



Askham Bryan College

Better
education
and care

Re-inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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Provider reference
130595

Introduction

Askham Bryan College was inspected in November 2004. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory or better in all areas inspected, except in the work-based learning areas of agriculture and horticulture/floristry which were found to be less than satisfactory.

Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is less than satisfactory within two years of the original inspection. If inadequate areas of learning or aspects of provision remain inadequate following re-inspection, inspectors will continue to monitor progress at annual assessment visits, but the areas will not be re-graded. They will be re-inspected during the full college inspection.

The less than satisfactory work-based learning areas were re-inspected on 16 & 17 November 2006. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

WBL area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Agriculture work-based learning	Grade 4 unsatisfactory	Grade 4 unsatisfactory
Horticulture/floristry work-based learning	Grade 4 unsatisfactory	Grade 4 unsatisfactory

Agriculture work-based learning

Context

Forty one apprentices and 16 advanced apprentices are enrolled on agricultural programmes, working in a range of areas including agriculture, crop production, livestock production and mixed farming. Most learners attend off-the-job training through day- or block-release, or both, at a venue near to their workplace. Some learners are trained entirely in the workplace.

Strengths

- learners demonstrate good levels of skill and knowledge
- the good range of additional training and enrichment activity

Areas for improvement

- low rates of framework achievement for advanced apprentices
- the slow progress of current learners
- poor planning of individual learning
- insufficiently focussed reviews
- inadequate performance monitoring
- ineffective arrangements to manage staff absence

Achievement and standards

Learners' achievements are unsatisfactory. Success rates for apprentices have improved and are now at the national average but for advanced apprentices they are unsatisfactory. Apprentices and advanced apprentices make slow progress. Timely success rates are very low compared to national averages. Few of the current learners have met the targets set in their individual learning plans. Learners enjoy their programmes and demonstrate good levels of practical skill and knowledge.

Quality of provision

Initial assessment and induction of new learners are satisfactory. Apprentices who progress to advanced programmes do not receive a refresher induction. Individual learning plans are set and updated appropriately. However, learning is not well planned and targets are not challenging enough. Many learners, even experienced ones, are not programmed to complete a unit of the national vocational qualification within the first year of the programme. A good range of additional qualifications and enrichment opportunities is available, and the first diploma is integrated well into the apprentice framework. Assessment is satisfactory but too little evidence is obtained from work-based assessment. Reviews take place regularly. Guidance officers have good working relationships with learners and employers. However, reviews lack sufficient focus and are often mixed with assessment and general guidance. Targets are not sufficiently challenging or focussed. Learners' progress is poorly monitored. Equality and diversity are not promoted well enough.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. They do not focus sufficiently on the progress made by learners. Managers monitor progress only when the learner reaches the last eight weeks of the programme. This is too late. Staff absence has contributed to the slow progress made by learners. Managers have been slow to address this issue and plans to accelerate progress, now that the assessment team is at full complement, are not in place.

Horticulture and floristry work-based learning

Context

Seven advanced apprentices and 101 apprentices are enrolled on programmes in horticulture and floristry. Seventy nine are on amenity horticulture programmes and the remainder are on floristry, arboriculture and environmental conservation programmes. The inspection concentrated on horticulture and floristry and did not include the arboriculture and environmental conservation programmes

Strengths

- some good initiatives to improve work-based learning

Areas for improvement

- low rates of framework achievement
- over-reliance on job-sheets
- insufficient detail in learners' individual learning plans
- limited use of the college management information systems to track learners' progress

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are unsatisfactory. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners' understanding of the framework components and of what they have to do to achieve them has improved. Framework achievement rates are low and the proportion of learners who are successful within the planned time is low and declining. Rates of completion of the framework by advanced apprentices have declined since the last full inspection. Success rates for apprentices have improved in 2005/06 but remain below national benchmarks. Key skills work is introduced and completed earlier in the programme and some current learners are close to completion.

