

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Tameside College
Date of visit: 19 October 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

GCE AS pass rates were below national averages in 2004/05 and value added for both GCE A level and AS level demonstrated a number of underperforming areas. Has the college improved the standards and progress of learners 16-19 at GCE AS and A level?

- GCE AS level pass rates have improved. In 2005/06 GCE AS level pass rates improved by 11 percentage points from 76.6% to 87.6%. Twelve subjects recorded a 100% pass rate. At GCE A-level the A-E pass rate rose to 98% percent with twenty-three subjects recording a 100 percent pass rate. The achievement of higher grades at GCE A-level declined between 2004/5 and 2005/06. Value added for GCE AS and A-level improved in 2005/06 although there remain a minority of underperforming areas. Targeted intervention and management support have been put in place to support improvement in the weaker performing subjects. There is good monitoring of and action planning for improved retention. Retention rates on level 3 programmes have improved: for learners aged 16-18 year from 78% to 81% and for learners aged 19 and over from 72% to 82%. The overall retention rate for GCE AS level has improved from 77% to 79% percent. The college continues to recognise the need for further improvements to GCE AS pass rates, value added and retention rates across level 3 provision.

Overall success rates in work based learning were very low in 2003/04 but demonstrated a significant improvement in the following year. Has this improvement been maintained?

- Overall success rates in work based learning are satisfactory and have shown year on year improvement, rising from 19% in 2003/04 to 61% in 2005/06. However there are still some pockets of poor performance that need further support. For example, in motor vehicle, rates have

declined from 70% to 40% and in construction from 38% to 25%. Timely success rates are improving and have increased from 11% to 37% over three years. However, they are still not in line with overall success rates.

Key Skills success rates were low in 2003/04 but demonstrated some improvement in 2004/05. Has that improvement been maintained? Success rates for adult literacy and ESOL have decreased. What has the college done to address this?

- Key Skill success rates demonstrate significant improvement. Overall success rates for key skills at level 1 have improved considerably and have risen from 10% in 2002/03 to 70% in 2005/06. Similarly, at level 2 success rates have increased to 61%. Success rates in adult literacy for long programmes have declined and are now below sector averages by 14 percentage points. Success rates on ESOL programmes are very poor. The college recognises the need for sustained improvement in this area. A new staff team have developed a range of good learning resources to support learners. The college has invested in new technology to support ESOL programmes and web based technology is now used effectively to support teaching and learning activities.

Attendance rates have been below national averages. The college has introduced a number of strategies to address this. Are there any improvement trends?

- Attendance rates continue to improve. Overall attendance has improved from 63.4% in 2003/04 to 80.7% in 2005/06. The college continues to develop strategies to aid further improvement.

Quality of education and training

An excellent on-line database records all teaching observations. However it was less clear at the 2005 AAV how this feeds into effective staff training programmes. What evidence is there to show that data base evidence is used to inform staff development and inform strategies for the sharing of good practice?

- There are very effective staff training programmes to support improvements in teaching and learning. Staff development needs are identified through a rigorous programme of lesson observations. An excellent on-line database records all teaching observations and is used extensively by college managers for the identification of professional development priorities. The raising of poor performance is effectively supported through a range of initiatives. Staff identified as outstanding through lesson observations are used to disseminate best practice. The college has produced some very effective literature guides to inform staff of best practice in a variety of teaching, learning and planning activities. Good practice has been shared with staff through showcase events with a strong focus on the development of high quality resources. There has been further significant investment in ICT including 40 additional electronic whiteboards with comprehensive training in their use. Curriculum area SARs reflect the increased use of ICT within teaching and learning. Staff training has supported the integration and embedding of Key Skills and Skills for Life in the vocational curriculum.

Leadership and management

How effective has recent structural management re-organisation been in promoting improvement?

- There have been effective changes to the management structure with a greater emphasis on cross-college systems and action planning. The college has established very thorough self-assessment procedures. There is effective promotion of a self-critical culture that focuses on sustained and continuous improvement. Self assessment is accurate and self-critical and with a clarity about areas of improvement. There is very good management of the sixth form curriculum and this is demonstrated through improvements in success, achievement and retention rates in 2005/06. The management of key skills is good. Each curriculum area has a designated key skills tutor and communications between staff and employers have improved. Assessment and learning materials have been contextualised and are now more relevant to the learners. Key skills are now taught at the beginning of programmes and this is having a positive effect on success rates at levels 1 and 2. The college conducts a very thorough review of each curriculum area against each question in the Common Inspection Framework. The best and worst performing courses are

identified. An action plan is developed to address identified weaknesses and progress against actions is rigorously monitored.

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

-

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

- Some course reviews lack clarity. They are not written in a sufficiently clear format or to specified criteria that would allow them to be used effectively to influence judgements in the self assessment process.