care and sports students through a wide range of fund-raising and volunteer activities, and by construction students who have had the opportunity to put their skills into practice by refurbishing local community premises.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

16. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although inspectors saw a few outstanding lessons, too many observed were less than good. Most teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects, and provide good support and encouragement to their students. In the best lessons, students engage in interesting activities that have been planned carefully by the teachers to respond to students' individual needs. Teachers challenge students regularly through directed and extended questioning to check and develop their knowledge and understanding well. Students then make good progress in their learning, and develop confidence in discussion and, where applicable, in their use of technical language. However, in too many lessons, the teacher dominates, students are passive and take little part, and the lesson moves at a slow pace. Activities are not always appropriate to promote or reinforce learning or to provide sufficient stretch to extend students' knowledge. Learning objectives are not always sufficiently detailed for the students to know what they will be able to do or achieve by the end of the lesson. For work-based learners, the quality of off-site training is good.

17. Resources for learning are good. Most teachers are qualified or in training. In many areas students benefit from industry-standard equipment and good accommodation. Information and learning technology (ILT) facilities are readily available across the college. Where students make good progress, teachers use ILT well to enhance learning. However, too few staff take advantage of the technologies to enhance their lessons or provide students with further opportunities to extend their knowledge. The VLE is underdeveloped to support and extend learning and, as yet, only used effectively in very few courses.
18. At induction, students undertake a comprehensive initial diagnostic assessment of their individual abilities and learning styles. Outcomes from these assessments are used well to provide in-lesson support for students and to prepare informative and useful group profiles for teachers. However, teachers do not use profiles sufficiently in lesson planning to cater for the identified needs of individual learners, nor do they plan the work of learning support assistants effectively.
19. Most teachers set regular coursework and homework. In many cases, students receive useful and specific feedback on work with good guidance on what they need to do to make better progress. However, marked work from a few teachers does not contain appropriate feedback to allow students to know how well they did, or how to improve. Students' in-course achievements and attendance are tracked effectively and students at risk of underperforming are monitored closely. However, students sometimes do not know how well they are doing as not all teachers set short-term targets on what they need to do to make better progress consistently well or sufficiently often. Many teachers take good advantage of opportunities to promote cultural diversity in lessons although this is not common in work-based learners' reviews.
20. The college has a comprehensive process to improve the teaching of staff, whose lessons are judged less than good in observations, through teaching and learning coaches. However, inspectors judged the grading of the quality of lessons to be over-generous in a number of cases as too many observers fail to take sufficient account of the extent of learning taking place and students' progress.
21. The college offers a broad curriculum from entry-level courses through to higher education, including an increasing range of apprenticeships. The proportion of students who progress onto higher-level courses varies considerably across curriculum areas. However, managers have recognised the need to provide better progression routes. Consequently more suitable courses are now provided to meet students' needs and aspirations. Valuable vocational training opportunities are offered to pupils on school link courses. Enrichment activities are planned effectively to provide good opportunities for students to gain work experience, develop enterprise skills and participate in competitions.
22. Partnership working is good. The college takes a strategic lead in developing provision which is responsive to local community demand. Employers' views are

sought extensively and acted upon very effectively. The college's successful links with and participation in innovative projects with local groups and agencies motivates young people and unemployed adults to participate in education and training. Since the last inspection the college has increased its provision for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Community groups and schools work closely with the college to respond to the needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and to provide courses for the long-term unemployed and for those whose first language is not English.

23. Students receive good pastoral support which helps them to complete their courses. The college provides students with a useful range of financial support, such as meal vouchers and travel expenses. Tutorials are used effectively to enhance students' learning and social awareness. Attendance is monitored well and students at risk of leaving are identified quickly. However, selection procedures and initial advice and guidance do not always result in students being placed on the right course.
24. Additional learning support for students is satisfactory. Students' support needs are identified effectively. However, teachers and learning support workers do not always use this information well enough to set specific and meaningful targets for students to work towards. Consequently, their progress in relation to their personal development is not recognised nor recorded sufficiently.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

