ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Worthing College
Date of visit: 18 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

Use of data, including value added data to improve performance

- College data for 2005/6 show that overall pass rates at both A2 and AS were higher than 2004/5. The value added data show that students on level 3 courses achieve just above the average compared to colleges with similar intake, though attainment of A and B grades at A2 is still an area for improvement. College data show retention has improved in 2005/6, though figures for retention between year 12 and 13 are not monitored. The overall 2004/5 success rates for the college show it is in line with similar colleges. College data for 2005/6 show considerable improvement on all 16-18 long course success rates to 84%
- Value added data are used effectively to set minimum target grades to improve performance. Understanding among middle managers of value added data and its use to make improvements is good. However, there is some inconsistency in ensuring that students understand their target grades and how this can help them to improve their performance.
- Action plans are in place for the poorest performing courses. The 2004/5 data showed no significant impact of changes in IT provision, but college data for 2005/6 show good improvement in success rates.
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- Attendance data are used effectively to improve attendance.

Improving the delivery and achievement of key skills

- There has been a full review of key skills, outcomes of which are:
  - different strategies being used to improve portfolios
  - more selective entry for the tests
  - management of key skills and its quality assurance has been moved to curriculum teams, except for IT.

It is too early to judge the effectiveness of the changes.

Quality of education and training

Impact of the retention strategy

- The retention strategy is having a positive impact. College data show that retention is better at this stage of the year than the same period in previous years. Staff at all levels demonstrate a positive commitment to the strategy with effective follow up to absences and poor punctuality.

Progress on improving tutorials.

- Several changes have been made including the appointment of tutorial coordinators, who have a clear view on their roles and responsibilities. However, it is too early to assess the impact of these changes. Communication issues are being resolved through the tutorials but this is still an area for improvement. The purpose of tutorials and tutorial activities for academic students are still not made clear enough. The college recognise the need to quality assure the tutorial process and have produced plans to use observations and questionnaires to achieve this.

Progress and impact of operational objectives in the college quality improvement plan.

- Staff fully support the teaching and learning policy and view further planned improvements with enthusiasm. They are very positive about how the development of peer observation will help improve teaching and learning.
- The information and learning strategy has improved the equipment and staff are fully committed to the developments planned. They are looking forward to further training to develop use of the equipment and new technologies.
- There are distinct structures to support and challenge teachers to improve their performance, clearly linked to the performance management system and the college aims.
- Though improvements have been made in ensuring additional learning support reaches students more quickly, there is still further work to be done to ensure that arrangements are thorough enough to ensure individual students are not overlooked.

- The college's 'Meeting the Standard' strategy is a very effective way of supporting students and improving their performance. Both staff and students speak highly of this.

Leadership and management

Impact of the new college management structure on raising achievement and standards

- Staff are clear on their roles and the new structures and there is a strong focus on improving quality. Support through the line management structure is good with definite links to student progress built into staff performance.
- The changes to the tutorial system have not been communicated effectively across the college and improvements being made to the tutorial programme are still at an early stage and not embedded.

Effectiveness of middle managers in implementing the college's quality assurance systems

- Middle managers understand fully their roles in improving quality through self assessment and the performance management system. They are positive about how they contribute to raising achievement through the monitoring and review of courses and their involvement in the lesson observation process.

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

- All aspects were covered.

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

- Students interviewed said they found the college friendly and welcoming and also commented that the teaching of theory and concepts is an area where teaching and learning could be improved.