



Investors in Diversity

Assessment Report

For

Milton Keynes College

Date: 1st February 2010

Assessor: Bruce Waller

On behalf of: National Centre for Diversity

Assessment details

Organisation Name:	Milton Keynes College
Organisation Address:	Bletchley Campus, Sherwood Drive, Bletchley, MK3 6DR
Telephone Number:	01908 637361
Nature of Business:	College of further education
Contacts:	Joan Martin
Number of Employees:	1200
Number of Sites:	2
Stakeholder groups	Staff, students, suppliers & Governors 63 interviewees
Site Visit Dates:	26 th /27 th /28 th January 2010

Executive summary & assessment decision

Having conducted the assessment review of Milton Keynes College, I am convinced that they meet the requirements of the Investors in Diversity national standard, and therefore I recommend that they should be recognised as an Investor in Diversity. The next review will take place by 2nd February 2012.

The remainder of the report summarises findings and general observations from the visits, including areas of strength and good practice, followed by suggestions for continuous improvement to help build on their many good approaches, and to strengthen these in the light of feedback. I hope that I have been able to do justice to all the initiatives I found.

There is no obligation for these comments and suggestions to be taken on board, and no guarantee that they will work. They are simply offered in the spirit of continuous improvement.

Congratulations I wish the College every continued success with their plans, and thank everyone for their kind hospitality and co-operation throughout the visit, especially Joan Martin and Julie Mills for their careful preparation and kind hospitality.

Report against the destinations of the Investors in Diversity Standard

Strand 1 – Committing

Your organisation is committing to creating or developing a truly inclusive organisational culture in which diversity is genuinely valued.

Destinations

- 1. Written commitment to diversity translates into all stakeholders feeling they have both the opportunity and the responsibility to learn from others and to develop self-awareness on diversity issues.**

Supporting evidence

Milton Keynes College began their IID Journey in May 2008, in agreement with the equal opportunities committee and the strategic review group, which included firm commitment from the Principal and Vice Principal. The Deputy Principal Julie Mills explained that they wished "to use the standard as a framework, to be able to evidence and demonstrate existing good practice, whilst continually improving."

The College publish a mission vision and values statement which was evidenced, the college's mission to be: *An outstanding College at the heart of our city: nurturing ambition and delivering success.*

A commitment was also made to appointing a dedicated Diversity manager, Joan Martin well before they embarked on IID. The commitment to the IID journey is updated on the college website home page along with other good practice including Two ticks disability and Mindful employer recognition.

The intranet has been updated for students and staff, notably the Principal Rob Badcock is committed to personally speaking to new staff and student groups about the college values. This is done on starter days with invites to attend lunch with Rob, people were able to speak of the value of this.

The College provided evidence of the Tutorial and enrichment resources, which were extremely comprehensive and available in various formats.

Linked to the principals of every child matters, the resources also have a specific equality and diversity section and links to learning materials such as books and DVD's. Stakeholder groups also confirmed that the college had visible management who were committed to the students and staff also having a good reputation within the Milton Keynes community. One stakeholder commented: "The college lives diversity, students confirmed that the college is good at stabilizing diversity issues".

2. The written commitment to equal opportunity translates into greater mobility in terms of people becoming mobile in moving away from the margins into a mainstream organisational culture which is inclusive and which values difference and diversity.

Supporting evidence

The College provided evidence which extended prior to the IID journey indicating that a commitment to equality and diversity has been around for a long time.

The EPG (Equalities good practice group) meet every term and have been meeting since November 2007. The group includes representation of staff and students, with a key goal, to promote equality and diversity widely and to challenge and develop issues.

The ESRG (Equalities strategic review group) also meets termly and includes members of the senior management team, they have a wider strategic responsibility for items such as legislation, the IID action plan, the corporate equality scheme, equality impact assessment and a general responsibility for the EPG. The group focused on increasing mobility and a greater understanding of diversity indicated in a few of the actions identified below from one of the meetings:

Diversity training – recognise what is diversity training and ensure that we provide necessary 'Mandatory' training – time frame set.