25. The principal encourages innovation and has an ambitious vision for the college's future as part of the Barnfield Federation, which he communicates well to staff. Governors and senior managers develop clear strategic plans accompanied by challenging performance targets. However, strategic objectives related to raising standards are insufficiently explicit. The long course success rate target has not been met for the last two years, although the target for the overall success rate has been met or exceeded. Managers have had insufficient impact on raising standards over the last three years. However, their determined improvement actions in the current academic year are proving successful; in-year retention rates are notably higher than at a similar point in the previous year and students' progress towards completing their qualifications is being regularly and thoroughly scrutinised. Senior managers' weekly reviews of a wide range of data about performance are used well to ensure prompt intervention in the case of underperformance. Managers' accountability for meeting targets and ensuring students' success has been increased markedly. Curriculum management varies in effectiveness, in part because some managers are new to their roles and lack experience. Good practice is evident in the way in which some middle managers have responded particularly well to the challenge to raise standards.
26. Governors are skilled and have supported development of both the college and its role in the Federation well. They provide very good financial oversight.

However, governors have been less successful in holding managers to account for the declining and largely average students' success rates. This is in part because the reports they receive have not highlighted the declining success rates on substantive courses nor are the comparisons to national averages given high enough priority consistently. But, governors are now being more challenging, for example by their influence on reinforcing the need to meet targets. Governors have a limited amount of training on safeguarding and equality and diversity although they receive regular briefings on these matters.

27. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and legislative requirements are met. Training provided for staff is particularly thorough and timely. Improvements to site security at all the campuses have been welcomed by students. Health and safety are promoted well and a number of significant improvements have been made to arrangements, such as improving risk assessments and promoting the importance of reporting of accidents. However, analysis of accident reports is basic and does not prompt prevention initiatives to be instigated consistently well.
28. Promotion of equality and diversity features prominently in college life and is good. A much higher percentage of students of minority ethnic heritage attend the college compared to within the local population. Policies are detailed, cover legislative requirements well and have been assessed to ensure these do not have a negative impact on any groups of people. The approach to analysing differences in achievement between groups of students across the college is sound but is undertaken at too high a level of data aggregation to ensure that all significant gaps are identified. However, differences in success rates between genders and between White British and the majority of minority ethnic groups have been successfully reduced. This analysis is less effective at curriculum level where a few examples of underperformance by minority ethnic groups are identified but not acted upon. Appropriate actions to increase the percentage of staff and governors from a minority ethnic background to match the student population are ongoing. Efforts to increase recruitment to apprenticeships from minority ethnic groups have not yet been successful.
29. The extent of engagement with employers varies. It is particularly strong in employment-based provision where employers are closely involved in the provision. However, engagement is less well developed in several subjects. Students' involvement with the work of the college is high through focus groups and by providing feedback from regular surveys. Student class representatives attend regular focus groups with senior managers and their views are acted upon. Student governors are active and have an influential voice at meetings; however, the student union has a low profile.
30. Quality assurance processes are well established and largely comprehensive, although arrangements to assure the quality of college-based off-the-job training for employment-based learners are not complete. Self-assessment arrangements and the lesson observation programme lack rigour. The resulting evaluations from these procedures are over-generous and inaccurate.

Moderation of self-assessed judgements is insufficient. Accurate and self-critical evaluation of data and the factors that have caused the decline in long course success rates across the college has not taken place until relatively recently and the decline is only being reversed in the current year. Evaluation of data relating to students' progression and destinations to support judgement is underdeveloped.

31. Management of accommodation, resources and staff is good. Considerable and cost-saving efficiencies have been secured through cross-federation initiatives, such as in shared financial services and joint procurement. Many improvements have been made to the campuses and ambitious plans for future developments are well advanced. The college's financial management and control are good. Taking account of the satisfactory outcomes for students on long courses and on apprenticeships, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Subject areas

Health and social care

Grade 3

Context

32. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in health, social care and child care. Of the 462 students currently enrolled on learner responsive provision, 316 are aged 16 to 18 and 146 are adults. Some 408 students follow full-time courses and 54 follow part-time courses. In total 103 students are at foundation level, 107 students at intermediate level, and 232 students at advanced level. In employer responsive provision, the college provides apprenticeships for 138 trainees in children and young people's workforce, children's care learning and development, dental nursing and health and social care frameworks.

