

Brockenhurst College

Inspection report

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. Brockenhurst College is a large tertiary college in the New Forest in Hampshire with learners attending from seven local authorities. In 2005/06, 12,782 learners provided 29,730 enrolments with 69% full-time equivalent students being 16-18 year olds and 31% adults. The college also has significant numbers of 14-19 year olds on vocational programmes. Part-time adult education provision is offered at four main sites as well as at a large number of additional community-based locations. The cost to learners of contracted rail and bus services to the main site at Brockenhurst is substantially subsidised by the college.

2. The college is a lead partner in a collaborative Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for applied information technology (IT) for business, and a partner in collaborative CoVEs in leadership and management and early years, playwork and children's services, as well as leading a regional CoVE in tourism. The college was designated as a Beacon College in 2004 and in April 2006 achieved Action for Business College accreditation. The college leads a Train to Gain partnership of seven Hampshire and Isle of Wight Action for Business colleges as well as a Train to Gain contract with the south west region LSC. In May 2007 it achieved Matrix accreditation for information, advice and guidance and in November 2007 received a Matrix national excellence award.
3. Most of the college's provision is in 10 of the 15 sector subject areas. Courses range from pre-entry to postgraduate. Qualifications offered are principally AS/A level, BTEC, NVQ, GCSE and OCN and include the International Baccalaureate. There is extensive provision for learners with essential skills needs and for young people and adult learners with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
4. Learners from minority ethnic backgrounds make up 4% of 16-19 year old learners and 3% of adult learners, which is higher than the proportion in the local population but lower than the widest travel to learn area. The area is dominated by small and medium enterprises with approximately 80% of companies employing five people or less.
5. The college vision is 'to become the leading educator and trainer in the learning and skills sector' and its core purpose is 'to help people make the most of their lives through learning'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: Contributory Grade 1</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

6. Overall effectiveness is outstanding. Success rates are very high. Many students achieve beyond their expectations irrespective of their ethnicity, backgrounds, gender or learning needs. However, retention rates on a few courses in 2006/07 fell below the national average. Students produce very good work and thoroughly enjoy college life. Overall the quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Assessment is comprehensive and helps students improve their work. The college meets the needs and interests of learners extremely well. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding as is equality of opportunity. Guidance and academic, pastoral and welfare support are excellent. Leadership and management, including governance, are outstanding. The college has a highly developed self-critical approach. Quality assurance is rigorous and used very effectively by managers to raise standards. Self-assessment is accurate and an integral part of the very good systems to improve provision. Students are effectively involved in the process. Accommodation is good overall and the college has made significant improvements to the college estate since the last inspection. Financial management is very strong and the college provides outstanding value for money.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

7. The capacity to improve is outstanding. The self-assessment report is accurate and improvement plans are detailed with specific and realistic actions for improvement. Plans are very clearly linked to the strategic direction of the college and staff at all levels understand the process well. A recently introduced on-line self-assessment system effectively aids staff teams to share good practice. Managers use readily available, detailed examination data and information from monitoring activities very well to raise standards in all aspects of provision. The college has maintained or significantly improved students' already high achievement and standards of work are very good.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

8. The college has made very good progress in rectifying areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The consultative, open style of the principal and senior managers, together with clear accountability and very effective quality assurance arrangements, are driving up standards. Teaching and learning have improved. Very good progress has been made on issues identified at the last inspection. More students are achieving higher grades than are expected of them based on their prior achievement. Overall key skills delivery and outcomes have improved. The college has improved the suitability of accommodation.

Key strengths

- very high success rates
- very good progress made by all students
- very good teaching and learning
- outstanding educational and social inclusion
- outstanding academic and pastoral support
- excellent advice and guidance
- highly effective quality assurance arrangements
- outstanding leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- retention rates on a few courses.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

