

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: King Edwards VI College, Stourbridge
Date of visit: 4 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

Has the college maintained its very high rates of performance in 2005/06?

- The college has maintained very high levels of student performance over a number of years and continues to do so. This remains a key strength of the college. Overall success rates remain very high for full-time students aged 16 to 18. Pass and retention rates remain significantly above the national averages for sixth form colleges.
- Key skills performance continues to improve and is well above the national average at level 3.

The college performance report shows a small decline in high grade achievement. What was the high grade achievement in 2005/06?

- The proportion of A and B grades at GCE A level continues to be well above the national average. The proportion of high grades at A level have been above 50% for the last four years. In 2005/06 there was a small increase from 2004/05. At AS level high grades are also above 50% and improved in 2005/06. The college recognises high grades must remain a focus in order to maintain and improve value-added outcomes.

How much progress are students making? Does the value-added for 2005/06 continue to show high levels of student performance?

- The 2006 ALPS report shows significant value-added. At GCE A level, the overall value-added score ranks the college in the top quartile of participating colleges. At AS level, the very high added value has placed the college in the top 10% of participating colleges for the last two years. There are four subject areas at A and AS level which have performed poorly. This is recognised by the college and plans are in place to tackle the issues. The three subject areas which performed poorly in 2004/05 all improved in 2005/06.

How effectively does the college analyse the performance of minority ethnic groups?

- The college analyses the performance of minority ethnic groups in a variety of ways: for example, by year group, value-added, grade and subject analysis. There are no statistically significant differences in achievement by different minority ethnic groups.

Quality of education and training

In the 2004/05 self-assessment report, guidance and support was graded 1 (outstanding), in the last inspection it was judged to be good. What evidence does the college have to support this judgement?

- The college has a range of evidence to support its judgement in grading guidance and support as outstanding. However, the evidence is not always sufficiently rigorous. Student questionnaires show that only 30% of students rate student support as excellent and 50% as good; 45% rate their group tutor as very helpful and 55% as helpful.
- At the last inspection careers advice, subject support for students and progression to higher education were identified as key strengths. These have been maintained and built upon further. The issues highlighted in the last inspection have mostly been addressed. For example, all students are now screened for additional support needs in literacy and numeracy and targets for subject reviews and individual learning plans have been developed with a focus on SMART targets and time frames. At this visit the quality of individual learning plans and targets for subject reviews were not examined.
- Observations of tutorials have mainly focused on one-to-one tutorials, with approximately 25 completed each year. There is analysis of good practice but little evaluation of the issues that need to be addressed in conjunction with the student questionnaire responses. The college does not have rigorous observation evidence for the full range of tutorials, including group tutorials.
- Good progress has been made in addressing the Every Child Matters themes. These have been mapped out across the college, in the tutorial programme and in student progress files.
- There is a range of comprehensive documents and detailed planning which underpins much of the work undertaken in the area of guidance and support. These include handbooks for tutorials, work-related activities and supporting students with learning difficulties and disabilities. The

college is also developing its use of the Moodle-based learning platform to support the tutorial programme.

What current 14 to 16 and 14 to 19 projects is the college involved in? What has been the impact of the College's involvement?

- The college is actively involved in a number of collaborative projects with local schools and is represented in the Stourbridge cluster group and the Dudley 14 to 19 team. The AS level critical thinking continues to be successful and is now in its fourth year. Over 50% of students achieve A to B grades, with pass rates over 90%. This course is aimed at 'gifted and talented' students from local schools. The college also works very successfully with a local school on the applied GCSE in business studies. There has been limited success supporting a school in developing AS biology and the course has now been discontinued. The college is beginning to enrol students who have already obtained an AS qualification alongside their GCSEs. It has expressed an interest in the delivery of three specialised diplomas from 2008.

Leadership and management

What further progress has been made in addressing the consistency of curriculum management and internal lesson observation grading?

- The previous AAV identified these as two areas for further exploration. The college is making good progress in both areas. Heads of department have a handbook to ensure more consistency which clearly outlines roles and expectations. Good practice between departments continues to be shared on Inset days. All heads of department have a monthly meeting with a member of the senior management team, which involves regular reviews of the quality improvement plan.
- The new teaching and learning observation scheme has been in operation for one year. The proportion of lessons judged to be good or better is still high at 92%. The report on lesson observations is very detailed and comprehensive and identifies areas for development in teaching and learning. Further training on lesson observation has recently been provided to ensure consistency of grading. A small number of joint observations have taken place with others planned as part of the course reviews. The observation of teaching and learning is closely linked to the revised appraisal procedures and staff development.

In the self-assessment report the college identifies itself as one of the leading sixth form colleges in the country. Leadership and management are graded 'good'. Do college leaders and managers have a clear view of what needs to be done to raise the grade to 'outstanding'?

- The college has a clear view of what it needs to do for leadership and management to be outstanding. As mentioned earlier good progress is being made in the areas of curriculum management, internal lesson observation and strengthening appraisal procedures.
- An area for development in the quality improvement plan is to ensure all members of the senior management team contribute to appropriate strategic groups. The senior team have a clear vision for developing the site, involvement in the local 14-19 agenda and maintaining the college's status and reputation.
- Key areas of the self-assessment report in 2004/05 do not effectively address aspects related to leadership and management. The capacity to improve judgement does not sufficiently draw on the range of evidence cited in the handbook for inspecting colleges. The leadership and management section does not refer to equality and diversity. There are plans to address these areas in the 2005/06 self-assessment report currently being compiled.