

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Capel Manor
Date of Visit: 1 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

What do success, achievement and retention data for 2005-06 show about overall trends? What has been done to improve success rates on level 3 provision for 16-18 year olds? Have improvements on level 2 provision for this age range been sustained? Success rates for adult learners are still above national average, but declining relative to the increase in the national average. They are now back up to 2002/03 levels in 2004/05, after a dip in 2003/04. What is being done to continue to improve success rates for adults?

16-18 year olds

- In 2004/05 the success rate for 16-18 year olds was still below average, but improving (59%). Overall retention (83%) for this age range was around the national average, however the overall achievement was low (72%) – due largely to very low success rate on level 3 provision (26%) – for example, national diploma (ND) in animal management. Nevertheless outcomes on level 2 provision improved considerably from 49% success rate in 2004 to 66% in 2005.

Provisional data for 2005/06 indicate standards have been maintained at level 1 and are broadly average. The college has a strong track record in retaining students on level 1 courses. Standards declined slightly on level 2 provision and were below average. This is due in part to the loss of a key member of staff on the first diploma in animal care. Although the overall success rate remains well below the national average, standards continued to improve on level 3 provision and targets have been set to support further improvement. Members of staff have been more systematic in ensuring students hand their

coursework in on time and the college's student mentoring scheme has had a positive impact on helping more students stay on their courses.

Adult learners

- Level 1 provision for adults remains the college's key strength and overall standards are very high. Success rates on level 2 and level 3 provision show an equally impressive rate of improvement over time and are above national averages.

Learners' achievements in key skills were very low in 2004/05, what steps are being taken to improve the delivery and assessment of key skills. Have key skills success rates improved and is the key skills strategy working? What key skills provision is available for 16-18 year old learners on level 3 long courses?

- Students' achievements on key skills qualifications declined in 2005/06 to around 32%. The total number of entries for key skills qualifications doubled. Notably students' achievements on level 1 key skills information technology (IT) and communication qualifications compare favourably to national averages and show signs of significant improvement in 2005/06. This is because the majority of students taking level 1 key skills are on level 2 vocational courses where the key skills strategy is generally well-embedded. Results for level 2 key skills qualifications are very poor, for example 7% in application of number. Too many young people leave college without a qualification in functional numeracy. Provision for pastoral care, tutoring, learning support and key skills has been restructured into a new School of Learning Support. Roles and accountabilities are clear and ensure a more seamless approach to meeting students' individual needs. Developments within the school are at an early stage and a coherent strategy for literacy and numeracy has yet to be defined and agreed. The college follows government recommendations in providing opportunities for students to achieve a level 2 key skill where appropriate. However, there are insufficient opportunities for the more able students to develop their key skill to an even higher level. The key skills strategy is not successful on level 3 provision. Students are not given sufficient specific support to develop their numeracy and literacy skills, often this time is absorbed by integrated assignment work. The quality of work provided by the key skills staff has been

commended highly by their external verifier. However given the growth in the number of 16-18 year olds taking key skills qualifications as well as the increasing levels of complexity of their individual needs, staff resources are very stretched in this area. The self assessment report (SAR) does not give sufficient evaluation to provision for key skills either in its own right or the extent to which students develop these skills within their vocational areas.

How well are students on work-based learning (WBL) programmes making progress? Success rates for WBL were just below the national average for 2004/05 (provider performance review (PPR) data). Qualification success rates (QSR) data for period 12, 2006 indicate that success rates have increased but are still below national average. What is being done to further improve WBL success rates?

- Apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in amenity horticulture are now well established, with provision extended to a new centre in South London this year. There are plans to extend provision to include arboriculture and floristry and a contract with the Royal Parks. Success rates for apprentices have improved and are similar to the national average for 16-18 year olds, but remain below average for those over 19. The first cohort of advanced apprentices is due to complete shortly with a predicted success rate well above the national average. New Measures of Success data are not yet being used to monitor overall performance. The recruitment process has been improved to include more systematic initial assessment of literacy and numeracy skills to ensure learners are able to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. The rate of progress of learners is now closely monitored, although some are still slow to complete the full framework.

Quality of education and training

What were the outcomes of the review of teaching observations processes that was scheduled for the Staff Development Forum meeting January 2006? What do college systems say about the quality of teaching and learning and how helpful are they in pinpointing where/what action needs to take place to improve the

quality of teaching and learning? How does the college ensure consistency of judgements between different staff carrying out lesson observations?

