

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Chesterfield College  
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

Have high success rates been maintained/ improved across the college?

- Overall success rates continue to improve at a greater pace than the national rate of improvement. Success rates on long courses improved by 7.4% during 2004/05 to 69.3% and they remain above the national average of 62.4%. Overall retention and achievement rates also improved during 2004/05 and are also above national averages.
- This positive picture of continual improvement is evident across almost all performance measures. Overall success, retention and achievement rates improved for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults. Overall success rates for courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 all improved. Long course success rates for 9 of the 15 sector subject areas improved on the previous year's performance with 12 of the 15 now having success rates at or above the national average.
- Overall key skills' success rates improved, although for adults they remained below national rates. Success rates for the majority of different types of qualification improved and most remain above national rates. However, overall success rates for NVQ courses, whilst improving significantly on the previous year's performance, still remain slightly below the national average. Detailed analysis shows that retention on NVQ level 2 courses for students aged 16 to 18 is significantly below average. The college are aware of the underperformance and have identified NVQ courses as a cause for concern. Appropriate actions are being taken to address this.

What progress has been made in improving overall and timely success rates for work-based learners?

- The college continues to improve its work-based learning provision. Further management changes have supplemented the significant re-organisation in 2005. Assessors and training staff now work together in the occupational areas, resulting in more effective communications and specialist

management for occupationally competent staff. Data for work-based learning are now managed centrally and are more accessible. Further improvements in advice and guidance, initial assessment and learner support have contributed to improvements in success rates on apprenticeship programmes. In 2003/04, the overall success rate on these programmes was 36%. This improved to 46% in 2004/05 and 58% in 2005/06. The improvements made have not yet impacted on overall success rates for advanced apprenticeships, which remain particularly low at 45%. Delays in internal reporting of achievements within the college have apparently led to discrepancies between college-held data and the provider performance report. Despite this, the college has a clear understanding of its work-based learning performance.

## Quality of education and training

What actions have improved teaching and learning so significantly since the last inspection?

- The management and quality assurance of teaching and learning continues to improve. Performance management of teaching and learning is particularly good. There is a clear and effective strategy supported by good, and sometimes innovative, staff development. Teachers, managers and specialist practitioners are set clear targets that are well monitored. The SAR for 2004/05 claims an exceptional improvement in teaching and learning, with a profile of lesson observations in which 80% of lessons were graded good or better. This represents a significant increase on the last inspection profile. However, following refinement to the observation process during 2005/06 the proportion of good or better teaching and learning dropped to 71%. Potential over grading was identified through a more robust lesson observation system and a thoughtful and critical approach to the observation of teaching and learning by managers. The college is assessing the impact of teaching and learning performance on outcomes such as retention and success rates.

How effective are links with employers and external agencies in improving the quality of provision for learners?

- College arrangements for employer engagement have recently improved. The new management structure now has a central employer engagement unit responsible for broadening the provision to meet the needs of employers. This unit works closely with new employer engagement managers in each department, who focus on employer engagement at departmental level. Targets are set and monitored by appropriate managers during regular meetings. Key performance indicators have been devised to monitor the effectiveness of employer engagement within the college. The

college now has appropriate structures to manage employer engagement and measure its effectiveness. Changes are too recent to judge the overall effectiveness of these arrangements.

## Leadership and management

How effective is the quality assurance system in identifying the under-performance of courses?

- The quality assurance system is very effective in identifying under-performance. Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and robust with processes being well managed and monitored. The college has successfully developed a self-critical culture where continuous improvement is always sought. The 'courses causing concern' procedure within the college identified many of the worst performing courses from the college performance report (CPR). However, the college procedure did not include short courses or courses provided as learner enrichment which under-performed. The college has recognised this omission and has refined the procedure so these courses can now be identified. The performance of many courses that were identified as 'causing concern' improved following appropriate action and careful monitoring.

What impact/ benefit has participation in the 'Peer Referencing Pilot' had on leadership and management within the college?

- The outcomes of participation in the 'Peer Referencing Pilot' are seen as beneficial by the college. The process involved staff from other colleges validating a range of curriculum and cross college self-assessment reports. The process was well planned and involved staff responsible for self assessment justifying and evidencing claims made within their self-assessment reports. Staff involved commented that the process was challenging and that it enabled productive links to be made with other institutions for the sharing of good practice. The process resulted in some changes being made to the final self-assessment reports, including revisions to text and to at least one grade.