

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

Date of visit: 15 January 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit (AAV). 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

How well did learners achieve in 2005/06?

- For learners aged 16 to 18, success rates are broadly average at level 1; at level 2 they declined to 6 percentage points below the 2004/05 national average, although success rates on vocational courses are around the national level; and at level 3 success rates are significantly below the national level, having declined between 2004/05 and 2005/06 due to the poor performance of GCE AS and A-level courses.
- For adult learners, success rates at levels 1 and 2 have improved to well above the 2004/05 national averages. At level 3, the success rate has remained steady, at just above the national level. Success rates are at the national level for short courses. Adult learners achieve well on higher level courses.
- Average attendance has improved to 85% and a concerted effort is being made this year to improve retention rates.

Achievement in work-based learning

- Overall framework success rates have now improved to 64%, which is 14 percentage points above the national average. The framework or NVQ success rate has improved to 69%, well above the national average. 'Timely' success rates have improved to 41%, which is higher than the very low national level of 30%. The framework or NVQ 'timely' success rate has improved over three years from 15% to 43%, compared to the low national average of 35%. Success rates show an improving trend across all curriculum areas. Effective management intervention in construction has contributed to higher success rates; they improved by 25 percentage points to 61% in 2005/06. While 'timely' success rates are improving, they are still below 50% in construction and in health.
- Performance is stronger for advanced apprenticeships than apprenticeships. The college framework or NVQ success rate for the advanced apprenticeship

programme was very high in 2005/06 at 82%, significantly above the national rate of 53%. For the apprenticeship programme, the success rate was 67%, which is 9 percentage points above the national rate.

Quality of education and training

Progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning

- The college judges the quality of teaching and learning to have improved, based on observations of lessons so far carried out in 2006/07. The characteristics of lessons are not fully analysed in the 2005/06 draft self-assessment report (SAR), but teaching is considered to be better on level 3 courses. Although any improvements in teaching and learning are not apparent in 2005/06 outcomes, there is some improvement in the current retention and attendance rates.
- The college is appropriately focused on improving the quality of lessons. A new teachers resource centre is now established and the work of 'learning coaches' continues. A manager has been appointed to co-ordinate training and development in teaching and learning, which individual staff are receiving as required.
- Curriculum managers are concerned about the low levels of literacy and numeracy of some learners aged 16 to 18 and the barrier to progress these can represent. Tutors feel that literacy support is working well with learners having good access to appropriate support; however, this is not consistent across all curriculum areas.

The effectiveness of target setting, assessment and monitoring of individual progress

- There is some variation between curriculum areas in the rigour of assessment. For example, in the setting of 'smart' targets, the timely marking of work and the quality of feedback to learners on how they can improve their performance.

The views of learners

- Learners speak positively about their college experience and appreciate the support they receive from their subject teachers and personal tutors. They particularly like the enrichment programme. They are concerned about the timing and quantity of assignments they receive and some say they wait for several weeks before receiving feedback on assignments.

Leadership and management

The local context and progress with the 14 to 19 agenda

- The college is working closely with the local authority, the local learning and skills council and other key post-16 partners to determine and develop a coherent provision for the area. This involves plans for a new campus with Franklin Sixth Form College and a local school, with discussions on a joint curriculum offer.

Management strategies to improve success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 and improve curriculum performance

- The poor performance of learners taking GCE AS and A-level courses is a concern to managers. Actions so far taken include new management of the area and closer attention to the prior attainment of learners recruited to these courses. Curriculum managers, course leaders and teachers have an appropriate focus on raising standards. At college level, some quality assurance systems lack sufficient focus and clarity to ensure good communications and rapid improvement.

Self assessment

- The introduction to the summary SAR for 2005/06 outlines changes to the self-assessment process. The process has been remodelled with the aim of giving greater ownership to curriculum teams. Staff at all levels say that this has worked well. The college judges its overall effectiveness to be good. Achievement and standards are judged satisfactory; the quality of provision is judged to be good; and leadership and management are judged to be good. The key strengths and areas for development are clearly identified and described. However, the impact of actions taken is insufficiently evaluated, some judgements are not linked clearly enough to available curriculum evidence. There is no evaluation of achievement and standards for learners aged 14 to 16.
- Achievement data for 2005/06 were yet to be finalised at the time of this AAV in mid-January 2007. This has impeded a detailed analysis and evaluation of performance and has slowed down the identification of areas where action is needed to secure improvement.

Progress in implementation DfES requirements for child protection

- The college has implemented the latest DfES guidance on safeguarding and holds a central record.