- The paperwork used for lesson observations has been updated since the last annual assessment visit (AAV) and now includes a developmental action plan for teachers being observed. Not all schools are using the action plan. College data indicate around 61% teaching is good or better. However, the grades vary somewhat from year to year indicating insufficient rigour in the moderation of judgements. Heads of school are now starting to observe teaching across other schools but there is still not enough sharing of good practice. Informal arrangements within individual departments for sharing good practice work very well, but this is not shared more widely across the college. In 2005/06 there were 77 observations of staff carried out and in 2004/05 there were 43. The total number of staff within scope for observation is much higher than these figures suggest which indicates that all staff are not being systematically observed. As a result the college is not able to get an accurate overarching picture of the quality of teaching and learning. The college plans to increase the number of lesson observations carried out, as well as introduce paired observations to ensure more consistency in judgements made. Some college staff have attended various external training events and conferences on lesson observations. The information they have brought back to the college is being used well to generate new ideas on ways of improving the observation procedures.

The last AAV identifies issues with late submission of coursework on ND courses - *“There is insufficient rigour in monitoring and tracking students’ progress in terms of assignment completion. Too many students fail to hand their coursework in on time.”* How does the college know if this situation has improved?

- A number of measures have been put into place to address late submission of coursework. Assignments are being scheduled more systematically and the number and types of assessment reviewed to ensure assessment is sufficient but not excessive. Students are aware of the schedule for handout, completion, submission and marking of coursework. A final deadline for submission at the end of the academic year has been set, with an ultimate deadline prior to the

start of the second year for progressing students. This has resulted in some students leaving courses at the end of year 1 for non-completion. Overall the college believes that timely completion has been significantly improved and is starting to be apparent in improved overall success rates.

What progress is the college making in relation to its Centre of Vocational Excellence (COVE) status?

- The college has achieved COVE status in two areas. The COVE in horticulture and garden design is well established. All funds have now been received and used to develop an all-weather landscape area and teaching space at two centres. Additional staffing includes an industry liaison manager and WBL manager. Training needs analysis has been undertaken in both industries. Apprenticeship programmes in horticulture and level 3 garden design programmes have been developed. The head of horticulture is currently chair of the national landbased COVE development group.

A COVE in floristry and business enterprise was established in 2006 and has already made an impact. Initial activity includes appointment of an IT and business co-ordinator. A training needs analysis has been carried out to identify needs for practical floristry and business/retail training. A floristry business short course at level 3 has been run for 14 candidates, comprising two business related units of the advanced national certificate. A temporary IT suite has been installed at Capel Manor, with plans for a permanent facility. Provision at level 2 has been started at Gunnersbury Park and introduction of advanced apprenticeships in floristry is being considered.

Leadership and management

In 2004/05, provision in animal care was very weak, what steps are being taken to ensure improved outcomes for learners on these courses? Have improvement targets set in the 2004/05 SAR for 2005/06 been met?

- A number of measures have been put in place to address weak animal care provision. Course delivery has been improved. Structured work

and assessment books have been produced for each unit. Most coursework is now completed in class, with the opportunity for immediate feedback to students on progress. A progression barrier has been introduced at the end of year 1 of the national diploma. Those who do not meet the requirements are transferred to the national certificate. Improvement targets for 16-18 year olds were not met in 2005/06. Retention improved at level 3 in 2005/06 although is likely to fall again in 2006/07 due to early leavers. Achievement has risen but is not yet at national average. At level 2, retention remains high, but achievement has fallen back to below average in 2005/06 after improving to above average in 2004/05.

Taking into account the outcomes of the Ofsted survey of June 2006 'Safeguarding Children' (HMI 2647) a follow up letter was sent to colleges on 17 July 2006 setting out the arrangements for improved record-keeping of checks on staff. What action has the college taken in relation to these proposals, is there a single central record in place?

- Arrangements for CRB checks are comprehensive and thorough. However the college as yet does not have a single central record which shows the necessary recruitment and vetting checks are undertaken. A strength in terms of safeguarding is that the college also undertakes CRB checks on adult students who act as 'student mentors' in the college. Suitable arrangements are in place if there are any delays in CRB checks being completed

The last AAV stated that, *"data on key performance indicators are not used consistently well in producing self assessment reports that are sufficiently self-critical or rigorous in identifying trends in standards."* How well are data used to set targets for improvement? Have improvement targets set in the 2004/05 SAR for 2005/06 been met?

- Heads and deputy heads of department have direct access to management information and good support to enable them to use data effectively. Data are presented by length, level and age for self assessment. Judgements in the SAR make reference to analysis at this level to determine strengths/weaknesses and trends, but do not always identify individual courses which may need attention. The SAR

for 2004/05 overstated some achievements as comparative national data used in the management information system (MIS) software were three years out of date. Some improvement targets set in the 2004/05 SAR have not been met and others were insufficiently challenging. Course level data is used to support course reviews and is broken down at course, individual group and centre level. In some cases this has been used to identify a problem at course level. For example, a support tutor was introduced to a floristry class with high numbers to improve retention, identified as being lower than similar classes with lower numbers.