Key findings

- Success rates are high on short courses but vary on long courses. On foundation level health and social care courses success rates are high, and average on intermediate and advanced courses. Success rates on advanced level child care courses are high, but they are low at foundation and intermediate levels. Most intermediate level child care students have now achieved their qualification, having successfully passed an examination they failed last year. Functional skills success rates are well above the national average.
- Standards of work are mostly good. Students develop vocationally relevant knowledge, understanding and skills which contribute effectively to their economic and social well-being. Most progress onto higher level qualifications. Students increase their employability through voluntary work or work placements and many progress into full-time employment with their placement provider. Most apprentices complete work to a high professional standard.
- Students feel safe and say that the learning environment is safe and welcoming and that all individuals are respected equally. They make informed choices about their health and well-being. They value the information they receive on drug and alcohol awareness, and sex and relationships, through short qualifications and the tutorial programme. Health and social care students make a positive contribution to the community, through a range of voluntary placements and through student-led activities, such as a tutorial on the work of a local hospital.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons effective planning, clear aims and vocationally relevant activities take account of students' interests and learning needs well. ILT is used effectively to promote and support learning and progress. In some lessons the pace of learning is slow with students inactive as teachers change activity and consequently learning opportunities are missed. Students are not always punctual to lessons. Resources are good and

students have access to a good range of medical and care equipment, including two hospital beds with hoists.

- Assessment and feedback of student performance is constructive and encouraging, highlighting areas for improvement effectively. The recently revised assessment process enables teachers to keep a better track of how students are progressing. Students value knowing where they are in their course. Work-based assessors support apprentices well through progress reviews.
- The provision meets the needs and interests of students well. A broad and responsive curriculum enables students to progress into employment in the sector. Students enjoy their studies. An increasing proportion progress into higher education. Good partnerships with employers support work placements and curriculum developments well.
- Improvements to advice and guidance this year have helped to ensure that students are on the most appropriate course. Support by teachers is valued by students and enables them to understand their progress against their learning targets. Support for students on personal issues is good. Parents and carers are invited to student progress reviews routinely to keep them informed. More rigorous monitoring of attendance on work placements is leading to improvements in students' progress.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff have a clear idea of the college mission and feel they are well supported by their managers. The department head promotes a positive and supportive culture that aspires to improvement. Data are used increasingly to set targets at departmental and course level to make improvements. Communication is good. Following the decline in success rates on some courses in 2010/11 a team approach was adopted to define and solve the problems. Improvement actions are having a positive impact on in-year retention but it is too early to judge their impact on success rates.
- The promotion of safeguarding of students is good and staff are well trained. For staff visiting placements a lone-worker procedure assures their safety effectively. Staff and students celebrate diversity positively. Students' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity are developed effectively in preparation for living and working within the local multi-cultural community.
- Self-assessment is insufficiently self-critical and does not identify key areas for improvement relating to students' success rates. Employer feedback from work placements is not sufficiently detailed in the self-assessment report. Students are encouraged to feed back their views via course representatives and these are acted upon.

What does Barnfield College need to do to improve further?

- Monitor students' punctuality in college so that targeted actions can be put in place for those at risk of underachieving.

- Plan lessons carefully so that more are effective in maintaining the pace of learning and holding learners' interest, by sharing good practice across the department.
- Ensure that self-assessment is more self-critical, evaluative and rigorous, so that issues are addressed and resolved, and action plans clearly address areas for improvement. Include feedback from work placements in improvement planning.

