

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Norton Radstock  
Date of visit: 11 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

What are the success rates, retention and achievement rates for students aged 16 to 18 and 19 plus in 2005/06?

- Data for 2005/06 are not yet complete. Success rates have fallen at level 1 which is the level studied by most students. Retention has held up well but achievement fluctuates. Success rates have risen at level 2 and are well above the national average for 16 to 18-year-old students. Success rates are around the national average at level 3.

Has the decline in success rates for students aged 19 plus at levels 1 and level 3 in 2004/05 been reversed?

- Early indications are that success rates have declined for students aged 19 plus at level 1 but they have improved by 2% at level 3.

Has the gap in the success rates for male and female students between 2003-2005 been closed?

- The 2005/06 data indicate that the gap has been closed due to the decline in male success rates. At level 2, the female success rate has shown substantial improvement from 57% to 80%. It has overtaken the male success rate which improved from 66% to 68%.

What are the success rates for key skills?

- Success rates for key skills improved for students of all ages in 2005/06. They increased from 48% to 49% for students aged 16 to 18 and from 43% to 64% for students aged 19 plus.

What is the success rate for work-based learning frameworks?

- Work-based learning framework success rates are satisfactory and improving. In 2004/05, 42% of advanced apprentices and 38% of apprentices completed their full frameworks against a national rate of 38% for apprentices overall. Qualification success rates (as yet unverified) for full framework completion in 2005/06 are showing overall success rates of 48% for advanced apprenticeships and 51% for apprenticeships.

## Quality of education and training

How well are key skills integrated into curriculum areas including work-based learning?

- The college has made further progress to integrate key skills into the curriculum in health and social care and hairdressing and beauty therapy. This includes ensuring that many assignments and activities are contextualised but further work is needed. Not all students are aware of their progress in key skills, or find that the assignments they do relate to their main programme.

How effectively does teaching meet the individual needs of students and promote equality of opportunity including in work-based learning?

- Lesson plans identify students' specific needs such as dyslexia and their other support needs. Teachers are aware of the individual needs of their students including their range of abilities. The college has provided staff training in meeting the needs of individual students and the effective use of information learning technology (ILT). Equality of opportunity and diversity have received good focus in staff training events and are checked during lesson observations.

Are there sufficient and clear curriculum pathways for 14 to 19-year-old students?

- The college has good links with a wide range of local schools, partnerships and consortia to develop the 14 -19 curriculum. It works effectively with these organisations to plan programmes which encourage participation in education or finding employment post-16. The college curriculum is increasingly vocational, with a clear focus on progression routes from entry level to level 3, higher education and employment.

Is initial assessment effective? Does the process avoid unnecessary duplication and are the outcomes used appropriately and in good time?

- The college has eliminated duplication in initial assessment. Initial assessment takes place as soon as possible during recruitment in order to provide early information on students' needs. As a result of the outcomes of initial assessment and interviews, the college recently encouraged some students to take courses at a higher level than originally intended. The college provides additional learning support in several ways. Students receive individual support in lessons or outside of lessons or they are supported in groups. They receive specialist help if necessary to meet their particular needs. Lesson plans sampled in beauty therapy provide good information for tutors and learning support assistants on the specific support needs of individuals in the group. Students appreciate the support they receive and find it beneficial and timely. They are confident about asking for help, and if additional support is needed, that it will be provided promptly by the college.

How effectively are tutorials, both whole group and individual, embedded throughout the college?

- Individual and group tutorial arrangements for full and part-time students are clear and well understood by students. They find them informative and helpful. Students get good advice on careers and progression to further and higher education, helping them to plan for their futures. Plans for group tutorials with full-time students include sessions designed to develop their personal skills, and focus on the five 'Every Child Matters' themes. Tutors use the individual tutorials well to review students' progress and to give them opportunities to raise any concerns. The college takes these concerns seriously and deals with them properly. Students are involved in setting their own targets and some students complete their own tutorial records. Tutors do not always ensure that students' spelling is correct, and that targets are specific and time-bound.

