

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: The Sixth Form College Solihull  
Date of visit: 19 June 2007

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 well do learners achieve?

- In 2004/05 the overall college success rate was 77%, slightly below the national average of 79%. This success rate improved by 4% in 2005/06 to 81%.
- Almost all learners at the college are 16-18 years old. Success rates for 16-18 year olds on long courses in 2004/05 were similar to the national average at level 3, representing over 95% of all learners. Success rates were well below the national averages for the very small minority of learners on level 1 and 2 courses. Significant improvements were noted, however, in success rates at levels 1 and 2 in 2005/06.
- The college subscribes to the Advanced Level Information System (ALIS). ALIS value-added data suggests that most learners on A-level courses achieve in line with expectations based on their prior attainment. Value-added indicators published by the LSC also suggest that most learners achieve their expected grades. The college has recently started to make good use of value-added data to evaluate the quality of provision.
- The college offers intermediate-level qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) as a way of developing and accrediting key skills. Success rates in 2005/06 were high on English courses, but well below national averages on mathematics courses. Relatively few learners take the optional courses in ICT.

## Quality of education and training

What actions has the college taken to further improve the quality of teaching and learning? What has been the impact of these actions?

- The college has a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and regularly reviews staff training, the use of learning resources and curriculum development to promote further improvements.
- All teachers are observed by a member of the college lesson observation group once every two years. In addition, all staff are also observed annually by their line manager. Observation forms are detailed and judgemental but lack specific and focused actions for improvement. The outcomes of lesson observations are used in staff performance reviews and to inform self-assessment. These outcomes are also used to plan staff development activities and share good practice across the college.
- The college notes improvements in teaching and learning in the current year against the areas identified in the 2005/06 self-assessment report. These include more active involvement of learners in lessons, greater account taken of the individual needs of learners and increased use of integrated learning technology (ILT) to support learning. The proportion of lessons judged to be good or better increased from 64% in 2005/06 to 79% in 2006/07.

What actions has the college taken to improve the consistency of learners' experience of group tutorials and the overall quality of these tutorials? What has been the impact of these actions?

- The college has undertaken a major review of tutorials in 2006/07, with some changes taking place in the current year and further changes planned for 2007/08. All staff have been actively involved in reviewing the quality of tutorials and in developing strategies for improvement.
- The group tutorial programme has been revised for 2006/07 to promote greater consistency of practice. The outline programme is provided to all tutors and is supported by lesson plans and learning resources. Group tutorials are part of the lesson observation system and the work of tutors is reviewed by line managers twice each term. Feedback from staff and learners is used to improve aspects of the provision, such as induction

activities and advice about health issues. An evaluation of group tutorials will form part of the self-assessment report for 2006/07.

- Individual tutorials currently take place at least twice each term. Progress is discussed and targets are set to be reviewed at the next tutorial. In some cases, however, targets are missing or are insufficiently specific to be helpful to learners. The college has recognised this issue and has focused much staff development activity and sharing of good practice on improving target-setting for individual learners.
- Changes planned for 2007/08 include an overall reduction in the time allocated to group tutorials and a consequent increase in subject-specific support and individual tutorials for learners. The group tutorial programme will cover much of the same material as at present but it will be focused into certain time periods during the academic year. Teaching staff will have more time to set and monitor individual targets with learners, and tutors will also be involved in regularly reviewing these targets and the overall progress made by learners. The college will also be undertaking a pilot study into the use of electronic individual learning plans.

## Leadership and management

How has the college attempted to improve links with employers and what impact has this had on the experiences of learners?

- The college has produced a systematic analysis of links with external agencies, including employers, as a first step in improving these links to benefit learners. This analysis has been used to inform an outline strategy which will require curriculum areas to self-assess the range and impact of their external links from 2007/08 onwards. Criteria for self-assessment are in place and heads of department will be held accountable for developing and improving external links. The current outline model indicates the nature of the links and the number of learners involved, but it does not have sufficient information about how the impact of these links on the experiences of learners will be assessed.
- There are currently many examples of good practice within the college in terms of links with external organisations and their benefits to learners. These include working with local businesses on course plans and

assignment briefs, external visits, visiting speakers, work experience and project work. External links are particularly strong in business, ICT, and health and social care. Plans are in place to use expertise in these curriculum areas to share good practice across the college.