

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Treloar College

Date of visit: 3 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

The self-assessment report (SAR) states that achievements at levels 1-3 exceed comparable national benchmarks. How does the college ensure that learners are placed on appropriate qualifications?

- The college has very good pre-entry, initial and baseline assessment. Individual learning plans are understood by learners and targets are appropriate to their needs. The improved use of Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) particularly in vocational programmes enables staff to use appropriate accreditation frameworks. The college regularly reviews accreditation and has recently phased out general national vocational qualifications and put in place a series of BTEC awards.

The SAR notes improvements in learners' Skills for Life achievements. How is this evidenced?

- There is very good progress in developing Skills for Life provision across the college. In December 2004 the college began a Pathfinder project looking at a whole organisation approach to embedding literacy and numeracy. In relation to vocational areas each vocational course now has a literacy and numeracy tutor working alongside a vocational tutor in writing schemes of work. Each course also has two sessions per week where vocational, literacy and numeracy tutors teach and record outcomes against the main vocational programme and Skills for Life targets. To support Every Child Matters outcomes weekly workshops are held in financial literacy that also supports the work in the independent living skills (ILS) curriculum. Further improvements have also been made to the provision for learners attending Alton College and for learners on the ACCESS programme.

How are RARPA processes developing?

- RARPA procedures and process are developing well through a well managed project in partnership with Central Sussex College. The project has identified many areas of good practice. The college now plans to link its Pathfinder Skills for Life project with its RARPA project in order to maximise impact and organisational change. The benefits already seen from the RARPA project include: greater staff understanding and ownership of RARPA processes; better use of accreditation; improved subject and vocational areas baseline assessments and improvement to learners' individual learning plans. The college plans to use computer based information system to record RARPA outcomes and recognises the need for staff training in this area.

Quality of education and training

Work experience opportunities and the development of work related skills remains an area for improvement in the SAR. What progress has been made to address these issues?

- The college careers department has worked hard to develop work related projects. Procedures to identify and develop learners work related skills have also improved. Since the last annual assessment visit the college has made 16 new contacts with employers, however, only four have resulted in the offer of work placements. Links with learners' home Connexions personal advisors have successfully given a further 11 learners work related opportunities. There are plans for entry level learners, as part of their community programme, to visit employers and develop work related activities from these visits. The college also plans to involve occupational therapists and tutors in visits to offer help and assistance to employers offering work placements. Programme managers are also taking increased responsibility for the development of work related skills and placements. Enterprise activities in the ACCESS programme also provide good opportunities to develop work related skills.

The SAR claims that transition planning is extensive. Is this true for all learners and are progression routes planned throughout the curriculum?

- Transition planning is based around individual learners' needs and is good. The work related learning co-ordinator now interviews all learners to discuss their experiences of work placement and identify areas that learners would like to develop. This leads to a baseline assessment from which a programme can be developed. Following each annual review a transition document is produced by the careers department that clearly

identifies transition plans and actions necessary for their successful achievement.

How will the revised initial assessment programme improve individual learning plans?

- Initial assessment and induction are overseen by a cross-college group that regularly reviews provision and has effected significant improvements in 2005/06. Initial interview reports are now entered into the management information system. Staff training on how to enter pre-entry assessment data is scheduled for later this term. 'Welcome to Treloar' days have been well used to gather information about learners' prior achievements and contributed to learners equipment needs being met early in the term. The induction and three week initial assessment programmes enables individual learning plans to be more learner centred and contain appropriate targets.

The independent living skills (ILS) curriculum is currently non-accredited. How does the college ensure that learners have challenging targets and how are these targets monitored?

- RARPA processes are developing well in the ILS curriculum. Processes were initially piloted in the college's residential settings. The Skills for Life team support residential staff working to identify literacy and numeracy targets within tasks. Learners' individual learning plans and annual review formats have been revised in order that non-accredited learning is discussed before accredited learning. This places greater status on non-accredited learning. A new proforma has also been developed to improve the recording of achievement in the enrichment curriculum. The Pathfinder project has identified the need for members of the Skills for Life team to be allocated to this work but at present, staffing levels do not permit this.

Leadership and management

The SAR claims the college has consistently high quality in teaching. How is this maintained?

