

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Hereward College of FE
Date of Visit: 6 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

How is the college evaluating their non-accredited provision, particularly for those learners with more complex needs?

- The college has made a good start in implementing Recognition and Recording of progress and Achievement in non-accredited qualifications (RARPA). The information about learners is being captured on a database and during this academic year, the approach is to be piloted with new learners. Initial assessment, guidance procedures and recording of individual progress have been revised, so that a clear picture of learners' strengths and needs are captured. The impact of impairment on learning is identified and strategies for teaching and learning included. The first six weeks of assessment are used to refine this document and to develop the baseline. This process is evaluated at each stage. Moderation processes to date have identified the need for further staff training in assessment and in developing goals and targets. The college recognises that more needs to be done, but a good start has been made in simplifying and pulling together the different strands of the curriculum.

Have the college sustained the high accredited pass rates?

- College pass rates remain high. Overall college success rates rose to around 80% in 2005 and the college's own data for 2006 suggests this has been sustained. For long courses, pass rates are particularly high at levels 1 and 2 for all ages.

Quality of education and training

Has the good practice in child protection procedures been maintained?

- The college continues to carry out CRB checks and has named, designated staff. The chair and vice chair of the governing body have had training. Other governors have a copy of the policy, but have yet to receive training. Learners' safety is emphasised through the curriculum and re-enforced through Every Child Matters (ECM).

At the time of the last AAV, a full-time post was about to be made to increase the number of work experience opportunities. Has this post been appointed and if so, what has been its impact?

- The college appointed a full-time work experience co-ordinator in January, and the area has a higher profile within the college. Provision is improving. The number of external work-placements has increased, and is likely to increase further this year. A new entry level short course 'preparation for employment' has been introduced. The number of learners following enterprise training has increased significantly. Links with local employers, including larger employers, have also increased.

How effectively is the college moving forward the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda?

- The college is moving forward in implementing the ECM agenda. The five themes are more proactively promoted across all areas of the college's work. This has helped raise the awareness of both staff and learners. There is now a more structured approach to ECM within the extended curriculum. ECM outcomes are being included as part of routine recording, particularly in the curriculum to improve independence. The profile of ECM has also been raised within the latest draft of the 2005/6 self-assessment report (SAR) and through departmental reviews.

It is clear that many learners enjoy attending the college and feel they are achieving and progressing well, both academically and personally. An annual leavers' ceremony, to celebrate individual achievement, was successfully introduced in the summer of 2006.

Learners have a good awareness of healthy living although feel that further changes could be adopted in the canteen to promote healthy food options. Opportunities for learners to share ideas and voice their

opinions are in place. They are encouraged to be involved in college discussion groups and internal projects such as involvement in designing aspects of refurbishment. The college recognises however, that there are currently fewer opportunities for learners to make a positive contribution within the local community. On initial evidence available during the visit, the college's evaluation of ECM themes within its SAR appears well founded.

Leadership and management

How well is the college's own self assessment report used to drive quality improvement?

- The way the SAR is used to identify and target whole college strengths and weaknesses has improved. The 2004/05 SAR did not have a specific cross college quality improvement plan (QIP) by which to effectively monitor progress against identified issues. Areas for improvement were identified at departmental level although it was not clear how these fitted in the whole college SAR process. This appears to have been rectified.

The draft SAR for 2005/06 is more succinct and overall judgments on cross college strengths and areas for improvement are much clearer. Staff at all levels of the college have been actively involved in the SAR process. This has enabled many to feel more involved in decision-making and has subsequently led to greater ownership of staff in driving up the quality of provision. Governors are also now more involved in the process and have reviewed their performance as a governing body for 2006.

It was too early at the time of the visit to determine the full extent of how the refined SAR document will drive up quality more effectively. A cross college quality improvement plan is presently being drafted to more clearly monitor identified cross college areas for improvement.

What progress has been in improving both residential and general accommodation within the college?

- The college has made substantial improvements to the accommodation to make it more accessible and suitable for learners. Information and communication technology (ICT) facilities and the number of interactive white boards have been significantly upgraded. Teaching space is used more effectively and toilet and bathroom facilities have

been refurbished. Improvements to the performing arts facilities, that include some new build, are due to start in the spring. However despite improvements, the college does not meet Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) standards for some of its residential accommodation. It has plans to improve the general facilities that include refurbishment of parts of the adjacent vacant further education college buildings. The plans for improvement to residential facilities have yet to be agreed and it is likely to be several years before they are built.

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

- The acting principal was appointed to the permanent role in October 2006.

Over the last 12 months staff feel that the communication between different sections of the college has improved considerably. There is a clearer understanding by many managers in relation to how their role and work contributes to the whole college strategic plan.

A curriculum review in 2005/6 led to a greater range of vocational programmes being introduced for 2006/7, particularly within media, business and ICT. There are also additional courses within the extended curriculum, for example in complementary therapies. The college has expanded the range of qualifications available to staff, including programmes in assistive technologies and delivering learning.