

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Hereford Sixth Form College  
Date of visit: 16 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

Success rates on long courses in 2005/06 and measures of added value

- Success rates for 2005/06, based on college data, show improvement compared to the previous year and are very high. All key measures show some improvement. The average point score at 'A' level has increased from 357 to 389, and a high proportion of learners gain A or B grades. A very few courses have lower success rates, such as in product design and citizenship, however actions have already been taken in the current year to address any issues. Value added measures show overall improvement in 2005/06 and place the college in the top 10 percent of colleges. These measures also confirm that there is very little difference in cohort performance for different groups based on prior attainment. An improvement in the value added to male learners means that they are equal or better than for females. The high grade success rate at GCSE is similar to the previous year and is significantly better than average in mathematics and English. The progression rate from AS to A2 level is very high and nearly all learners are successful in gaining their first choice of university. Pass rates for key skills tests in IT have improved and are high. The number of portfolios to be submitted for full accreditation is increased from the previously extremely low number.

### Attendance

- Overall attendance has improved in 2005/06, especially for GCSE learners and key skills classes, as a result of targeted actions by the college. Despite improvement, the attendance rate remains low for general studies classes.

## Quality of education and training

### The use of information and learning technology (ILT) in the curriculum

- A three year strategy is in place with a clear focus on increasing student use of ILT. A virtual learning environment (VLE) is growing in content rapidly and nearly all subjects now have some materials uploaded. In biology and sports science, there is a considerable amount available to help learners learn independently. All classrooms have PC access to the VLE and well over three quarters have a means of display through digital projectors. A bank of laptops is available in a number of classrooms allowing very flexible use by learners. All learners now have access to their own data pages containing up to date assessment information and targets. They are encouraged to input self evaluation of their performance in each subject regularly. However, the on-screen template does not prompt tutors to include target dates for the action points they set.

### Developments in key skills provision

- Key skills are now comprehensively mapped into each subject area through schemes of work. Good guidance and support is available for learners who wish to submit portfolios. Learners are more satisfied with key skills provision, demonstrated by an increase in satisfaction ratings in the 2005/06 surveys.

### Promotion and integration of 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) themes into the curriculum

- Considerable work has been done to identify aspects of subjects where ECM themes can be reinforced and included in lessons. Staff and learners show a good understanding of ECM themes and a mapping exercise for each student ensures appropriate coverage. The college encourages learners to become fitter by promoting sport and providing almost free access to the college gym during the day. Water fountains are provided and a strict no smoking policy exists within the college buildings with a dedicated outside smoking area available. However, smoking in other outside areas around the campus is not always discouraged actively and some learners feel the college could do more in this respect. The student council is very active both in contributing to the work of the college and also in charitable work and involvement with community projects.

### Analysis of lesson observation data for 2005/06

- Lesson observations are complete for 2005/06 and an analysis undertaken of the results. Proportions of good or better teaching are similar to the previous year and the well established process of using external observers from a linked college ensures rigour.

## Leadership and management

### Improvements to accommodation

- The new building housing music, product design and classroom accommodation is complete, impressive and well designed. Plans to increase further the social and study space are well advanced and make good use of space.

### Steps taken to further improve the sharing of good practice

- The college has made a link between its subject departments and departments in other similar colleges for at least half of its provision in line with its action point to strengthen sharing of good practice. Several very useful CDs have been produced illustrating good practice within the college, including one dedicated to mathematics teaching. The college is already involved in peer referencing and plans to do more, especially with its near neighbours on the city centre campus.

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

- The college was awarded Beacon status in July 2006 in recognition of its outstanding performance.