

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Cardinal Newman College
Date of visit: 2 November 2006

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

Since 2003 the success rates for learners aged 16-18 have continually improved and were significantly above the national average in 2005. Has the success rates been improved further in 2006?

- In 2006 success rates continued to improve and are outstanding. Over the last three years improvements at the college are well above the national rate of improvement. On level 3 long courses success rates improved from 87% in 2005 to 90% in 2006 and on level 2 long courses they improved from 84% to 89%. The 2006 success rates are significantly above the national average.

In 2005 the success rate for adult learners, whilst improving, remained below the national average. What are the success rates for the declining number of adults in 2006?

- In 2006 the number of adults attending the college declined to around 110 learners. Learners were enrolled on either ESOL or level 1 literacy and numeracy courses. Overall the success rates have improved and are around the national average. Retention is good and the college has recognised achievement as an area for improvement. The provision has been integrated into the college's management structure and a clear action plan is in place for further improvements.

Has retention been maintained/improved further in 2006?

- The high retention rates in 2005 have been maintained. The 93% retention on level 2 courses is 9% above the national average and at level 3 retention rates of 95% are well above the benchmark. Retention rates on GCSE and BTEC national certificate courses are

outstanding. Alongside high retention rates pass rates have improved and are well above the national average for GNVQ, GCSE, AS and A-level courses.

How much progress are learners making? What does value added data tell us?

- Value added on level 3 courses continued to improve in 2006 and indicates that students make outstanding progress. The college's overall score on the ALPS system improved to grade 2 for both AS and A-level, placing the college in the top 10% nationally. Students performed well above expectations in around half the subjects offered. In a minority of courses students did not do as well as expected. The college has set ambitious targets to further improve the progress of learners.

Quality of education and training

Have the strategies to improve teaching and learning and share good practice had an impact? What do the outcomes of the college's lesson observations tell us about the quality of teaching and learning?

- All teachers are observed annually and a comprehensive training and development programme, including weekly sessions on specific topics of interest, is in place to support them. The profile of observation grades has improved. In 2005/06 no observed lessons were graded as unsatisfactory and there is a clear strategy to improve the proportion of outstanding lessons. The lesson observation records clearly indicate elements of good practice and identify areas for improvement. Middle managers have a clear role in ensuring the teachers in their area follow up on identified action points which includes additional training and observation of good practice. Examples of good practice are shared regularly at team meetings and this is being extended through peer observations.

How effectively is the college using ILT to support learning?

- A new senior manager has responsibility for developing ILT across the college and good progress has been made. A new college virtual

learning environment (VLE) using “moodle” is in the early stages of development. Staff at all levels are enthusiastic about the use of ILT and the VLE is being used in imaginative ways to support learning and assessment of students’ progress in a few subjects, for example, design and technology. Plans are in place to monitor the quality and effectiveness of ILT. Insufficient easy access to IT resources remains an issue in a minority of courses.

Have the new developments in the delivery of key skills had an impact on learners’ achievements?

- All full-time students complete IT key skills. In 2006 pass rates in the key skills tests were good; however, portfolio completion remains low. The key skills coordinator has plans to liaise more closely with departments to link IT portfolio work with course assignments. Personal tutors now have a greater responsibility to monitor students’ progress in key skills.

How effective is additional learning support in enabling learners to achieve?

- Additional support has improved significantly since the last inspection. In 2005 all students completed initial assessments; this resulted in a much greater proportion of learners being identified and benefiting from additional support. Take up of additional support is good and plans are in place to improve the attendance of a minority of students identified as needing support. College data indicates that most students attending support sessions achieved at or above their minimum target grade. A more comprehensive system to monitor the impact of additional support was introduced September 2006.

Leadership and management

Have the college evaluated the impact of the strategies introduced in September 2005? Are managers clear about the priorities for improvement across the college?

- College strategies are fully evaluated at all levels. Self assessment is robust and thorough. High expectations and challenging targets are set across all courses; progress in achieving these is closely monitored by senior and middle managers. The high grade strategy in 2005/06

has clearly led to improvements in pass rates and value added. Managers are very clear about priorities for 2006/07 and embedding good practice across the college.

Have the college correctly identified under-performing courses? Are the strategies to improve their success rates successful?

- Monthly monitoring meetings between senior managers and leaders of underperforming courses has been effective in improving retention and pass rates and sharing good practice. The college has correctly identified courses to be monitored in 2006/07.

Have the college revised its safeguarding children procedures in line with the new guidelines?

- The college's arrangements for protecting and safeguarding children meet the statutory regulation and recent guidelines. The child protection policy was last updated and approved by governors in November 2005 and an annual review is planned. A single central record of staff is in place and all staff, including governors, receive regular training on child protection.

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

- The new tutorial system has been successfully introduced. The college intranet supports personal tutors and teachers in closely monitoring learners' progress. Data, for example, on attendance, is used very well; "at-risk" students are identified quickly and supported to remain on course. The response time in following up concerns about individual students' performance has been greatly reduced.
- Cardinal Newman is an inclusive college and a level 1 course for learners aged 16 to 18 has been successfully reintroduced into the curriculum.
- The college has made good progress with its accommodation strategy and plans for new buildings are currently with the LSC for approval.