

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Basingstoke College of Technology

Date of visit: 20 May 2008

### Context

Basingstoke College of Technology is a general further education college located in the largely rural borough of Basingstoke and Deane. Basingstoke is a significant commercial location with over 3,000 predominantly high-value companies.

Unemployment rates are consistently below the national average and some 81% of school leavers continue in full-time education.

The college was last inspected in April 2005 when five curriculum areas were judged to be good and 3 were judged as satisfactory. Provision in construction was judged to be inadequate. Leadership and management of the college were satisfactory while social inclusion and support for students were good. The construction provision was re-inspected in April 2006 when it was judged to be good.

### Achievement and standards

<p>What progress has been made in improving success rates across the provision, particularly for 19+ and work-based students? What progress has been made in improving retention?</p>	<p>Insufficient progress</p>
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Adult learners made up 66% of the enrolments in 2007. Between 2004/05 and 2005/06 adult success rates at level 1 improved from 37% to 57%, but then declined to 47% in 2006/07. At level two there was good improvement in 2005/06 but the rate dropped back in 2006/07 to 49%. Success rates at level 3 have been variable, but improved from 66% to 73% in 2006/07.

The college has identified poor retention of adult learners on information communications technology (ICT) qualifications as a key factor contributing to the fall in success rates. A new manager and team of staff have been appointed in this curriculum area, and greater control is being applied to the recruitment of learners at the off-site learning centre. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these actions.

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision was also identified as an area with poor success rates for adult learners. Learners have since been enrolled on more appropriate single ESOL qualifications and initial testing, linked to improved advice and guidance is in place. The arrangements for monitoring retention and

attendance rates have been improved. Retention rates at all ESOL levels have improved during the current year.

Reasonable progress has been made in improving success rates for 16 to 18 year old learners, who made up some 44% of starts in 2006/07. The level 1 success rate in 2006/07 increased by five% to 75%. The level 2 and level 3 success rates in 2006/07 were 67% and 72% respectively, an average improvement of 8% on the previous year.

The progress made in improving GCE AS success rates has been insignificant. Rates for 16 to 18 year old learners have been consistently low at an average of 46% between 2003 and 2006. In 2006/07 the rate fell to a very poor eight%. Learner numbers have steadily declined over the last four years with only 24 starts in 2006/07. AS level success rates for adult learners improved in 2005/06 to 53%, but declined in 2006/07 to 42%. The college has taken the decision to restrict entry to the AS provision to those learners for whom the qualification is an integral part of other programmes. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these actions.

Although work-based learning success rates for apprentices on engineering and construction improved in 2006/07, they remained low in engineering at 53%. The number of apprentices who completed the framework in retail were also low. In hairdressing, only 26% have so far completed their apprenticeship in 2007/08.

Success rates in key skills have improved slightly for 16 to 18 year olds at level 1 and adult learners made good improvement. Level 2 success rates fell in 2006/07 for both 16 to 18 year olds and adults. At level 3, success rates fell slightly for 16 to 18 year olds but showed good improvement for adults in 2006/07.

Retention rates for adult learners have shown a reasonable improvement. In April 2008 retention was 78% compared with 71% at the same time last year. Retention rates for 16 to 18 year olds has remained static at 83% over the same period.

#### Quality of provision

<p>What progress has been made in improving the monitoring of teaching and learning? The quality improvement plan notes a range of measures to develop the quality of teaching and learning. How effective have they been in achieving improvement?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress.</p>
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Clear procedures to observe all staff at least once a year are established and the college sets challenging targets for teachers to achieve a minimum grade 2 on observations. Those who are graded as satisfactory or below are given appropriate support before being re-observed. Observations are carried out by a trained team of internal observers. While their work is moderated internally and by external qualified

practitioners, some observations are not recorded in sufficient detail to match the grades awarded. College data indicates improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The college has recently started to use peer observations to share good practice more effectively and has just purchased software to analyse observations in more detail.