Promote throughout Milton Keynes, a wider understanding of Diversity, e.g. interfaith, disability and Increase opportunities to promote Diversity in the classroom.

Evidence was also presented showing regular student council meetings, with minutes including discussions around equality and diversity. A competition was run to ensure students understood what equality and diversity is, using the winning entries to create a poster to be displayed across all sites.

Regular surveys are carried out to check if students feel that they are being treated equally, e.g. there had recently been a Religion and Beliefs survey. There is also a College Equality Opportunities policy leaflet available.

The EAF (equal access forum) meets regularly to discuss issues around access, health and safety and equality and diversity. One staff member also confirmed that: "minutes from EAF and student council meetings are translated into other formats such as Macaton to provide better access". Milton Keynes College are also ensuring that opportunities are being promoted within tutorial session plans and schemes of work to promote equality and diversity and promote deeper daily considerations.

This was borne out in stakeholder interviews with the quality team confirming they have regular performance monitoring meetings with managers "who have to state what they are doing about equality and diversity"

3. Leaders have shown a practical commitment towards embracing diversity.

Supporting evidence

The leadership team show a strong commitment to equality and diversity and are a driving force for embedding inclusion both internally and externally. Whilst I was interviewing the Principal Rob Badcock and the chair of governors Francesca Skelton, they provided me with a copy of the college's strategic framework. This is a well thought out framework that incorporates vision and values, Core strategic objectives and the strategic focus for 2009-2012. Described in the vision; *Milton Keynes College will be at the heart of a connected and inclusive learning community.* Valuing diversity and diversity indicators are a clear vision within the framework. The work of the college's leaders is further recognised within groups such as the ESRG & EPGP previously mentioned in detail.

The College also provided me with a copy of the draft equality and diversity strategy, which included the following statement: *We will nurture ambition and deliver success in a College where everyone can participate fully and be treated equally and fairly without disadvantage arising from any personal characteristic including gender, disability, race, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief or transgender.*

Also within the statement: *equality is recognised as a leadership responsibility and a mark of good governance;*

The ESRG also manage the corporate equality scheme and its development, significant developments include good student BME representation and achievement, expansion of the curriculum to meet changing needs and an increase in students with learning difficulties accessing courses.

One external provider of training commented "I was made aware that one member of staff had gone to a senior manager regarding their sexuality and had been supported and referred to a group who could offer specialist help"

4. Your organisation has shown whole-hearted practical commitment to diversity by taking relevant initiatives forward.

Supporting evidence

Commitment from the leadership team with the appointment of Joan Martin as the dedicated E&D manager has allowed many good initiatives to be embedded. Such as:

- Lunch time discussion groups
- Updates to the intranet and College Website
- Revising induction procedures to promote better ways in which students can access support.
- Enrichment teams and tutorial support re E&D
- Guidance regarding the use of prayer/quiet rooms
- A review of equality and diversity considerations around food preparation and dietary requirements e.g. Halal, Kosher, vegetarian etc.

- Formal and informal training such as promoting equality and diversity for staff in July 2009.
- College Calendar of events.
- Formation of the equality and diversity good practice group (EGPG)
- Curriculum and community events
- Working with contractors to promote E&D
- HR News

During stakeholder interviews the following comments were made:

"The college invested in a professional coffee making machine so that students with learning difficulties could learn and be work ready for coffee houses and restaurants"

"The tutors are down to earth, you can have a laugh with tutors, out of lessons you don't see many problems"

"At the college people are aware that diversity is about being valued and people do feel valued at Milton Keynes College"

"Deprived and disadvantaged people can get a flavour of learning, for example we had a former heroine addict who did care and first aid training and is now training to be a social worker"

Strand 2 – Learning

(i) Your organisation develops as a learning organisation which continuously and proactively self assesses. It is able to plan and adapt in order to improve how it manages diversity.

Destinations

5. Your organisation is clear about the business or organisational benefits of embracing diversity.

Supporting evidence

In an extract from the colleges self assessment review(SAR) for 2008/09, the main headings included key strengths such as, staff promoting equality and diversity, equality impact assessment on student policy and improvements such as the promotion of equality and diversity within offender learning. Ofsted Subject Survey into Learner Voice reported that equality and diversity are thoroughly embedded (Feb 2009).