- The observation of teaching and learning scheme is detailed and thorough. It has continued to evolve over the last three years and now includes graded and peer observations. All staff have between one and three observations each year. The observations are carried out by a team of trained observers and moderated by the acting principal, who is also a trained observer. The acting principal also carried out some longitudinal observations last year and plans to increase the number this year. The longitudinal observation involved following a chosen learner for a whole

day. The college gained a lot of useful information about the learner's experience and this is now being used in planning the curriculum and will contribute to findings in the SAR. The acting principal analyses all the information from the graded and peer observations and identifies recurring themes and good practice. This information is then used to inform the training plan and is drawn into the self-assessment report. Recent staff training has included training for the new Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications, Skills for Life, equality and diversity. Good use is made of informal mentoring, for example, teachers with satisfactory grades are paired with a mentor to help improve aspects of their teaching. Teachers who receive less than satisfactory grades are well supported and helped to improve their teaching.

The college is rigorous in its collection of learners' perceptions. How does the college use this data to improve provision?

- The college routinely collects the views of learners but have more recently moved to using a virtual learning environment (VLE) to make this task easier for learners. The college manager responsible for this area analyses the information in the returned surveys and any areas identified as having a low level of satisfaction have to produce an action plan detailing how they intend to improve their area. The action plans will be monitored by the senior management team. This is a new initiative introduced this year so at the time of the annual assessment visit (AAV) it was too early to judge the effectiveness of the process. The manager responsible for this area is also beginning to do more trend analysis and to explore ways of sharing good practice. The learners report that they have a variety of ways in which to communicate their views such as through the student council, the suggestions box, through their tutor, by email or through the end of year survey. They feel that they are listened to and improvements made. The college doesn't have a large dissatisfaction rate but where issues of concern are raised by learners then the college does take action to improve. Last year learners highlighted food as being in need of improvement so the college installed new serveries that keeps food hotter for longer and the satisfaction rate has increased. Another recent improvement has been the upgrading of all computers.

The college has demonstrated commitment to external partnerships for example the Beacon programme and Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded projects. How is this being managed and is what is the impact on the college?

- The college has developed a good range of partnerships and projects. The projects are well managed, usually by dedicated project managers.

Projects include the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Beacon and Pathfinder projects as well as other regional initiatives. The most recent project under development involves engagement with employers. The work focuses on helping employers to build up their knowledge of young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, helping college staff to update their skills, breaking down barriers to employment and making stronger links between the curriculum and work experience or employment. Strong local partnerships have been developed with the six form college, a comprehensive school, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), a 14-19 consortia, the University of Creative Arts and Hampshire County Council's further education support network. The partnerships and projects are carefully monitored and impact measures are identified in action plans. The college feel they have learned a lot about whole organisational approaches, particularly from the Pathfinder project, and are now using this knowledge in other areas such as embedding Every Child Matters into quality improvement activities.

In the previous inspection social and educational inclusion were graded as good. In the SAR 2005/06 the college has graded this area as outstanding. What improvements have the college made to support this new grade?

- The college is doing very good work to promote social and educational inclusion. A range of initiatives have been pursued over the last three years and the college meets the needs of a wide and diverse range of learners. The college offers multi-disciplinary assessment to further education colleges so learners who might not otherwise attend a six form college are able to so; the take up of this service has been very good. They have developed close links with a local further education college and are providing learning support and therapy sessions to learners with learning disabilities and difficulties who choose to go to that college. The college offer evening courses to local groups of adults with learning difficulties, classes include survival cookery and lip reading. The number of black and ethnic minority students has doubled over the years and now accounts for 15% of learners. Staff from black and minority ethnic groups is double the local working population at 2.5% and staff with disabilities account for 3.5%. The college has recently invested in equipment for staff who have a hearing impairment.

In the 2005/06 SAR the college states that the quality improvement plan is a key to taking the college forward. Does it contain realistic targets and how is it monitored?

- The acting principal is in the process of putting in place a quality assurance group to moderate the SAR and monitor the quality

improvement plans. There are key dates in the year for quality improvement plans to be updated but there is no systematic recording or monitoring of the process and the plans are not presented to governors or reported on elsewhere.

The college has a new acting principal and a revised staff in structure. How will this new structure bring about improvements to the college provision?

- There has been a new staffing structure put in place 1 September 2006. Some new positions have been created such as an assistant principal for residential services, and many new appointments have been made internally. The acting principal maintains her role as leading on curriculum and the SAR, one vice principal leads on quality and systems, and the assistant principal leads on residential services. At the time of the AAV it was too early to judge the impact of the new structure.