

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Leicester College
Date of visit: 7 November 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

Have success and retention rates of learners aged 16 to 18 on GCE AS and A level provision improved in 2005-06 compared with 2004-05? In particular, have these rates improved in science and mathematics, humanities and visual and performing arts?

- Success and retention rates of learners aged 16 to 18 on GCE AS and A level provision declined in 2005-06 compared with 2004-05 and are below national averages. Pass rates on GCE AS provision for learners aged 16 to 18 improved and are close to national averages. Most GCE science success rates declined between 2004-05 and 2005-06 and are well below national averages. GCE success rates in humanities and visual and performing arts are more varied.

The last inspection report referred to a strong trend of improvement in success rates on long courses. Has this continued in 2005-06?

- The overall long course success rate declined in 2005-06 compared with 2004-05, based on the latest available college data. All the long course success rates are above national averages. However, the long course success rates for adult learners on level 1 provision declined considerably between 2004-05 and 2005-06. Most of this decline was due to the low success rates on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision. In 2005-06, over 70% of ESOL qualifications transferred to nationally approved qualifications. Success rates of learners aged 14 to 16 improved considerably in 2005-06 compared with 2004-05.

Have the overall key skills success rates continued to improve in 2005-06? What are the success rates for each key skill at each level?

- Between 2003-04 and 2004-05, key skills success rates increased considerably. They decreased slightly in 2005-06. Key skills success rates are broadly the same across levels 1, 2 and 4 of the three main key skills. Success rates of the small number of learners on level 3 key skills are low. Success rates vary considerably across curriculum areas; the lowest being in care and the highest in engineering.

Have overall apprenticeship framework success rates improved in 2005-06? Have timely completions improved in 2005-06?

- Apprenticeship framework success rates improved significantly in 2005-06. Over the three-year period from 2003-04, apprenticeship, advanced apprenticeship and timely success rates have improved considerably. During this period, the number of learners also increased significantly. The college has improved its management of work-based learning.

Quality of education and training

The last inspection report said that assessment was generally satisfactory. What has been the impact of actions taken to improve assessment practices across the college?

The college has done much work to improve assessment policies and practice in 2005-06. The impact has been:

- assignments more reasonably dispersed through effective use of year planners
- improved feedback from learners regarding planning of assignments
- improved external verifier feedback on the rigour of assessment practice
- improved use of specific targets for learners in assignment feedback
- quicker feedback to learners, tutors and learning support staff on the outcomes of initial screening and diagnostic assessments
- improved integration of these outcomes into individual learning plans
- improving use of group profiles (which are now monitored)
- greater emphasis in observations on assessment practice

The college is aware of the need to continue to improve:

- management of learners' deadlines
- coverage of plagiarism
- constructive feedback to learners
- use of results of initial and diagnostic assessment by key skills teachers in lessons and target setting
- questioning techniques
- monitoring by the effectiveness panels of assessment practice

What have been the benefits to learners of the college's participation in the national peer referencing pilots?

- It is too early to judge the impact on learners. However, the college's involvement with five other east midlands colleges in peer referencing and sharing good practice has been very useful. The impact of receiving a review has been to expand and improve the quality improvement unit, review the role of assistant director and to focus on issues in three curriculum areas. The impact of reviewing other colleges has been to improve staff development and the accessibility and use of data.

Are more college-wide enrichment activities now available to learners than in 2005-06? Do more learners now participate in enrichment activities?

- The college has increased the enrichment activities available in 2006-07, compared with 2005-06. It has improved the management of existing activities. New initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh's scheme provide good opportunities. It is too early to measure learners' participation.

What progress has been made to improve the quality and consistency of group tutorials?

- The college has made good progress to improve the quality and consistency of tutorials. The tutorial training programme includes the new measures of success, recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited courses (RARPA) and target setting. The college has amended tutorial observation forms to be more

relevant. Arrangements to monitor the tutorial programme are more rigorous. However, tutorial staff do not meet together and do not use the virtual learning environment to share good practice. Tutors make good use of cards to involve learners in discussions on the every child matters aspects.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in the last year with the strategy to improve accommodation for learners? Are more areas now accessible to learners with restricted mobility?

- The college has already made considerable improvements to accommodation. However, the bulk of the work to improve the accommodation is part of a £44.2 million development programme. The college expects to complete the Freeman's Park campus improvements by April 2007. The complete rebuild project for the Abbey campus is at an advanced stage of financial approval. Good arrangements are in place to provide a wide range of facilities for learners with multiple needs. The college aims to exceed the requirements of the disability discrimination act.

What progress has been made to produce evidence that staff identity, qualifications and criminal backgrounds have been checked?

- The college has made satisfactory progress to meet the requirements of checking staff identity, qualifications and criminal records. It has focussed on staff joining the college since 2002, those changing role since then and on staff working in high-risk areas.

What progress has been made with the post-inspection action plan? What is the impact of the actions taken to improve learners' experiences?

- The college has subsumed the post-inspection action plan within the document aimed at driving the college from good to outstanding provision. This outlines how the principal, governors and senior managers give a very high priority to leading improvements, based on

a range of key issues. It is too early to judge the impact on learners' experiences, but the college has already made many improvements which will affect learners.

What actions have been taken to improve the consistency of key skills provision? What has been the impact of these actions on learners?

- The college is fully aware of the need to improve the consistency of its key skills provision. The grade profile for key skills lesson observations is lower than the general observation profile. The college has made the management of key skills clearer and more focused. Managers have provided additional training for vocational staff, have reinstated learner progress meetings and have established closer liaison between vocational and key skills specialist staff. It is too soon to judge the impact of these actions on learners.