## Leadership and management

How effectively are data used to monitor performance, identify issues and drive improvement at all levels?

- Senior managers and heads of school receive frequent reports on recruitment and retention throughout the year. Heads of school monitor

attendance rates formally at least each half term. More frequent attendance monitoring and the prompt follow-up of absent students is better in some areas than others. An electronic registration and timetabling system is shortly to be piloted with a view to using it across the college during this academic year. Quarterly review meetings between heads of schools and the principal are now formally recorded. The senior management team receives weekly financial reports on student numbers against funding. Good-quality revue packs are provided for the governing body quality sub-committee. Packs include success, retention and achievement data with trends against national averages, the reported outcomes of lesson observations, a brief outline of each area of work, clear strengths and areas for improvement and student feedback from surveys.

How effectively is equality of opportunity promoted and monitored?

- The college produced a well-considered action plan for race equality in summer 2006. The college has trained staff on a wide range of issues around equality of opportunity and diversity. Success, retention and achievement rates are analysed by students' ethnic group. Most students from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds have high success rates. Whilst their numbers are small, they have more than doubled in the last three years. The college appropriately captures and analyses complaints by the ethnicity, age, disability and gender profile of the complainants, as well as by the nature of the complaint. The pro forma used during individual tutorials has been amended to ensure that equality of opportunity receives an adequate focus. Equality of opportunity is covered systematically in work-based learning reviews. Lesson plans contain sections on equality of opportunity so that students' particular needs are identified and met. Plans are in place to strengthen the coverage of equality of opportunity in group tutorials across the college this year. Focus groups are being set up to ensure that students from different groups such as BME and those with disabilities have a clearly distinguished voice in the college.

How effective is quality assurance at raising the standards of teaching and learning?

- The outcomes of the termly student satisfaction surveys are widely disseminated and used throughout the college by the senior management team, heads of schools and tutors. The college recognised the need to improve course reviews and introduced a new, online system in the

summer. So far the college has reviewed over 400 courses using the new system which includes data on student punctuality and attendance. The system will be refined after this trial year has been completed. Lesson observation records have improved. The text is evaluative and generally matches the grade awarded for the lesson. Forms contain good summaries of key strengths and areas for development. Course files sampled contained good schemes of work and demonstrate that attention is paid to developing the self-assessment report from course level upwards. Frequent training events are held to develop teaching and learning strategies. Staff have free choice and are not required to attend specific workshops related to their identified needs. The GCE A-level provision at the B6 centre was not included in the college quality processes. The self-assessment report has a sharp focus and matches the common inspection framework well.

How effectively and frequently does the college monitor and develop its performance at school level?

- Heads of school are aware of the targets and priorities of the college. They now receive monthly data packs which help them to monitor recruitment and retention rates. They use course level data on success , retention and achievement rates including trends, during self-assessment. They consider and act on the results from student surveys and the outcomes of focus group meetings between students and each head of school. Attendance rates are calculated each half-term. The system for course reviews has recently changed. The small number of reviews sampled were well structured and included judgements on student punctuality and attendance. Changes are made to improve the quality of provision, such as a change to the arrangements for the delivery of engineering at level 1 this year. Heads of school are aware of teachers' strengths and areas for development and are instrumental in ensuring that action plans for improvement are formulated and followed through.

How effectively is the curriculum reviewed?

- The college has reviewed its curriculum offer to ensure that it meets local community, and individual needs. Arrangements for course review have become more systematic, consistent and thorough. The college has decided to focus on a vocational curriculum to better meet the needs of its students. GCE A-level provision at the B6 centre will finish this year. The curriculum offer has been broadened in areas such as art and design,

hairdressing and beauty therapy and business and information technology to include more provision at level 1 and greater progression opportunities.