Motor vehicle engineering

Grade 3

Context

33. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in motor vehicle engineering from foundation to advanced level. Of the 209 students currently enrolled on learner responsive provision, 173 are aged 16 to 18 and 36 are adults. Some 180 students follow full-time courses and 29 follow part-time courses. In total 125 students are at foundation level, 63 students at intermediate level and 17 students at advanced level. An additional 23 pupils aged 14 to 16 follow courses in motor vehicle engineering as part of their Key Stage 4 programme at school. In employer responsive provision, the college provides apprenticeships for 16 trainees in vehicle body and paint and vehicle maintenance and repair.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students and apprentices are satisfactory. Most students are on foundation level courses where success rates rose in recent years to just below the national average. Success rates on the foundation and intermediate level vehicle body and paint courses declined in 2010/11 to well below average. Success rates on the intermediate level vehicle maintenance and repair courses are well above the average.
- Functional skills achievements in English, mathematics and ICT are above the average. Students develop good vocational skills in lessons. A small number of more able students do not undertake functional skills appropriate to their assessed needs. Attendance is satisfactory. At the time of inspection, in-year retention has improved when compared to the previous year.
- Students enjoy their learning. They carry out a wide range of vehicle maintenance and body repair procedures competently. For example, on the intermediate level vehicle body and paint course, students completed the repair and spraying of vehicle doors professionally and foundation level students completed vehicle inspections competently. Portfolios of student work are comprehensive and in-year progress is recorded effectively.
- Students feel safe and adopt safe working practices in workshops. They are aware of their responsibilities towards health and safety. Where safety signs are displayed in workshops best practice is not always reinforced by teachers.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons include a good variety of learning activities to stimulate and engage students effectively. Workshops are spacious and well resourced. Students' learning is enhanced by the wide range of high quality hand tools and specialist automotive testing equipment, such as pressure gauges and exhaust analysers. Teachers provide constructive feedback with comments on how to improve. Students benefit from vocational e-learning software in lessons and at home, but it is not used to its full potential to support and develop learning.

- Few opportunities exist for full-time students to undertake work experience, as links with employers are limited. However, partnership links for the low number of apprentices are good. Very few full-time intermediate level students progress onto the advanced level course, as teachers feel that they lack the industrial experience to enable them to achieve at that level.
- A broad range of courses are offered in vehicle maintenance and body and paint operations from foundation to advanced level. The full-time advanced level course did not recruit in September 2011. Apprenticeship numbers are low and few students progress from full-time intermediate level courses to apprenticeships.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Students receive appropriate general advice and guidance prior to enrolling, but these activities do not inform students of the rigours and expectations of motor vehicle courses sufficiently well or take into account students' potential to achieve. Students benefit from the good personal support they receive from teachers in lessons.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. A range of improvement actions to raise performance this year have been implemented by the acting head of department, course leaders and staff. They are beginning to have a positive impact. Communication and staff morale have improved and are good. Students' progress is monitored more carefully. As a result retention has improved this year, but it is too early to measure the full impact on students' success rates. The quality of teaching and learning has improved through the sharing of good practice and teaching resources.
- Staff involvement in, and their understanding of, self-assessment are underdeveloped. However they are aware of specific issues that affect their own practices, such as the low progression rates of students into advanced level courses. The self-assessment report fails to identify key areas for improvement and resultant improvement actions. For example, ensuring full-time intermediate students gain the industrial skills and experience to enable them to progress further.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The department has an equality and diversity champion who works effectively with staff to raise awareness of diversity. The department benefits from two highly experienced, female, vocational teachers who are excellent role models. College data indicate a few minority ethnic groups underperform but there are no clear strategies to improve their performance at departmental level.

What does Barnfield College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates, primarily on vehicle body and paint courses, by strengthening initial advice and guidance procedures and activities to better inform students of the rigours of a career in the motor industry and provide a better match to students' needs and career aspirations.
- Provide intermediate students with opportunities to complete work experience activities in order for them to develop the necessary skills to progress successfully to advanced level courses.

- Strengthen curriculum management to ensure that self-assessment is more self-critical, evaluative and rigorous, so that issues are addressed and resolved, and action plans clearly address areas for improvement.
- Use data on the success, retention and achievement of minority ethnic students at departmental and course level to target improvement actions for these students.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 4

Context

34. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy from foundation level to foundation degree. Of the 611 students currently enrolled onto learner responsive provision, 378 are aged 16 to 18 and 233 are adults. Some 449 students follow full-time course and 162 follow part time courses. In total 117 students are at foundation level, 361 are at intermediate level and 118 are at advanced level. An additional 53 pupils aged 14 to 16 follow foundation programmes as part of their Key Stage 4 programme at school. In employer responsive provision the college provides apprenticeships for 69 trainees in hairdressing frameworks.