Also detailed were areas for improvement such as, work with employers to increase BME participation in apprenticeships. Provide detailed interview guidance to short listed applicants, explore how to engage older full-time students in student voice activities. Conduct a Religion and Beliefs survey to inform the College's Single Equality Scheme, implement the recommendations from the LGBT staff and student survey and improve retention for students from Other Asian backgrounds.

Stakeholders had an understanding of the business case as follows:

"From a moral point of view, we can have a talented pool of staff and students, also it is about our position in the community"

"Good equality and diversity ensures there are no barriers, which enables a better community".

"It is important to understand the changing demographic of the city, so that so that we can identify needs"

6. Your organisation has successfully conducted effective and proactive stakeholder consultation and self-assessment.

Supporting evidence

Milton Keynes College carried out the IID online student survey in April 2009, of which 825 responded and the staff survey in October 2008 of which 285 responded. They also carried out a qualitative staff survey in July of 2008, 123 responses were received and a detailed qualitative analysis of all completed surveys was completed with key emerging themes identified. Also a qualitative stakeholder survey was done in December 2009, to which 6 responses were received and a qualitative analysis of all completed surveys was carried out.

In addition the college carried out specific surveys with staff and students on LGBT issues in May/June 2009 and also on religion and belief issues in October 2009.

The results of these surveys were fed into a diversity surveys action plan with a review schedule of Dec 2009, March 2010 and June 2010. Evidence of the survey results was provided in the evidence files.

Area for improvement

Being such a large organisation I feel it would be informative both internally and externally for the college to complete the IID assessment survey at some time before the reassessment in 2012. This will ensure that a greater opinion is sought across the college's key stakeholders and supplement the face to face interview process.

7. Stakeholder consultation and self-assessment have informed the creation of your organisation's IID Action Plan. It has clear aims and objectives, which are understood by key members of staff and stakeholders.

Supporting evidence

Milton Keynes College arranged feedback to students and staff after the surveys using a "you said, we did" format. With some of the feedback detailed below.

"You love how all students are supported, whatever their background"

"Some of you aren't sure where to go for help, **we will**, improve guidance for personal tutors, focus the work of the youth work team".

"Provide training for staff"

In addition an extract from an OFSTED report said:

The promotion of diversity is a key feature of the learner voice, careful analysis of the views of different groups of students is undertaken and used well to plan improvement. An effective equality access forum enables learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to express their views and ideas openly.

Additionally posters were erected around the college to promote students views.

Some extracts of staff feedback are below:

You said, "I don't have enough training in diversity issues"

We did a Cross college development day with a diversity focus and trained a team of trainers to accelerate diversity training

You said "I want better work-life balance"

We did sign up to mindful employer standard, provided subsidised gym membership, equality impact assessed HR policies.

In addition to the above the college built key areas for improvement, such as expanding staff training and establishing a multi-faith steering group into the diversity surveys action plan.

(ii) All are encouraged to improve their own and other people's diversity-related awareness, knowledge and skills.

8. Stakeholders are able to adapt to diversity within your organisation.

Supporting evidence

A range of appropriate training is provided for staff, the college ran a cross college training day in July 2009 on E&D. Promoting diversity training is also mandatory at induction and an ongoing plan is in place, to ensure all staff have had the training, via the equality champions. The college also seeks to encourage the discussion of diversity issues at all levels having introduced a programme of activities through the management, including E&D as a standing item at performance management meetings.

One member of staff commented, "It is the subtle make up of people that we can now appreciate, it's not just about colour for example, things like dual heritage."

Another mentioned, "There is now a confidence in staff to tackle students on a range of issues, this is a rewarding place to work, you can go anywhere for help".

When asked about staff training one tutor said, "The diversity training was really good and highlighted new ways of doing things".

Students were asked what diversity is at an infoXchange event in 2008, this is what they said.

I'm me! You're you! We are all different, deal with it.

Diversity makes us who we are. If we all looked, acted and lived the same, the world would be bland.

Diversity is the difference between people in the same world.