<p>The improvement of work-based learning provision is seen as having a high priority in the quality improvement plan with a wide range of actions identified. What progress has been achieved? Have actions to improve the extent of feedback from employers been effective?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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The tracking of learners' progress has been improved and the college has recently introduced a revised procedure for work-based reviews with more involvement of curriculum specialists. Timely reviews are undertaken but some target setting is weak and there is insufficient reinforcement and checking of equality of opportunities. This has been recognised by the college and actions are planned to resolve this as an area for improvement. The college has improved its links with employers and now offers a recruitment service to ensure learners have access to a wide range of suitable work opportunities.

Significant progress has been made in incorporating the work of the college training organisation, Basingstoke Engineering Training Association (BETA), into the quality improvement arrangements. Lesson observations have been established, and training provided in lesson planning. Staff have been offered teacher training opportunities. Plans are in place to support greater sharing of good practice.

Employers are now more involved in planning and reporting on work based learning provision. Student progress has improved, for example, following negotiations with an employer regarding access to on site resources. Incidents of poor behaviour by learners are addressed appropriately. College reviews indicate that the confidence of employers in the college's work-based learning has improved.

#### Leadership and management

<p>What progress has been made in the use of data? Are all staff, including part-time, now CRB checked? What progress has been made in analysing the performance of different student groups?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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Data is now more thoroughly scrutinised by senior managers. The college has a clear procedure to highlight courses that are underperforming and this information is regularly reviewed by the college quality improvement group. Heads of curriculum areas have access to appropriate data, but it is not easily accessed. Value added

data is now used more effectively to identify improvements and curriculum heads and course tutors have now been trained in its use.

CRB checks have been completed for all relevant staff. Equality of opportunities data is well scrutinised and learner success is appropriately monitored by age, gender and ethnicity. Data on the success of students who are given additional learning support is also analysed. The college recognises the need to examine this data by postcode to analyse the achievements of students from more deprived areas. In curriculum areas such as engineering and hairdressing, the college has made good efforts to encourage more balanced gender participation. Marketing materials in these areas have been carefully produced and female changing facilities are now in place in the engineering department.

<p>What progress has been made in further improving the quality of course reviews and action plans? How effective have been the actions to integrate the outreach provision with the colleges QA arrangements? What progress has been made in improving the E2E provision?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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The 2006/07 self-assessment report and the associated quality improvement plan provide suitable tools for quality improvement. The college has worked hard to improve its course review and evaluation process. Documentation has been re-written to provide greater clarity and reduce the paper burden on course teams. Reviews are now timed to match key events in the college year. The involvement of learners and employers in the development of the self-assessment report has improved with both groups now represented at curriculum and college level review boards. Basingstoke has links with two other colleges in providing managers to act as 'critical friends' at the review and moderation of the self-assessment report.

Reasonable progress has been made to improve the outreach adult education provision which was fully integrated in to the quality assurance cycle for the first time this year. Staff training and lesson observations have increased in frequency. Team working with staff delivering external courses has improved. Internal verification arrangements have been improved.

Reasonable progress has been made in improving the Entry to Employment provision. This was identified in the previous self-assessment report as being inadequate in both learner volume and outcomes. Three key staff left this curriculum area in 2006/07 and a new manager was appointed in October 2007. Team working has improved and there has been a reasonable improvement in learner outcomes to date.

What progress has been made in developing and implementing strategies to improve the accommodation now and in the future? What progress has been made in negotiations for a re-located campus?	Reasonable progress
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Work will be completed during summer 2008 to provide dedicated information and learning technologies (ILT) facilities in all curriculum areas. Significant investment has been agreed to improve accommodation for computing courses by September 2008. Teaching spaces will be re-configured, sound proofing improved and new equipment installed. It is too early to judge the value of these extensive changes. Good progress has been made in providing accommodation for on-line and year round examinations. The college has begun an appropriate investment in updating all its IT resources over the next five years.

Progress has been slow in improving the lower concourse area which was identified in the self-assessment report as requiring improved temperature control and carpeting. Light reduction film is to be fitted to the large windows and new carpet fitted, but the college recognises that existing environmental control equipment is not sufficiently effective.

Initial planning and consultations to re-site the college are making reasonable progress. A potential site, for a proposed new learning campus, is being discussed and outline plans are currently being considered by the LSC. College managers have a target of 20011/12 for completion of the new facility.