

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Kingston Maurward College
Date of visit: 6 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

Note: At the time of the visit approximately 15% of achievement data were still to be recorded and so success rate data are interim at that point. Inspectors have worked from that position.

2005/06 success rates on long courses at levels 1 to 3 for both 16-18 year old and adult learners

- In 2004/05 success rates at levels 1 and 2 for 16-18 year old learners were around the national averages for specialist colleges. However, level 3 success rates for the same age group had dropped below an improving national average and were the lowest in three years. This was despite a consistent improvement in retention for the last three years. For 2005/06, current success rates for the 16-18 group at levels 1 to 3 are all above the 2004/05 national averages and at level 3 the rise from 59% to 75% has been particularly sharp. The indications are that long course success rates at levels 1 to 3 will all finish well above the 2004/05 national averages.
- For adult learners in 2004/05, success rates were significantly above improving national averages at both levels 1 and 2, and the college had secured a large increase in its success rate compared to the previous year. At level 3, the success rate was around the national average. Thus far, success rates in 2005/06 at level 3 for adults will be above the national average, but the position at levels 1 and 2 is less clear.
- The college has secured improvements in retention for 16-18 year old learners at levels 1 and 3 and for adults at levels 2 and 3, so that retention is above national benchmark at all 3 levels in both age groups.

What is the updated position on achievement and standards in work-based learning for the 2005/06 year?

- Overall, success rates remain above national averages but unvalidated LSC qualification success rate data indicates they have fallen relative to the national average in 2005/06.

- LSC data indicate that the overall success rate for apprenticeship framework completions in 2005/06 has fallen slightly on performance in 2004/05 to 62%, but remains well above the national average of 53%. Most learners who complete the NVQ also complete the apprenticeship framework. The fall in success rates can be identified mainly as a group of learners in equine studies who transferred to another provider mid-way through the programme. The proportion of learners succeeding by the expected completion date has increased significantly and is now around 50%.
- LSC data indicate that success rates on advanced apprenticeships improved slightly to around 55% in 2005/06 compared to the national average of 44%. Success rates have risen significantly in sport and recreation programmes, but remain low in agriculture, which was a weakness at the re-inspection in 2005. Fewer advanced apprentices who complete the NVQ also complete the full apprenticeship framework. The proportion of learners succeeding by the expected completion date has increased steadily and is now around 32%.

Quality of education and training

Refinement of lesson observation process

- The college has further refined its processes for lesson observation. Further training has been provided for observers, including joint observations. As a result observers are able to make reliable and criterion-referenced grading decisions on the quality of lessons. Both feedback to teachers and grading decisions are moderated to ensure consistency. Observers were able to demonstrate the impact of lesson observation on the quality of teaching and learning, either in improved success rates on short courses or by improved grading achieved by teachers upon re-observation. There is a clear overview of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning to inform staff development, but this overview is not built into the college's self-assessment.

Monitoring of learners' performance and use of data.

- The tutorial process has been further developed in order to ensure the consistency of monitoring of learners' progress, improved target setting, and a greater focus on academic performance. Tutors and managers use data well to measure learners' performance, including attendance, behaviour and assessment data, and to motivate learners to meet or exceed their target grades. However, there is still scope to improve the consistency of SMART target setting. The

improved tutorial process has been a contributory factor in the increase in success rates for 16-18 year old learners from the interim success rate data. Plans are underway to develop an electronic individual learning plan and tutorial process.

- Monitoring of learners performance and progress on work-based learning programmes has continued to improve. Improvements in target setting and progress monitoring identified at the re-inspection in 2005 have been sustained. Management information has been standardised further. Work-based learning co-ordinators receive regular reports on learners' progress. More emphasis is placed on supporting learners to achieve by their target date. Target completion dates are now being set based on an assessment of learners' individual circumstances rather than on a standard length of time. Progress reviews now focus on progress with completion of all elements of the apprenticeship framework, including key skills. Key skills tutors are now based in curriculum areas.

Has the greater rigour of internal verification seen at the re-inspection continued to improve standards in assessment?

- In most areas the greater rigour of internal verification has been sustained and the quality of assessment confirmed by external verification. In horticulture however, direct certification claim status was withdrawn in May 2006 by the awarding body following concerns about internal verification procedures.

Leadership and management

Does the self-assessment report enable the college to have an accurate view of itself and does it serve as a quality improvement tool?

- The SAR to which inspectors had access for the 2004/05 academic year in preparation for this visit was for technical reasons a draft only, and it was clear from scrutiny of academic board meeting minutes that this draft had undergone amendments in both content and grading. The SAR for 2005/06 is a work in progress and so inspectors can comment only on the rigour of the process in allowing the SAR to serve as an appropriate quality improvement tool.
- Self-assessment has been further refined since the last annual assessment visit to fit the SAR to the requirements of the new common inspection framework, including the every child matters themes, and in order to

enhance further the rigour of the process. This rigorous process should ensure consistency across the component parts of the SAR, the evaluative nature of the document and the security of judgements made. In addition the process of termly review leading to the curriculum SAR is a more formative process supporting corrective action in-year.

- Effective self-assessment has contributed to the improvement in success rates. Managers have broadened the curriculum at levels 1 and 2, and improved the lesson observation process. The increased rigour of internal verification has had an impact in both the planning and implementation of assessment. The monitoring of learners' progress has been improved.

Has the improvement in the management of work-based learning been sustained?

- Work-based learning has a clearly defined role in the college's strategic development. Programmes, including Train to Gain, have been introduced or are planned to meet local learners' and employers' needs. Management of programmes within curriculum areas, supported by consistent quality monitoring and regular use of accurate data, is working effectively.