

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: St John Rigby College

Date of visit: 23 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

What do the 2006 data show about success, retention and achievement rates in 2006?

- College data show that for learners aged 16-18 the overall success rate for long level 3 qualifications rose significantly in 2006. The overall success rate in 2005 was 78% and in 2006 college data show that it was 86%. For GCE AS level qualifications the success rate improved from 73% in 2005 to 82% in 2006. For GCE A level qualifications the success rate improved from 87% to 95% and for AVCE qualifications the success rate improved from 84% to 95%. These success rates are all higher than the national averages for 2004/05 (the most recent available) and result from improvements in both retention and achievement rates. Overall success rates for learners aged 16-18 for long level 1 and level 2 qualifications in 2006 were also above national averages. For GCSE courses both retention rates and the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C improved significantly and were above national averages. For the very small number of adult students, overall success rates in 2006 were low for long level 1 and 2 qualifications and high for level 3.

What do value added data show about student achievements in GCE AS and A level exams in 2006?

- Value added data show that overall students do better in GCE AS and A level examinations than would be expected, given their prior attainment at GCSE. However, there is variation between subjects. In many subjects students get better grades than would be expected but in some subjects they achieve lower grades than would be expected.

Quality of education and training

What evidence is available about the quality of teaching and learning?

- College internal observation data suggests that the proportion of lessons judged to be good or better is increasing. Very few recent internal lesson observations have resulted in satisfactory grades. The college has many strategies in place to further improve the quality of teaching and learning. A manager responsible for teaching and learning has been appointed. Teaching and learning champions in different areas of the college form a teaching and learning group which seeks to share good practice. In addition to management observations, peer observations are undertaken. A regular teaching and learning newsletter is published. This is well presented and includes many useful ideas which teachers can adapt for their own subjects. A recent staff development event involved most curriculum areas presenting some of their own teaching and learning methods for others to see how these are used in practice. A website is also being developed. Additional information and learning technology (ILT) equipment has been purchased, and most rooms now have a data projector and internet access. Most students who met the inspector rated the quality of teaching very highly.

What changes are being made to course provision below level 3?

- Four new first diploma courses have been introduced at level 2. Consideration is being given to the introduction of new level 1 courses and other level 2 courses. Most level 3 vocational courses now have a level 2 feeder course.

Has the monitoring and evaluation of subject specific support for learners improved?

- Relevant systems are in place to identify students in need of subject support, and support is provided in a number of ways. For example, subject tutorials may be arranged. Student focus groups are now used to help evaluate subject specific support. Managers are looking at ways of analysing data to demonstrate the impact on retention and results.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses identified at the last inspection?

- In most subjects where success rates for GCE AS courses were low there were improvements in 2006. In some cases the success rates are now similar to the most recent national averages. In a few cases, although improved, success rates remain lower than national averages.

How is quality improvement planning in curriculum areas being improved?

- A new management structure involving four divisional managers is in place. They meet regularly with the deputy principal. This management structure is helping to improve management monitoring of curriculum areas. There is a very strong emphasis on monitoring attendance, retention and attainment. Entry criteria are appropriately enforced to ensure that learners are on the right course. Senior managers oversee the curriculum area action plans and support middle managers in further improving these. Appropriate plans are in place to address the issues raised in the last inspection. Senior management monitoring and intervention take place for under-performing courses.

Are leaders and managers developing appropriate strategies to raise achievement further?

- Strategies put in place since 2005 are clearly having a demonstrable impact as is shown in the significant improvements in outcomes in 2005/06. The versatile on-line student tracking system includes key information about individual students, and shows action by teachers and tutors where there is cause for concern. Student progress review arrangements are effective and help to identify those who are under-achieving. Appropriate support is available to help these students improve. Particularly effective use is made of individual target grades. Attendance monitoring is very effective. Senior management intervention is tackling the few remaining under-performing courses. Further analysis of value added data has been undertaken to identify particular groups of students who are not achieving quite as well as others.