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22 November 2006

Sue Daley
Principal
Boston College
Skirbeck Road
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Dear Sue

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT

Following my visit on 31 October 2006, I write to confirm the findings of the college's annual assessment visit. I attach feedback outlining the main conclusions. I hope you find this useful in continuing to improve provision at the college. I also attach the risk assessment from the visit.

Please make sure that you bring to our attention any factual inaccuracies in the feedback, by e-mail to collegeinspections@ofsted.gov.uk, within two working days of receiving this letter. If there is anything on which you require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

May I thank you, your colleagues and students for making us feel so welcome during the visit. I look forward to meeting you again.

Yours sincerely

Paul Joyce HMI

cc. Central AAV unit
Nick Rashley, Executive Director, Lincolnshire and Rutland LLSC
Roger Shippam HMI, Regional Divisional Manager, Ofsted
Christine Langton HMI, Regional ADM, Ofsted
David Knighton HMI, Patch ADM, Ofsted
Alan Winchcombe, ALI

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Boston College
Date of visit: 31 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

How do college success rates compare with national averages? Do success rates continue to improve?

- Headline success rates improved to 73.5% in 2004/05 and are now close to the national rate of 74%. Overall success rates for long qualifications improved by 3.1% to 62.4%, equal to the national rate. Success rates for short courses of between 5 and 24 weeks duration significantly improved although overall these remain below national rates. Success rates across most sector subject areas rose with significant improvements in health and social care and construction. College data for 2005/06 was being finalised at the time of the visit although interim data indicates continued improvement in overall success rates.
- The overall success rate at level 1 declined slightly during 2004/05 and remains below the national rate. Long course success rates are below national levels in arts, media and publishing and significantly below in the preparing for life and work sector subject area and the history, philosophy and theology sector subject area, although the number of learners within this area is very low.
- Completion rates on work-based learning programmes continue to improve. College data for 2005/06 shows an improvement of 13.9% in overall completion rates and of 30.1% in timely completion rates. Both overall and timely completion rates remain very significantly above national rates.

What does value-added show us about learners' performance? Has there been any improvement in value-added for the courses identified as under-performing previously?

- The college has started to use the new measures of success data to evaluate learners' performance and has discontinued the use of other

value-added measures. Data, although in its pilot stage of implementation, shows that, overall, learners make at least satisfactory progress. It was not possible to evaluate any improvement in value-added scores for individual courses previously identified as underperforming. However, inspectors noted that the average points score for A level learners improved significantly during 2005/06 and that the proportion of learners gaining higher grades improved by 7% on the previous year.

Quality of education and training

What actions have been taken to address some of the areas for development identified in teaching and learning?

- The college has appointed a new coordinator to more effectively target the continuing professional development (CPD) of staff. Roles and responsibilities are more clearly defined and CPD activities are better informed by the information collected from quality and performance monitoring processes. The observation system for monitoring teaching and learning continues to be progressively developed and refined. External observers continue to be used to validate and moderate judgements by the college observation team. A teaching toolkit has been developed and advanced practitioners provide additional support for new staff and those identified as a result of the observation process.

What actions have been taken to ensure greater consistency in assessment and verification practice? How effectively is assessment and verification monitored across the college?

- Additional training has been provided for staff involved in the assessment, verification and moderation of learners work. Training for staff new to assessment has been formalised. Standard documentation has been produced and is used as a basis to review compliance with awarding body requirements. Arrangements to monitor verifier and moderator reports are more robust. All reports are now reviewed and logged centrally with any resulting actions required identified, documented and monitored through to completion. The quality group report noted no significant non-compliance with any qualification awarding body during 2005/06.

What actions have been taken to improve the provision in art and design? What impact have these actions had?

- Changes have been made to the range and content of courses in response to learner feedback. Courses better meet the needs and interests of learners. Substantial investment in resources has improved the standard

of accommodation and equipment in the area. Changes in management have clarified roles and responsibilities of staff. The area is now self-assessed as satisfactory and success rates have started to improve. Data for 2004/05 shows a 5.7% improvement in overall long success rates although they remain below the national average.

What actions have been taken to enable learner progression in construction?

- A comprehensive review of the construction curriculum has been completed. A carefully considered and appropriate action plan has been produced. Full-time courses at level 2 have been introduced to provide a progression route for learners completing level 1 courses and for more able learners who wish to access a level 2 course directly. Progression routes for part-time learners have been introduced and learners can now move from pre-vocational courses at level 1 to vocational courses at level 2. Courses at level 3 are being introduced to enable a progression route for learners completing level 2 qualifications.

Leadership and management

How effective are quality assurance procedures at course level? Are they consistently applied? Are they effective at identifying areas of concern?

- Quality assurance procedures have been refined and improved. Changes have been made to systems and processes which have improved the cycle of quality assurance activities. Roles and responsibilities of staff have been more clearly defined and staff have a better understanding of what to do and when to do it. There is improved availability and access to management information and improved processes for performance management. Quality assurance measures have been effective in identifying areas of concern. It is too early to measure the impact of the latest refinements to quality procedures.

What actions have been taken to improve the promotion of equality and diversity within the college?

- Equality and diversity is identified as a key college priority. A satisfactory equality and diversity action plan has been produced. Equality and diversity impact measures have been identified for most aspects of college activity, although in many areas these are at an early stage of

implementation. The college monitors learner enrolment, success, retention and achievement rates and has set targets for improvement at whole college level. However, it is unclear how individual curriculum areas or courses contribute to these overall targets. Appropriate targets are set to increase the proportion of staff, managers and governors from under-represented groups. All staff have received recent training on matters relating to equality and diversity and good resources have been developed to promote and reinforce equality and diversity issues as part of a college wide tutorial programme.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- None

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

- The college has clearly identified its strategic priorities and has a focus on meeting the needs and interests of the community it serves. Collaborative provision with other providers continues to develop in Skegness and the college works closely with local schools to provide opportunities for 14-16 year olds. Arrangements for employer engagement have been strengthened within curriculum areas.