9. Stakeholders show high take-up rates of formal diversity-awareness training as well as engagement in informal learning from each other.

Supporting evidence

In addition to the mandatory training mentioned in destination 8 the college has been proactive in running a range of additional training and awareness raising events.

The 2008 staff survey highlighted the need for a multi-faith Group, this was established late 2008 and in May 2009 the group identified a designated Youth Worker. Further guidance was provided for managers on capturing informal learning, this to be ongoing and reported back to the SMT via the annual CPD report. They also organised a Cross College event within CPD to provide training for staff & students to promote confidence in challenging inappropriate behaviour.

An independent survey was carried out by the LGBT Q alliance area partner in May –July 2009 and a report issued with guidance to staff on homophobic and transphobic banter. Also a youth team worker was identified to support LGBT students. The College also runs a calendar of cultural events and encourages wider participation and a sharing of best practice through the intranet a discussion board and HR news.

Additional events include Culture week in April and May of 2009, with activities for all. Sponsoring and participating in the Milton Keynes race equality council's annual ball in 2008.

Curriculum events also include a wide variety of diverse learning opportunities, some of which are listed below:

Islamic art project, Black hair programme, men into childcare programme and women's academies in football and basketball.

Stakeholders also spoke of things such as assistive technologies giving students who need it, kit to bring them up to speed, the existence of a signing group where teachers and students can come together to improve.

The college also runs COGS, a counselling service for students.

Strand 3 – Developing

(i) Your organisation is becoming more proactive in developing and sustaining the diversity of its workforce.

Destinations

10. Managers are effective in supporting the development of your stakeholders in relation to diversity.

Supporting evidence

Milton Keynes College have a very comprehensive recruitment procedure, which is constantly monitored and developing.

Anyone who is involved in recruitment is given a copy of the 'staff recruitment and selection process' document. This is very detailed and includes a section on equality and diversity as well as reference to the Investors in diversity standard.

All job adverts internal and external include the following paragraph: *Milton Keynes College is student focused, positive about change, and values diversity. Our success is due to our staff, our culture and our belief in working in partnership with others.*

Application forms include an equal opportunities monitoring form, which asks for any reasonable adjustments a candidate may request.

Interview sheets also include a section on equality and diversity for potential candidates. All materials include the investors in diversity logo and two tick's disability logo. Managers also receive recruitment training and are given an information sheet regarding investors in diversity. The HR team confirmed that the college website was generally where the highest number of applicants came from and that they had recorded 30% of applicants do not fill in the equal opportunities monitoring form. They also reported that comparably high numbers of BME applicants are failing to get to appointment, in this case they could only identify possible language barriers and are taking additional steps to try and improve this.

11. There is encouragement for stakeholders to speak of new opportunities (commercial and non-commercial) based on their own knowledge of diverse needs.

Supporting evidence

All staff members at the college have a development and appraisal review (DAR) which is formalised and completed by the staff member then assessed by the manager. All staff confirmed that this process was valuable and that the reviews were up to date. Evidence was provided of the blank review forms as well as examples of actual staff reviews. One of the competencies in the review asks what tutors do to promote E&D within teaching and for managers and staff they are asked what equality and diversity training they have undertaken. The college also hold termly performance monitoring meetings and provided me with a copy of the agenda from the Autumn term 2009/10. The agenda included a requirement to record feedback from student voice in a written report, to be provided for students and performance data, which reports on attendance and retention in various sections. They also provide feedback on *promoting equality and diversity data* which reports on 2007-2009 activity, for example: In the previous two years since 07/08 there have been 655 attendances in promoting Equality & Diversity sessions. In addition 326 members of staff have attended new staff induction, which includes Equality & Diversity Awareness Training. In the same period of time 282 members of staff have attended Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) training. There is also a comprehensive list of 17 additional equality and diversity related trainings which have been made available.

12. The physical workspace is appropriately suitable for the needs of stakeholders.

Supporting evidence

The EAF (equal access forum) involves staff and students and are responsible for workspace and access issues. The College has always taken access seriously and evidence was available prior to them undertaking IID, for example, the access survey on Kiln Farm in November 2007 suggested internal and external improvements. Also one for University centre Milton Keynes (UCMK) in November 2008, developed with this assistance of a wheel chair user from the EAF.

