

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

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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 have the opportunities for day learners to learn independent living skills improved?

- The college has made some progress in improving the opportunities for day learners to develop independent living skills. All day learners are now able to access the college four evenings a week and at weekends to take part in a range of activities related to independent living skills. From September 2006 all learners have had their independent living skills assessed as part of their initial assessment. Currently individual targets are being set for each learner. These targets aim to integrate independent living skills into the curriculum. For example, independent travel will be part of one learners' target, with the recognition of numbers and money being part of the overall planned learning. However, arrangements for sharing this information with parents are underdeveloped. Currently parents are informed of these targets, and progress towards these targets through telephone contact from learning support workers. Plans are in place to share these targets more formally through parents' evenings and support groups.

How are achievements in literacy and numeracy being recognised?

- Satisfactory progress has been made in the recognising and recording of literacy and numeracy achievements. All learners now have their literacy and numeracy needs assessed during initial assessment. Targets are set with the learner, using the outcomes from all aspects of the initial and baseline assessments. Targets are now more specific and achievable and more directly related to the needs of the learner and their ability to live independently. For example, an A level science learner has targets related to time keeping and organisation. Individual learner diaries have been introduced to monitor and record the progress a learner is making on a daily basis. More formal monitoring of progress against these targets is planned to take place through weekly feedback sheets and individual learner reviews. Some staff training has taken place and further training is planned to ensure that all staff are adequate to support the development

of learners' skills. However, these actions are new and it is too soon to judge the impact.

Quality of education and training

What action has been implemented to ensure the rigour of assessment? Is this proving effective?

- The consistency and rigour of assessment has improved. From September 2006 all new learners undergo the same initial assessment that includes assessment of learning styles, literacy and numeracy and skills for life. Assessment of learning styles and literacy and numeracy are carried out by the same person. Assessment of skills for life development needs are carried out by the learning support worker and then agreed and reviewed with the head of education. Also since September 2006 the individual learning plan (ILP) team has met on alternate weeks to discuss and review individual learner progress. Currently there is no formally agreed process of how learners' progress towards achieving these targets will be monitored.

How is the college developing the use of ILPs as a tool for effectively recording learners' progress? Is this information now actively shared across all teaching and support staff?

- Some progress has been made in developing the use of ILPs. Currently outcomes from initial assessments are being collated and key areas for development identified. Overarching ILPs are being completed for all learners, using these outcomes. New ILP documentation has been developed. A more holistic approach to the development of ILPs has been developed through the establishment of an ILP team. The focus of this team, which meets alternate weeks, is to ensure that a clear learning framework is developed for and by learners. All learning support staff have had training in the use and development of session plans that will be produced using the targets set in the ILP.

Leadership and management

At the last inspection quality assurance and monitoring systems were mostly informal and unsystematically applied. What has been done to address this? How are senior managers ensuring consistency and compliance?

- Aspects of quality assurance have improved. Recent senior appointments have enabled the college to review and formalise its monitoring of key areas such as the development of ILPs and improve communication between the different departments. There is now a formal system for staff

to regularly share ideas and best practice. All learners leaving the college now receive a transition interview systematically. There are also now consistent approaches to all staff training. The introduction of on-line modules has made much of this training accessible to staff both in and out of college. Several aspects of the college's quality assurance processes remain ineffective. The self-assessment report, although appears accurate in its evaluation, does not yet involve all staff in its creation and is mainly a document produced by senior management. Partnership agreements are too vague and are currently under review to tighten existing links with the local further education college such as the gathering information on achievements and standards and the monitoring teaching and learning. The use of management information system (MIS) data has improved and this has been supported effectively by the recent appointment of a MIS officer. The analysis of these data however is underdeveloped.

- A new principal will be officially in post from the end of October 2006. The planning for this transition has been managed very well. Both the existing and new principal has been working closely together for the last three months to ensure both consistency of practice and a smooth transfer of leadership. This phased approach has been sensitively handled, ensuring minimal disruption to existing learners and staff.

Overall, what progress has been made against the college's post inspection action plan (PIAP)? Are targets clear, realistic and regularly monitored?

- Satisfactory progress is being made against the PIAP. A number of key senior staff have moved to new external jobs over the last 18 months which has, in some cases, contributed to delaying progress against key objectives. New appointments for most of the positions have now been made. These senior managers are working well as a team although it was too early at the time of the annual assessment visit (AAV) to judge the full impact of all actions taken.
- The PIAP is regularly reviewed in conjunction with the college's development plan, however, target setting in both plans are not sufficiently specific. Too many actions, particularly in the PIAP, lack specific outcomes by which to measure the college's progress effectively.

How has the college addressed its previous non-compliance with equalities legislation?

- Limited progress has been made against the equalities legislation. Staff training in this area has increased, however, an updated policy regarding the Special Education Needs Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and the Race

Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RR(A)A) is currently in draft form. As yet, plans for their implementation are not in place. The college did successfully meet the majority of their equality and diversity impacts measures (EDIMs) for 2005/06 and have extended the number of measures for 2006/07.

Has the college continued to build on its strengths as a new institution?

- The strengths identified at inspection have been maintained. The extensive range of courses and activities in particular, remains a key strength. New activities include the opportunity for some learners to scuba dive. Several activities remain learner initiated and led. For example, supporting one learner to set up his own chess club and the use of a professional musician for eight weeks to work with learners interested in music. The latter of which has been further developed by learners to organise their own 'jamming' sessions in college.

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

- The management and deployment of resources has improved. Learner numbers have doubled since 2003/04. To cater for this expansion new accommodation is on schedule to be operational by the end of October. In addition, a new residential house has been in operation since September 2006, with a particular focus to advance learners' independent living skills. Access to the North Star Campus by both residential and day learners has been extended and has subsequently improved the learner experience.