Key findings

- Success rates vary considerably. While intermediate and advanced level beauty therapy courses are around the national average, the foundation level course is well below. The college no longer offers the foundation course. Hairdressing success rates at all levels are low as are success rates for hairdressing apprentices. Attendance at the time of inspection was low.
- The standard of students' practical work is satisfactory. Advanced level beauty therapy students confidently and accurately carry out body electrical treatments and foundation level hairdressing students put hair up into attractive and creative styles. Students have a satisfactory understanding of the theory behind treatments and essential anatomy and physiology.
- Most students make satisfactory progress. However, progress is too slow in many lessons as there are too few opportunities for practice and assessment as a result of too few clients. Students' employability skills such as client care, retail and commercial timings are underdeveloped.
- Students feel safe at college. They know how to keep themselves and others safe in the salons but do not always wash their hands or keep work stations tidy. Students make a useful contribution to the community through charity fundraising events and voluntary work with a local hospice.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Effective management of practical salon sessions enables students to develop independence and initiative. For example, in beauty therapy lessons students take the role as salon manager very seriously and confidently give other students tasks. In hairdressing lessons teachers set individual tasks for students to follow. Students make effective use of these to work independently.
- In practical lessons teachers do not encourage students to sell products to clients. Students often complete fewer treatments and services than would be usual for the same amount of time in a salon and at the stage in their course. Teachers do not always ensure students work towards commercial timings.

When students work on friends and family they do not always practise good client care skills. Teachers often fail to address this effectively.

- Assessment processes are satisfactory. The progress that students make towards completing the course is now recorded carefully and monitored regularly. However, this is less effective in hairdressing.
- Equality and diversity are embedded well into tutorials and lesson plans and students have a reasonable understanding of both concepts. However, teachers often miss opportunities to promote or reinforce broader issues of equality and diversity in the workplace.
- The provision is broad ranging and provides opportunities for progression from entry to higher level qualifications which include ladies hairdressing, Afro-Caribbean hairdressing, barbering, and specialist make-up and spa therapies. Progression from intermediate to advanced level courses and into higher education is particularly good. Accommodation is good, in particular the reception area and hairdressing salons which are of a very good industry standard.
- Teachers provide effective care and support for students' personal and learning needs, which students value highly. However, not all students with identified support needs attend the additional sessions arranged for them. Consequently they do not achieve as well as their peers. Initial advice and guidance interviews are useful in raising students' awareness of the course content but they do not prepare prospective students fully for the physical and academic challenges of studying in this vocational area.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The self-assessment report sets challenging headline targets but very few of these were met in 2010/11. While underperforming courses are identified and actions devised and monitored, limited use is made of the outcomes of lesson observations and learner views. As a result, improvement actions are not sufficiently accurate or detailed.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. Staff have received training and feel confident in the support that they receive when safeguarding issues arise. There is clear action to address the achievement gap between male and female students, but analysis and target setting for other groups are underdeveloped.

What does Barnfield College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that, through the advice and guidance activities they receive, prospective students are more aware of the physical and academic demands of undertaking vocational courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy.
- Improve the rate of progress students make by ensuring they have sufficient and diverse clients on whom to practise their skills and that they work to professional timings. Use a more consistent approach to monitoring students' progress against agreed targets.

- Improve students' employability skills and commercial standards by placing greater emphasis on developing retailing skills and professional standards in lessons and in salon activities.
- Where students have been identified as requiring additional learning support to succeed on their courses, ensure that support is put in place promptly, that students attend support sessions and that the effectiveness and impact of additional learning support is monitored and evaluated regularly.
- Ensure that self-assessment is more self-critical, evaluative and rigorous, so that weaknesses are identified and resolved, and action plans clearly address areas for improvement. Include a more detailed analysis of teaching and learning and students' views to inform more specific improvement actions.