Evidence was also available to support surveys at Bletchley in May 2009 and minutes from EAF forum meetings.

The results of the diversity surveys action plan also identified action needed to improve circulation at CW campus & create more open space through the new learning & reception Centre. Which was achieved in September 2009, in addition the college promoted staff wellbeing more with staff, through the sport/healthy college initiative, which is ongoing. This was all backed up by achievement of the mindful employer accreditation in August 2009.

Certainly my tour of the shared facilities at both campuses was a warm and vibrant experience, where you were able to get a true feel for the diverse culture of the college and it's commitment to the learner experience.

(ii) Through the provision of support and services, your organisation promotes diversity within.

13. The workplace environment and atmosphere sustains a diverse staff-team, which is increasingly adaptable to diversity.

Supporting evidence

The college provided evidence of staff monitoring data on recruitment between September 2008 and August 2009, for ethnicity, declared disability and Gender. This data was measured against applications, to interview, to new start. Steps are being taken to address a dip in new starters from minority ethnic backgrounds for example by providing detailed interview guidance to short listed applicants. The college is very focused on access and a case study was provided showing reasonable adjustments made for three different members of staff, to assist with a hearing impairment, a visual impairment and additional software to assist with paperwork.

The college also has a good range of policies to safeguard staff and students, evidence was provided of the bullying and harassment policy. In addition, the college publish the Equality and Diversity Strategy and the Single Equality Scheme incorporating seven of the equality strands.

A number of key areas for improvement were reported in the 2009/2010 SAR including, promoting foundation degrees to black and minority ethnic groups and working with employers to increase BME participation in apprenticeships.

There are many student enrichment activities to ensure access for all, such as: The welcome fair, info Exchange, culture week, disability week, citizenship, interfaith week and student council.

During interview a number of staff described how the college, "Value staff as much as students."

One gay member of staff commented how the college had "honoured her paternity leave when her partner gave birth".

(iii) Your organisation seeks to influence its wider partners to be positive about diversity.

14. Your organisation makes it clear that it wishes to work, where appropriate, with organisations which can prove that they are positive about diversity or who are "Working towards Investors in Diversity".

Supporting evidence

The College has a key role in promoting community cohesion and is beginning to be recognised as being at the heart of the diversity agenda in the city.

The College collaborates and works in partnership with more than fourteen local organisations with a shared agenda of promoting diversity and tackling discrimination, including:

Ten outreach centres for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, an increase from four centres in 2004/05 and Midsummer Housing Association, collaboratively working to provide literacy and numeracy support to tenants.

The College hosts MK Equality Council meetings and provides desk and office accommodation for MK Arts and Culture and for the local Police Community Support Officer.

The College hosts a major community faith event each year which brings together communities typically at conflict.

They are also turning a focus on suppliers within the tendering processes carried out in respect of capital development, ensuring an explicit focus on exploring how prospective contractors approach equality and diversity within their own organisations and how they could contribute to the College's improvement journey.

One external consultant who works with the college on major construction contracts mentioned how he and the college had developed an EDI question within the screening process, which counted towards 10% of the decision making process. Going on to say that "two companies in particular stood out as good around EDI"

Strand 4 – Improving

Your organisation adopts or creates a range of self-assessment measures to assess development, new opportunities, the extent of culture shift and any improvement in the feeling of 'inner well-being' within your organisation.

15. Your organisation has developed and is using clear information gathering systems to enable it to measure the impact of the work on diversity.

Supporting evidence

Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out on 19 staff and student policies resulting in changes to practice and procedures and changes to the Development Annual Review (DAR) process, particularly around questions on disability and reasonable adjustment. Thus enabling

members of staff to disclose additional needs, in respect of reasonable adjustments and the College to record details of adjustments made.

Notably the proportion of students disclosing a learning difficulty or disability has increased from 16% in 2006/07 to 18.4% in 2008/09 for students aged 16 – 18, and from 11% to 13% over the same period for students aged 19+.

