

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Hinwick Hall College
Date of visit: 30 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

Learners' achievements were judged to be inadequate at the last inspection, with weak baseline assessment, target setting and recording of progress as contributory factors. How effective have been the improvements made since this time in providing clear records of the progress the students are making? How does the college evaluate how good an individual learner's progress is?

- New processes have been introduced since Spring 2006 in relation to the Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) framework. The newly introduced baseline assessment has now been carried out for all learners. These documents include some useful general comments relating to learners' support needs. The assessment includes input from therapists and staff. However, it does not coherently identify the learner's overall strengths and areas for development, nor does it provide a clear base upon which to measure further achievement.
- The process for recording achievement is new and includes the recording of progress against specific objectives on the lesson plans. However, some objectives in these plans are not sufficiently clear and specific, for example, 'to produce accurate work'. Staff are currently receiving training to improve this target setting. Furthermore, recording on lesson plans often describe the activities that a learner has undertaken, rather than the skills developed or progress made. The student progress journal was introduced in September 2006 to build a record over time of learners' achievements. This is not yet effective as some journals have few entries, and some contain comments that are merely descriptive, with no clear demonstration of the progress that has been made.

Quality of education and training

The college's progress report on its post inspection action plan (PIAP) records that all learners have appropriate baseline assessments. Do these include the aspects that are important for planning learning within the new individual learning plans (ILPs)? Are they used effectively for target setting?

- The ILPs are very new. Primary learning goals on the plans are too long, over general and lack clarity. The long, medium and short term learning target objectives are not clearly identified. Subject aims, also included on the ILP, often identify an activity or event rather than the necessary skill development; some are too general, for example, 'to practice' or 'to attempt', to enable an effective assessment of the intended learning.

A second round of lesson observations since inspection have been completed this term. Do the records of the observations indicate they were sufficiently evaluative and provided adequate information for guiding staff development? How are observations moderated? Is there convincing evidence that there has been an improvement in the overall quality of teaching and learning?

- While the second round of lesson observations indicate that improvements had been made from the previous cycle, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that these judgements are secure. Too little emphasis has been placed on linking the quality of teaching to the learning outcomes of the students. As a result, some lesson grades are over-generous given the weaknesses in learning identified in the observation notes. Feedback to teachers is, therefore, not as accurate, helpful or evaluative as it could be. The college acknowledges that more work is needed to ensure that all staff understand the fundamental link between teaching and learning. It is working closely with outside consultants to develop this understanding as an urgent priority.

Leadership and management

Has the college followed recent DfES guidance regarding a centrally held record of staff information regarding safeguarding checks and qualifications?

- CRB checks are undertaken for all staff. However, the recent DfES requirement for a single, central database of all necessary vetting and qualification information is not met.

How does the college ensure it is meeting individual learner schedule requirements?

- Auditing of how well learners' schedules are being met is detailed and thorough. However, there is not sufficiently clear planning before the start of the academic year to ensure that sufficient staff resources will be in place to meet the anticipated needs of learners.

Is the college able to demonstrate convincingly that it has begun to address weaknesses identified at the last inspection? Do managers and trustees have an accurate view of the college's effectiveness?

- The update on the post inspection action plan indicates that the college has implemented many actions to address weaknesses identified at the last inspection. However, while there is ongoing monitoring to ensure action target dates are met there is insufficient evaluation of their effect on students' learning. The college does not have a sufficiently clear understanding of what constitutes different rates of learners' progress. Current recording of learners' achievement does not give a clear track of the progress made upon which to base such evaluations. Consequently, managers and trustees do not yet have a suitable overview of information to enable effective monitoring of standards and quality, and the effectiveness of actions taken since the last inspection on learners' progress.