

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Priestley College  
Date of visit: 30 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

What are the trends in student performance up to 2005/6? Have the improvements in AS retention rates been maintained?

- Success rates for long courses for 16-18 year olds at all levels have shown improvement in 2005/6. For level 1 and level 2 courses and vocational courses at level 3 they are well above those for similar colleges. For GCE AS and A level courses they are now around or slightly above the national average rates. GCE AS and A level retention rates are continuing to improve.
- Demanding targets for further improvement in attendance have been met. The college is making a very effective and timely response to student absences using information provided through the electronic register system.

What are the patterns of performance in value added for GCE AS and A level and what has been the impact of action in those subjects identified in 2005 as requiring improvement?

- Value added for GCE A level has improved overall and is now around what would be expected. It remains strong for AS. The current trend in improvement of value added, together with the college's effective quality improvement processes, indicates that the college's students may well be achieving at a higher level than their GCSE results would predict within the next few years.

## Quality of education and training

What have been the main foci of attention for the Learning Champions in working throughout the college, and how have the outcomes from teaching and learning observations been used to improve practice?

- The outcomes of teaching and learning observations are now used well to identify whole college issues and prioritise a small number for development. These feed through into the professional development programme and the support made available by Learning Champions. Recent improvements have been made in the dissemination of information on the qualities of teaching in individual curriculum areas. This has helped to identify and share good practice. Newly qualified teachers are well supported.

What progress has been made to improve the information, advice and guidance made available to pupils coming to the college from some local schools?

- Current students value very highly the opportunities provided by the college to obtain information and advice on the courses which are offered and the nature of studying at a sixth form college. It is however clear that whilst such opportunities are made available through close partnership working between the college and some schools, this is not the case for a significant number of Warrington schools. In particular, pupils from some 11-18 schools have had unsatisfactory experiences of information, advice and guidance (IAG) to support transition. This has included the provision of insufficient IAG to enable them to make well informed choices about the full range of post 16 opportunities available. In some cases this has also included the provision by schools of inaccurate information about the college. Students at the college frequently take the initiative in providing information to younger friends and siblings about their very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of their Priestley experience.

What steps are being taken to prepare for changes in the 14-19 curriculum?

- The college continues to build upon the good curriculum links established with a small number of schools to deliver a broader 14-19

curriculum. The partnership working in Health & Social Care provides a very good basis for broader development such as for the specialist diplomas. The college has also developed and helps deliver a critical thinking component for the Key Stage 4 curriculum in partnership with one school.

What further steps have been completed in renewing the college's accommodation?

- Development of the campus continues to advance. Good progress has been made in ensuring that existing premises are accessible for those with limited mobility. A further extensive phase of construction is due for completion in summer 2007. This will enable many courses to move from long-standing temporary accommodation into state of the art facilities.

What are the developments in Art & Design which have led to nomination for a Beacon National Award?

- Some excellent work undertaken by National Diploma students in Art and Design has led to the college being nominated for a Beacon National Award. Outstanding links with relevant professionals and local employers have been established by the course team. These have enabled stimulating and realistic project briefs to be developed in partnership with external agencies, which have inspired students to produce and exhibit work of very high quality.

## Leadership and management

What are the key development issues identified by the college through the self assessment and other processes for future implementation?

- The college has been highly focused on addressing issues which may restrain its ability to be a consistently high performing institution. Amongst these, improvements to retention rates and the creation of a learning environment for the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been key. The retention rates have been very successfully addressed, and the college believes that the learning environment and the continuous improvement of teaching and learning are key triggers to its future success.

What steps have been taken to ensure greater consistency in the observation of teaching and learning and the recording of the outcomes?

- Effective steps have been taken to ensure that teaching and learning observations are now more consistently graded and their main qualities recorded thoroughly. A new post of Head of Quality Improvement and Professional Development has been established. This forms an integral part of concerted college-wide strategy to improve teaching and learning.
- Managers are drawing upon a more accurate and detailed analysis of the teaching and learning in areas for which they are responsible in drawing up curriculum sections of the self assessment report. This requires further development however to ensure that these analyses are consistently clear and specific, and to identify each curriculum team's priorities for development.