The College participated in the LSC Single Equality Scheme Action Working Project.

Ofsted (2009) reported that the 'commitment to inclusion is outstanding and manifests itself well in the day to day life of the college. The citizenship programme extends to all 14-19 learners regardless of level or ability'. They also reported that the 'promotion of diversity is a key feature of the learner voice, which analyzes the views of different groups of students to plan improvements.

The College collected much information from staff and students mentioned in previous destinations and they also record achievement, for example analysed by reported ethnicity 2005/06 – 2008/09 for students aged 19+, Success rates in Offender Learning by reported ethnicity and Proportion of staff from BME heritage by contract type. People were getting used to the effectiveness of impact assessments and building it into routine.

Area for improvement

Reference was only made to policy when discussing impact assessment, continue to ensure impact assessment is evidenced against strategy and projects and ensure this can be evidenced at future assessments.

16. New opportunities or markets have been explored.

Supporting evidence

Milton Keynes College are keen to continue to raise their profile in the community as a promoter of equality & diversity and have worked hard on external partnerships such as Sponsoring an Award at the Diversity Ball, working in partnership with MK Equality Council & MK Mix, Diversity & Culture website. They also hosted the Ramadan breaking of the fast community event and Supported MK Islamic Arts, Heritage & Culture Association.

They continue to work with HMP Bulwood to organise a range of events to celebrate a diverse range of cultures and faiths.

Internally various new opportunities have been explored such as mainstreaming 'Men into Childcare' programme and the launch of Women's Academies in Football and Basketball. From the quality Team, an introduction to "Best Practice in Teaching and Learning" with curriculum areas to include a discussion on how to integrate equality & diversity into the curriculum Student enrichment activities: Tutorials, Welcome Fair, Info Xchange, Culture Week, Disability Week, Citizenship, Interfaith week, Student Council. The college is also aiming to mainstream LLD programmes into vocational areas.

One external stakeholder and community volunteer whom I interviewed said, "Milton Keynes College engage from grass routes level with interfaith communities, allowing dialogue particularly around women & youth issues

and marriage and cultural difference". Also speaking of "the café bar, which brought the community and college together."

17. Your organisation has delivered on its clear and evidence-based IiD Action Plan.

Supporting evidence

Milton Keynes College try hard to live by their mission, vision and values statement which was evidenced, to be: *An outstanding College at the heart of our city: nurturing ambition and delivering success.*

Management's commitment is demonstrated with the appointment of a dedicated Diversity Manager and the Principal Rob Badcock is committed to personally speaking to new staff and student groups about the college values. Stakeholder groups also confirmed that the college had visible management who were committed to the students and staff and had a good reputation in the Milton Keynes community.

The EGPG (Equalities good practice group) formed in November 2007 and ESRG (Equalities strategic review group) meet every term. The EAF (equal access forum) meets regularly to discuss issues around access, health and safety and equality and diversity.

The leadership team show a strong commitment to equality and diversity and are a driving force for embedding inclusion both internally and externally. Also within the statement: *equality is recognised as a leadership responsibility and a mark of good governance;*

There is strong evidence of stakeholder consultation with results being fed into a diversity surveys action plan.

A range of appropriate training is provided for staff and the college ran a cross college training day in July 2009 on E&D, promoting diversity, training is also mandatory at induction.

Milton Keynes College have a very comprehensive recruitment procedure, which is constantly monitored and developing. All staff members at the college have a development and appraisal review (DAR) which is formalised and completed by each staff member then assessed by the manager.

The College has a key role in promoting community cohesion and is beginning to be recognised as being at the heart of the diversity agenda in the city. Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out on 19 staff and student policies resulting in changes to practice and procedures.

Communicating

18. Marketing & publicity

Your organisation is clear about the benefits of marketing your commitment to diversity

Supporting evidence

The College has taken the promotion of IID seriously and reference to the standard is included within the majority of policy documents, as well as strategic plans and the SAR. The IID logo appears on the website and IID posters are displayed around the college. When asked, stakeholders were able to identify with the logo and the standard. It is clear to me that the College is very keen to be connected with the standard and the recognition which goes with it.