

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: The Oldham College  
Date of visit: 14 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

Success rates have over the last two years demonstrated improvement. Has this trend been maintained in 2005/06?

- Success rates are good with improvement sustained over the last three years. Success, retention and achievement rates at level 1 for learners aged 16-18 are significantly above national averages. Success rates demonstrate a year on year improvement from 60% in 2003/04 to 76% in 2005/06. At level 2, success rates over three years have been more static but are significantly above the national average at 72% in 2005/06. At level 3, retention rates are just below the national average although success rates are in line with the average for similar colleges. The college acknowledges the need to improve success rates at level 3 and has established a clear agenda which is focused on improvements in a small number of curriculum areas.
- For learners aged 19 and over, success rates at level 1 are below the national average by 4 percentage points. Success rates for level 2 are significantly above the national average for similar colleges. Success rates at level 3 demonstrate year on year improvement from 62% in 2003/04 to 72% in 2005/06, which is significantly above the national average. For short courses (5-24 weeks) success rates for both age groups remain below the national average.
- Overall success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups on long courses are around the national average but demonstrate strong improvement over a three year period. For example success rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi learners have increased by 16% and 11% respectively.

Is there evidence that changes to the management of work based learning programmes has led to improvements?

- Work based learning overall success rates were above national rates by 5 percentage points in 2005/06. Timely success rates across all areas are below national rates but have improved significantly year on

year and are now within 7 percentage points of the national average. The management of the area has undergone reorganisation. The delivery of the framework is no longer fragmented into different components. This new holistic approach has added cohesion to the delivery of the programmes. The tracking and monitoring of learner performance is very thorough. There is a much greater accountability and responsibility placed on individual staff. Staff have a thorough understanding of data. Performance targets are thoroughly recorded and regularly monitored at operational and strategic management meetings. Meetings focus on individual learner's progress and place great emphasis on monitoring learners who are within six months of their target completion date. Interventions to improve individual learner's performance are regularly reviewed to measure their success. A very useful electronic review form is being piloted. It records learner progress in detail, sets clear measurable targets for every aspect of their programme and gives employers very detailed information on their learners' progress.

Has the re-organisation of skills for life and key skills led to improvement in the management and delivery of programmes?

- The delivery of skills for life and key skills has been improved. A three year strategy to improve delivery and teaching and learning materials is being implemented. A skills for life steering group meets weekly with senior managers to report on progress. Strategies to improve ESOL programmes have been implemented. For example, a change in awarding body has led to greater flexibility in external assessment opportunities and has made delivering qualifications in the community and qualification success more accessible to learners. An internal inspection identified areas for improvement in teaching, learner tracking and target setting in key skills. The area has been reorganised as part of the college restructuring programme. Methods of teaching and learning have been improved with the focus on individualised learning programmes that identifies and meets learners' developmental needs.

## Quality of education and training

A key target for the college has been to improve the percentage of teaching observations graded as outstanding. Has the college improved the percentage of outstanding grades in the observation of teaching over the last year?

- Staff development activities to support continuous improvement are very good. The college has placed great emphasis on coaching to create a culture of problem solving at all levels of the organisation. The focus on improving teaching and learning is very strong. Teaching and learning, and subject coaches have been instrumental in making significant improvements in outstanding teaching grades which improved by 9 percentage points in 2005/06. Unsatisfactory grades have been reduced. All staff develop an action plan resulting from their lesson observation, identifying how they can sustain and improve their performance. Learning and support materials are shared on the virtual learning site to promote the sharing of good practice.

## Leadership and management

A central theme for the college has been to promote increased participation across Oldham. Is the college continuing to demonstrate success in this area?

- The college has developed excellent partnerships with local schools to promote increased participation in education across Oldham. There are strong links with a range of supportive agencies. A comprehensive range of programmes for learners aged 14-16 have been developed and pass rates on these are well above the local average. There is now very good progression to further education (FE). The college has worked hard locally with a range of partners including Connexion services to promote provision for under-represented groups in FE. This focused programme has made an excellent contribution to the reduction of young people not in education, employment and training in Oldham from 11.2 percent to 8.5 percent. E2E provision is excellent providing a nurturing, sensitive and confidence building environment. There is good progression to employment which was at 63% in 2005/06. Excellent additional learning support enables learners to progress and improves their skills. The college works with feeder schools on literacy and communications to aid improvement at key stage 4 in preparation for progression to FE. Some additional focus is required in training staff to enhance further a range of strategies to address difficult behaviour. The college commitment and work in promoting progression for the 14-19 cohort and beyond is exemplary.

How is the college maintaining its thorough approach to self assessment?

- The self assessment process has been evaluated and further refined. A quality cycle identifies key points in the year where staff are required to report on their areas of learning against specified criteria. Progress towards self assessment is reported quarterly to college governors. These reports incrementally inform the self-assessment process and the final report. All reports undergo a rigorous validation process. Data and other evidence are used well to support the judgements in area of learning reports. The previous year's development plan is reviewed by the validation panel as part of the process to measure ongoing improvements. Key areas for improvement, for example, the proportion of outstanding lesson observation grades and the use of data and success rates to inform quality improvement at course level, have been achieved.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

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

- There is very good and improving progression to HE. In 2005/06 progression to HE increased by 65 percent. This increase in HE progression reflects well the focused teaching and learning strategies, excellent additional learning support and the increased effectiveness of local 14-16 and 14-19 strategies.