9. Achievement and standards are outstanding and this agrees with college's self-assessment. Students achieve very well, irrespective of their backgrounds, gender or learning needs. Already high success rates have improved significantly across most provision and are now very high. Overall value added scores show that the progress made by most students in most subjects is above that expected from their prior attainment on entry to the college. Attendance is good and improved from last year. Standards of students' work are very good.
10. Particularly significant are the improvements to the already very high rates at level 1 on all courses for both age groups and level 2 long courses and NVQs for adults. In 2005/06, adult success rates on long courses at level 2 were already well above the national rate and have significantly improved to 83%. Although success rates at level 3 for 16-18 year olds are high, they have remained similar for the last three years and the differential between the college rate and the national average has reduced as national rates have improved. Adults do very well on A/A2 level provision but for the small number of adults who take AS level, success rates fell to a low 50%. Retention on a few vocational courses and GCSEs and AS levels has declined. However, current retention rates on all these programmes show a significant improvement.
11. Overall success rates across key skills have improved but the results vary in each qualification and level. For example, success rates on key skills in entry level application of number, level 1 communications and information and communication technology are outstanding at 100%. However, in communications at level 3, although numbers have reduced, success rates remain low at 21%.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

12. The quality of provision is outstanding and this agrees with the college's own self-assessment. Overall teaching and learning are outstanding. The college has taken very effective steps in the last year to improve the reliability and accuracy of its lesson observation process. Teaching is good. Inspectors agreed with the college that the current profile is broadly accurate which shows that a large majority of teaching and learning is good or better. However, 18% is satisfactory. In the best lessons students work purposefully with a good understanding of the aims and objectives for the lesson. In these lessons students are able to take responsibility for their learning, use their time effectively and demonstrate a determination to succeed. Teachers create an excellent environment for learning and provide an appropriate level of challenge for all students. Initial assessment is used very well to plan individual programmes of study.
13. Additional learning support is particularly effective and well received by students. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is fully integrated within

vocational teaching for all courses at levels 1 and 2. Students' work is marked promptly and thoroughly. Teachers' feedback is very good and clearly indicates what students need to do to improve their work and achieve higher grades.

14. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The curriculum is reviewed regularly and developed effectively in response to employers' and students' requests. Social and educational inclusion are outstanding. The college works hard to make its courses accessible to students who might not otherwise take advantage of the opportunities to study. A wide range of study options, flexible timetabling, subsidised transport, individual programmes of study and tailored initial assessment for those without recognised qualifications, all contribute to an accessible curriculum. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses are timetabled alongside vocational courses where appropriate. The college provides a welcoming and supportive environment in which diversity is valued and respected. The range of subjects and levels of study are extensive. The enrichment programme is wide ranging and promoted particularly well to students. Students on all full-time programmes develop skills which contribute to their future economic well-being by taking part in work experience. The college works successfully with around 14 partner schools to offer flexible programmes of study.
15. Guidance and support for students are outstanding. Initial advice and guidance are very good. The introduction of a new students' day in July has been particularly successful. It offers all full-time students the chance to experience the subjects they will be studying as part of the selection procedure. An extensive range of specialist support is available. Pastoral support is exceptionally good. Personal tutors monitor students' progress thoroughly. Systems for recording students' individual learning plans, achievement, attendance and overall performance are excellent. Teachers and tutors share information particularly well and use a range of modern technology to facilitate communication with students and with each other. Very good attention is paid to students' welfare and safety. Communication with parents is excellent and a parental portal is available on the college intranet. Adult students and part-time students have access to a range of tutorial support which is highly appropriate for their needs. Careers advice is readily and widely available through a range of mechanisms including the learning resource centre and an excellent arrangement with Connexions. Students are encouraged to have high aspirations and are well motivated and self-confident. Aspects of the group tutorial system are not well developed and in some cases tutors prefer to use the time for group tutorials for individual support.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

*Contributory grade:
Equality of opportunity*

Outstanding: Grade 1

16. Leadership and management are outstanding as judged by the college itself. The principal provides strong and consultative leadership and, together with senior managers and governors, very clear strategic direction. Key priorities for action are clearly identified and communicated well to all staff. An increased

focus on developing employer liaison and networks has been very effective. The college has continued to improve most, already high, success rates. Staff are given autonomy and clear accountability drives forward improvements. Teachers are very well supported by managers and staff development is very good.

