

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Stafford College
Date of visit: 10 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

1. Has the improving trend in success rates at all levels up to 2004/05 continued in 2005/06?
 - Based on incomplete and unvalidated college data for 2005/06, this trend has not continued in all areas. The college has reduced much of its short course provision (in line with local LSC priorities) and this adversely affects its overall success rates. However, the success rates for all learners on long courses have improved for the fourth consecutive year. In 2005/06, most pass rates improved but most retention rates declined, compared with 2004/05. The success rates of learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 provision are below national averages and have been so for three years. The retention rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on levels 1 and 3 courses declined in 2005/06 and are well below the national averages. The retention rate of learners aged 16 to 18 on GCE AS subjects declined considerably in 2005/06 compared with 2004/05.
2. What is the impact of the actions taken by managers to improve the pass rates in construction?
 - Overall pass rates in construction declined in 2005/06 compared with 2004/05, based on incomplete and unvalidated college data. The overall retention rate improved, but is still low. The college is taking appropriate actions to raise standards.
3. Most key skills pass rates improved in 2004/05, especially on one-year courses. However, some pass rates on two-year courses were low and a few had declined. What were the pass rates on all key skills provision in 2005/06?
 - Interim college data show that most key skills pass rates improved in 2005/06 to above the national averages. However, the pass rates for the one-year level 2 information and communication technology declined in 2005/06 compared with 2004/05.

4. Have the overall and timely success rates in work-based learning provision improved in 2005/06? Are they now at the national averages?
 - The overall apprenticeship success rate has risen over the last three years, but not as much as the rise in the national averages. The improvement in the advanced apprenticeship success rate is more marked and provisional data for 2005/06 show that it is above the national average. Timely success rates are low and are falling further behind the national average.
5. How successful has been the work done to address the gender imbalance of part-time learners and to raise the success rates of young males?
 - This has been successful. New curriculum provision in music technology, plumbing and sports has increased the proportion of male learners. The overall success rate of male learners has risen and is close to that of female learners.

Quality of education and training

6. How has the quality of tutorials been monitored and improved?
 - The college has appointed a new co-ordinator and produced a new and centralised group tutorial programme. Managers are also piloting an individual learning programme for first year full-time learners. This facilitates learners' progress tracking and initiates tutorial action as needed. Faculty managers monitor and the teacher-training section moderates tutorial provision. The college will audit the tutorial system internally in March 2007.
7. Are all learners now aware of their rights and responsibilities to others? Do they receive clear advice about the nature of bullying and harassment?
 - Learners receive advice and guidance on bullying and harassment during induction. Group and individual tutorials include wider aspects of equality and diversity.
8. What has been the impact of 'This Way Up' in achieving improvements in the quality of provision of less successful courses?
 - 'This Way Up' covers a 'red support' system for learners at risk of leaving or not succeeding and 'courses for close monitoring'. Of the twelve courses selected for close monitoring in 2005/06, nine

improved by one or two grades. Only one of the twelve courses did not improve and increased and more directive intervention is in place in 2006/07. Managers select courses based on data and learners' feedback. Managers at all levels agree action plans and monitor their effectiveness formally each term.

Leadership and management

9. How effectively has The Stafford Collegiate developed in the last year?

- The collegiate has developed effectively during 2005/06. The college has rationalised its GCE provision in collaboration with other providers. Increased GCE class sizes have improved viability and cost effectiveness. The collegiate provides a very broad curriculum and every learner can access her/his first choice, if prepared to travel between different sites. Learners' choices determine the curriculum and its location. The college has increased and improved its collaboration with other providers.

10. What has been done to promote equality of opportunity in work-based learning?

- College policy requests the completion of the employee rights and responsibilities unit early the programme. Periodic reviews consolidate and promote equality and diversity issues and check on learners' welfare and safety. The college prioritises equality and diversity issues in its staff development programme and rewards staff who complete training successfully. The college has achieved limited success in attracting female learners on to traditionally male provision. However, the recruitment of male learners on to traditionally female provision has been less successful.

11. Are systems now in place to monitor the achievement of under-represented groups of learners and of learners at social disadvantage?

- The college has embedded systems to record and monitor learners' participation and success rates by gender, age, black and minority ethnic background, learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ward uplift. The college analyses this data rigorously and takes appropriate actions. Managers also set targets based on this data, which feed into the equality and diversity action plan. Not all these

targets are specific or measurable and so the college is introducing performance indicators. Overall, no group of learners underperforms.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- None

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

- The college analyses recruitment and staff data closely in terms of gender, age, disability and ethnicity and sets relevant targets. Managers are making good progress to comply with the requirements to verify staffs' identity, qualifications and criminal record background.