

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Barnfield College
Date of visit: 8 January 2007

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

Achievement and standards have continued to improve. The overall success rate of 83% is good. Success rates for adult students have been maintained at very high levels while those for students aged 16 to 18 have improved from close to the national average in 2005 to above average in 2006. Although the success rate for students of minority ethnic heritage is lower than that for white British students, college data indicate that their standards are improving at a similar rate. The number of students who have completed a key skills qualification successfully has increased significantly. Pass rates in key skills tests have improved in most departments. For the year 2006, the apprenticeship framework success rates remained above national averages, although framework success rates for advanced apprentices, accounting for about 10 % of work based provision, were significantly below national averages. The college has carefully analysed reasons for this and now provides more thorough initial advice and guidance. Some applicants are now advised to enter foundation programmes before commencing apprenticeships. In the current year, retention has significantly improved, and of those who started in September 2006, none have left the course. The college met all of its overall achievement targets in 2006.

Quality of education and training

Teaching and learning

The college has introduced several initiatives aimed at further improving the quality of teaching and learning. Lesson planning documents now include a requirement to identify differentiated learning outcomes. Heads of department are currently carrying out longitudinal studies, including observation of classes, on selected programmes. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these developments. The number of inadequate lessons

observed has dropped from 5% to 3%. However, although 73% of lessons taught by full time staff were judged by the college to be grade 1 or 2, only 48% of lessons taught by part-time staff achieved these grades. The college recognised this difference and made additional staff training available to part-time staff.

The college is committed to increasing the use of information and learning technologies (ILT) to enhance learning. It has initiated much staff development, both to help teachers to make greater use of the college's virtual learning environment, and to encourage staff to share good practice in the use of ILT. Lesson plans and schemes of work are designed to encourage staff to develop ILT teaching and learning strategies. Subject learning coaches and advanced practitioners work closely with staff to adapt materials to match learners' needs.

Tutorial provision and Every Child Matters themes

The college is in the process of revising its procedures for providing tutorial support for students so that tutorial provision is better matched to specific programmes of study. The college has fully embraced the principles of Every Child Matters. It has conducted an audit of Every Child Matters themes and revised the content of its tutorial scheme of work to provide more comprehensive coverage of all five themes. A detailed review of the college's response to the five themes is contained within the current self-assessment report and related departmental action plans. The identification of themes within the curriculum is good, but it is not yet clear how college standards will be identified and how evaluation of performance against those standards will be measured.

Leadership and management

Widening participation

The college works hard to forge extensive and productive links with local employers and the community. Six centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs) have created successful links with a substantial number of employers who are new to training. Retention and achievement on these courses is currently over 90%. Very flexible provision ensures that the college meets the needs of employers in their workplaces at times when they need it. Two major

initiatives, one a new centre in a ward where deprivation is high and the other a training base at Luton Airport, are soon to open. The college works effectively in partnership with community organisations to develop progression routes and bridges to help first step learners move on to the next level. The college is extending its range of distance learning provision. It has identified an increasing need for ESOL courses for new communities in Luton, although the needs of this group of learners are not yet fully met. The college is making an excellent contribution to the 14-19 developments associated with 'Campus Luton' and is providing a good range of vocational opportunities for younger students, particularly in construction and in health and social care. This experience provides excellent preparation for the college's intended leadership of the specialised diplomas in both of these vocational strands in Luton.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- None

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

- None