17. The college has a strong self-critical culture. Quality assurance systems are thorough and focus very effectively on improvement. Managers use a wide range of data to analyse and compare all aspects of provision. Specific clear action planning prioritises issues well and managers follow-up monitoring ensures improvements are sustained. The formal, well embedded system for observing teaching and learning focuses appropriately on learning and improvement. The process accurately identifies the quality of teaching and learning. Advanced lecturers provide good informal support and mentoring arrangements effectively help new staff to develop their practice.
18. The self-assessment process is thorough, inclusive and rigorous. Moderation effectively involves students and governors as well as taking into account parents' and employers' views. However, whilst not all key issues within curriculum reports are brought forward sufficiently critically into the summary level, senior managers clearly identify key issues and set actions to improve these in the quality improvement plan. Timescales are realistic and monitored well. The college has very effectively introduced an on-line electronic process for the production of the self-assessment which includes automatic population of data tables and hyperlinks to important guidance and inspection manuals. It allows easy cross referencing for senior managers and important sharing of good practice by all staff.
19. The college has done much to improve accommodation and facilities and overall they are good, although in a few areas rooms are cramped for the numbers of students using them. The college is at full capacity and has strong potential for growth. The property strategy has enabled continual investment in capital buildings, infrastructure and equipment and has improved access for students with restricted mobility. Senior managers have consulted widely and received support for the extensive new capital building project about to be submitted to the LSC for approval.
20. Governance is outstanding. Experienced and knowledgeable governors with a wide range of skills provide very good support for the college. They challenge senior managers effectively and monitor academic and financial performance well. Annual formal arrangements that link individual governors to curriculum areas enable them to gain good insight into day-to-day issues for staff and students. Financial management is strong and the college provides outstanding value for money.
21. Equality of opportunity is outstanding. The college has a strong ethos of meeting individual students' needs, and support and guidance are outstanding. The college meets its statutory obligations under child protection legislation, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA).

Learners' achievement *

Notes to the data tables: where course types have been discontinued or where there are very small numbers of learners, these have been omitted from the table.

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18			Diff	19+			Diff
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	
1 Long	04/05	337	80	65	15	1,561	74	62	12
	05/06	344	78	69	9	1,312	80	65	15
	06/07	351	84	N/A		1,291	84	N/A	
GNVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...				...
NVQs	04/05	34	85	68	17	2	0	66	-66
	05/06	32	72	72	0	4	100	74	26
	06/07	21	86	N/A					
Other	04/05	298	79	64	15	1,559	74	62	12
	05/06	312	79	69	10	1,308	80	65	15
	06/07	330	84	N/A		1,290	84	N/A	

* college data for 2006/07

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18			Diff	19+			Diff
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	
2 Long	04/05	916	72	61	11	668	62	60	2
	05/06	833	74	66	8	868	77	66	11
	06/07	957	75	N/A		918	83	N/A	
GCSEs	04/05	507	69	64	5	69	68	63	5
	05/06	379	78	68	10	71	62	67	-5
	06/07	466	77	N/A		53	68	N/A	
GNVQs	04/05	...	...	...		...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...		...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...		...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	62	71	57	14	183	80	60	20
	05/06	53	91	65	26	267	76	67	9
	06/07	40	70			280	88		
Other	04/05	330	78	61	17	416	53	59	-6
	05/06	400	69	66	3	530	79	65	14
	06/07	450	72			585	82		

* college data for 2006/07

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	04/05	4,552	78	68	10	460	67	58	9
	05/06	5,101	79	70	9	588	74	63	11
	06/07	5,934	79			590	75		
A/A2 Levels	04/05	1,518	92	86	6	34	65	69	-4
	05/06	1,274	92	87	5	62	77	72	5
	06/07	1,890	91			36	78		
AS Levels	04/05	2,492	72	66	6	76	57	52	5
	05/06	3,277	77	67	10	103	53	55	-2
	06/07	3,360	74			64	50		
GNVQs	04/05	207	67	61	6	...	...	...
	05/06	143	66	66	0	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...		...	...
NVQs	04/05	...	...	...		141	79	56	23
	05/06	...	...	...		181	83	63	20
	06/07	...	...			182	86		
Other	04/05	324	71	60	11	204	63	59	4
	05/06	403	69	65	4	238	75	64	11
	06/07	680	71			308	74		

* college data for 2006/07