

Barnsley College

Reinspection of Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities:

February 2001

Report from the Inspectorate

The Further Education Funding Council

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

REINSPECTION

The FEFC has agreed that colleges with provision judged by the inspectorate to be less than satisfactory or poor (grade 4 or 5) should be reinspected. In these circumstances, a college may have its funding agreement with the FEFC qualified to prevent it increasing the number of new students in an unsatisfactory curriculum area until the FEFC is satisfied that weaknesses have been addressed.

Satisfactory provision may also be reinspected if actions have been taken to improve quality and the college's existing inspection grade is the only factor which prevents it from meeting the criteria for FEFC accreditation.

Reinspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Reinspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports and confirm that actions taken as a result of previous inspection have improved the quality of provision. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. The opinion of the FEFC's audit service contributes to inspectorate judgements about governance and management.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Assessments use grades on a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses*
- *grade 2 - good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses*
- *grade 4 - less than satisfactory provision in which weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 - poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.*

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 02476 863000
Fax 02476 862100
website: <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>*

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Barnsley College
Yorkshire and Humberside Region

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Background

Barnsley College was inspected in November 1999 and the findings published in inspection report 22/00. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was awarded a grade 4.

The key strengths were: students' good achievements on the vocational access certificate course; effective work-related learning and good work placements; and clearly defined progression routes within the college. The weaknesses were: ineffective initial assessments; inadequate individual learning plans; narrow range of teaching methods; inappropriateness of some provision to students' needs; ineffective recording and reporting of students' achievements; and support workers' practice of completing the students' work themselves.

The provision was reinspected in March 2001. Inspectors observed 10 lessons, reviewed a range of students' work and held meetings with managers, teachers and students. In addition, inspectors examined a range of documentation prepared for the reinspection.

Assessment

Teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Three of the 10 lessons observed were good or outstanding. No lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. At the last inspection 38% of lessons observed were unsatisfactory. Inspectors found that the key strengths identified in the last inspection had been maintained.

Considerable changes have been made to address weaknesses in the last inspection report. The standards fund has been used effectively to provide extensive staff development for teachers and support staff. There are more full-time staff in the programme area. Regular course team meetings focus on curriculum and staffing issues. The college has begun to develop provision for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, in collaboration with the local Connexions service. The documentation used to track the progress of students' learning from initial assessment is now satisfactory. Each student has individual learning targets, which are reviewed regularly during tutorials. Some of the documentation to support the review processes was introduced shortly before the inspection. Not all forms are completed properly. Those that are completed most effectively show appropriate attention to student achievements and progress. Students are insufficiently involved in evaluating their own learning. The college has yet to develop an effective way to involve students in evaluating their course or the quality of college services.

Students' individual learning needs are used as the basis for the content of the better lessons. This approach is particularly well developed on entry level courses designed by the college where teachers develop the curriculum in response to student need rather than having to teach to an externally devised syllabus. Good examples of inclusive learning were seen in brickwork, creative arts and personal development lessons. There were some examples of imaginative project work using teacher-devised resources for students. Where appropriate students used IT, including the Internet, as a resource to support other lessons. Some teachers made good use of student individual targets at appropriate times in the lessons. In the less

effective lessons, some theoretical concepts were introduced that were too difficult for students or insufficient attention was paid to individual learning needs. Opportunities were sometimes missed to integrate numeracy concepts with practical subjects. Some whole-class teaching did not provide sufficient challenge for some students. Some student folders included work that had not been marked or that did not include sufficient comments from teachers that would enable students to improve. Support workers are now better integrated with course teams, and they have a better understanding of their role. In the best lessons, they provided effective support that enabled students to learn.

Revised grade: provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities 3.