Arts and media

Grade 3

Context

35. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in visual and performing arts and media studies from foundation to advanced level. Of the 324 students currently enrolled on learner responsive provision, 253 are aged 16 to 18 and 71 are adults. Some 304 students follow full-time courses and 20 follow part-time courses. In total 84 students are at intermediate level and 229 students at advanced level. An additional 40 pupils aged 14 to 16 follow arts courses as part of their Key Stage 4 programme at school.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students have been below the average for the last three years, apart from those for students aged 16 to 18 in 2010/11. The decline was particularly marked in 2009/10. Success rates for students on the intermediate level music course and the advanced level performing arts and art and design courses were low in 2010/11. In-year retention improved at foundation and intermediate levels but it remains low on advanced-level fashion courses in art and design. Success rates on advanced level music technology have been consistently high. Attendance during inspection was low.
- A high proportion of students on advanced-level courses, around two-thirds, progress to university. Many students progress from foundation to intermediate level, but fewer from intermediate to advanced courses. A high proportion of advanced-level students obtain high grades and make good progress. Many students, particularly those in music and media, have had impressive opportunities to experience the professional world. Some have secured contracts with recording companies.
- Students' work shows good development of technical skills. Their sketchbooks show clear evidence of thorough research and development of ideas through experimentation with a range of media and techniques. Most students apply a well disciplined approach to the organisation and planning of their work and show high levels of independence and creative thought.
- Teaching and learning are good. Students are stimulated by well planned lessons that contain an interesting variety of activities. For example, fashion students learnt how to present their work professionally on spring and summer collections and how to give and receive evaluative feedback. Teachers use their industry expertise well to add vocational relevance to lessons. Well resourced and planned lessons keep students fully engaged, particularly when sessions run for full or half days.
- Assessment practice is good. Work is marked promptly with useful written feedback on performance that clearly indicates what students need to do to improve. Detailed verbal feedback is given both in lessons and at individual reviews. Staff monitor students' progress well. Assignments are interesting and

vocationally relevant. However, some, particularly those for intermediate students, use language that is too complex.

- The provision meets the needs of students well. The department offers a wide range of courses in many specialisms at different levels. The majority of students take an additional course that supports their main qualification well, such as life drawing for fashion students and film studies for media students. These activities broaden students' aspirations and expand their knowledge and understanding of the arts effectively.
- Students feel safe and secure in college and follow safe practices in studios and workshops. Accommodation and resources are mostly good. However, one fashion room is very cramped. The accommodation for performing arts is split between sites and this has had a detrimental impact on retention in the past. Teachers plan an appropriate range of trips, visits and other enrichment activities to support assignment work. A recent visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum, for art and design students to see a selection of rare books, motivated and inspired them in the development of ideas for their final project.
- Individual support for students is good. Initial advice and guidance for most students is satisfactory. Interviews, auditions and portfolio work ensure that they have the necessary ability and basic skills. However, students on the advanced level fashion course are not always placed at the appropriate level and as a result retention is poor. Teachers, tutors and technicians provide good levels of support in lessons. Students find tutorials very valuable, enabling them to prepare for work or university and to discuss social and personal issues in a supportive environment.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent initiatives introduced by the acting head of department have been effective in improving students' retention on the performing arts and music courses, but not on the advanced-level fashion course. Staff are highly motivated to provide the best for their students and are working effectively with their managers to plan and deliver improvements. Recent staff and curriculum changes have had a positive impact on raising the quality of lessons and teaching and learning are now good.
- The promotion of equality and diversity and safeguarding are good. Teachers take every opportunity to fully embed aspects of equality and diversity into the curriculum. Students produce thoughtful and well executed work on a whole range of themes, such as the holocaust and black history month. On a fashion and textiles course students produced some excellent work that explored fashion from a range of cultures.
- While self-assessment is inclusive, and all staff contribute to the process, some areas for improvement highlighted at inspection were not clearly identified by the college and some strengths were over-stated. As a result poor retention on the advanced level fashion course continues to disadvantage students.

What does Barnfield College need to do to improve further?

- Raise success rates on poorly performing courses by ensuring that students are enrolled on the right level course, particularly in fashion, and that their attendance and progress are monitored more closely.
- Share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment to further drive forward improvements and to ensure that assessment briefs meet the needs of intermediate-level students in particular.
- Improve the rigour of self-assessment by being more self-critical about the strengths and areas for improvement in the department and using data thoroughly to inform judgements made. Ensure actions to improve performance are sufficiently specific and are monitored and evaluated closely.

Information about the inspection

36. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice 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 funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
37. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of students and employers. They also looked at questionnaires students and employers had recently completed for the college. They 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)
Barnfield 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	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection					
Full-time learners	3,152	0	2,180	972	0
Part-time learners	6,114	424	669	3,772	1,249
Overall effectiveness	3	n/a	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3				
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?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3				
Quality of provision	3	n/a	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?	2				
How effectively does the provider use partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to attain their learning goals?	3				
Leadership and management	3	n/a	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3				
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?	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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