Quality of provision

The quality of provision is unsatisfactory overall. The work of the vocational assessors and the key skills teachers is better co-ordinated. Key skills teaching and project work are now more relevant to horticulture than previously. Systems for the integration of key skills within the NVQ are improved. Assessment visits to the workplace are more frequent but learners' portfolios are over-reliant on job-sheets. Initial assessment is satisfactory but learners' individual learning plans lack sufficient detail. Progress reviews are carried out regularly. However, workplace supervisors contribute too little to these reviews and learning targets lack detail.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Progress against the post-inspection plan has been slow. Changes have been made but some systems are confused and staff turnover has led to delays. The management information system is not used to track learners' progress or to set progress targets. Reports from it are difficult to reconcile with those held within the horticulture department.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Askham Bryan College
Date of visit: 16-17 November 2006

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

Achievement and standards

Analysis is based on the college performance report for the three years to 2005 and on college-provided data for 2006

Learners aged 16-18

- in 2004/05 and 2005/06 success rates for long qualifications at each of the levels 1, 2 and 3 were low, due to low retention rates. At level 3 the success rate improved markedly in 2006, at level 2 the rate kept pace with improvements in the national average, at level 1 the rate lost ground
- key skills success rates are low
- apprenticeship framework success rates are low.

Adult learners

- success rates at level 1 are consistently high. At levels 2 and 3 they were low in each of 2004/05 and 2005/06

Quality of education and training

- the college has improved the system for lesson observation. Detailed and useful guidance has been produced to guide judgements, unannounced observations take place in two week blocks of time, moderation has been strengthened and professional development held. The sample of completed records shows that the grades awarded to lessons are supported by the written evidence, other than for lessons graded outstanding where it is not clear that the grade is justified. Key strengths and areas for development for the college as a whole are identified and inform the professional development programme
- schemes of work indicate that, in some subjects, too limited a range of learning activities is planned into the teaching. Lesson plans and

learning materials are not readily available as a central resource to managers

- internal verification of work-based learning assessment is satisfactory. Sampling is appropriate and feedback to assessors is supportive and appropriately developmental. Employers are becoming more involved in work-based learning, for example by helping to select units of work relevant to their work place, but many employers are not adequately involved in learners' progress reviews.
- the college is successful at creating partnerships with schools and other colleges, and accessing external funding which help market and develop the provision and resource base. For example, new accommodation has been established at the Great Yorkshire Showgrounds in Harrogate, a rural business centre in the auction mart in Thirsk, new provision in Darlington and new provision is being planned for the Tees Valley. A consortium with the other North Yorkshire colleges has been successful in gaining a 'Train to Gain' (T2G) contract. The college has been designated as one of six nationally to become a demonstration farm. College income has increased markedly in recent years, 16-18 full-time learner numbers have increased by nearly 40% in the four years to 2006, the number of 14-16 pupils using college facilities has increased as has the number of apprentices in training
- the CoVE in food chain technology, the national beef training centre and other activities have helped improve main site resources and increased the reputation of the college in its core business
- much work has been done to try and improve retention, a key area for improvement noted at the last inspection. For example, initial assessment is completed earlier, a retention working group established, level 1 course curriculum content has been changed, and attendance monitored more closely. However, retention rates remain low.

Leadership and management

- the college's vision and six strategic priorities have been revised and reflect the college's drive to develop its core business and to grow. A drive which is being successfully implemented. Staff comment

favourably on improved leadership and an approachable senior management team. It is unclear how the college's six priorities impact on curriculum development at section leader level and where the management responsibility for key skills provision lies

- There has been limited progress in the implementation of the college's post-inspection action plan. The self-assessment report (SAR) is becoming more rigorous but there is still work to do to ensure grading reflects the evidence, for example in key question 1, and to ensure curriculum SARs evaluate the quality of the teaching sufficiently. There has been progress in ensuring the results of initial assessment are promptly available to course teams. The work done to improve retention has not yet proved effective; retention rates remain low. Whether the teaching overall has improved is uncertain; improved moderation arrangements for lesson grading have meant that there is not yet an improving trend to the grade profile. Management of work-based learning, and reviews of work-based learners' progress remain weaknesses.