

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Greenwich Community College
Date of visit: 23 November

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

The college is currently collating students' achievement data for 2005/06 and in many vocational areas the picture is far from complete. Bearing this in mind, what is the current picture regarding students' achievements?

- Generally students' achievements present a positive picture. Retention data for learners is now mostly collated and shows a significant improvement on previous years. Retention rates for learners aged 16 to 18 have improved significantly at all levels and are currently above the 2004/05 national averages for similar colleges. Retention rates for adults have improved at levels 1 and 2, but they remain below the national averages for 2004/05 at all levels.

Information on pass rates is still being collected and so overall success rates are incomplete. Data collated so far indicate that success rates have improved for learners aged 16 to 18 at level 3 to above the national average; but at levels 1 and 2 they indicate a decline and are below the national averages. They have improved for adults at all levels but remain below the national averages. Success rates have increased in 2005/06 compared to 2004/05 in all curriculum areas for learners aged 16 to 18 and in the majority of curriculum areas for adults. Success rates at AS level are good at 8 percentage points above the national average for 2004/05 and GCE A level success rates have improved in 2005/06 but remain 4 points below the national average. The limited GCSE provision has good success rates, 3 points above the national average for 2004/05.

What is the current position on value added or distance travelled measures of performance?

- The use of value added information is very effective when setting individual targets with students based on their prior attainment. These targets are aspirational and they are monitored closely. The number of students with measurable entry criteria in any course is usually low which makes the overall value added indicators less useful as a tool for evaluating the performance of subjects or courses.

What are the success rates for key skills? What actions have led to these improvements?

- The self assessment report (SAR) reports that the strategy for the development and achievement of learners' key skills is effective. All learners are encouraged to take at least one key skill qualification and to develop others. Success rates for key skills in 2005/06 are uneven, with some above average success rates: for example the success rate for information and communications technology at level 2 is 48%. Other key skills pass rates are currently low, but this data is still incomplete as the compilation of students' portfolio is still taking place.

What was the overall attendance for 2005/06 and what are current rates? What actions are being taken to improve attendance and punctuality?

- The SAR indicates that students' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory overall but remain an area for improvement on some courses. The college has raised the profile on the importance of attendance and punctuality through a wide range of initiatives including staff training workshops, work in tutorials and lessons. Regular attendance reports are produced. Data for 2005/06 indicates that the actual attendance was 69.5% for the college as a whole. This is unsatisfactory ; but this low figure may be an artefact of the way that attendance is expressed in the report and the college is looking into its accuracy.

Quality of provision

Based on lesson observations and other evidence, the self-assessment report judged quality of provision to be satisfactory. What is the college doing to improve the quality of teaching and learning?

- The quality of teaching from college lesson observations in 2005/06 was 9% outstanding, 45% good, 38% satisfactory and 7% inadequate. A total of 411 lessons were observed (331 staff). Some 80 re-observations were carried out on sessions graded 3 and 4, following constructive feedback and training. Staff who receive an inadequate judgement are given rigorous training and development before being re-observed. Staff judged as satisfactory are encouraged to attend additional training sessions and their progress is monitored through performance review meetings, but no specific action plan to improve their teaching is agreed.

Were external staff involved in these lesson observations? How does the college moderate these judgements?

- All staff carrying out lesson observations undergo training annually. Some dual lesson observations take place with senior managers. The

documentation for lesson observations is sampled at moderation to determine whether the text matches the grade awarded. The college is currently meeting with other local colleges to discuss how more external moderation and the sharing of good practice can take place.

How is the college taking forward the agenda for e-learning and information and learning technology (ILT)?

- The previous inspection report cited “greater variety in teaching to meet the needs of all learners more effectively” as a key area for improvement and also indicated that teachers “do not always provide sufficient challenge for more able learners”. A major thrust to address these issues is the development of e-learning and ILT. Three staff e-guides are in place (with a fourth to start soon) to coordinate these initiatives. The college has invested heavily in resources and most teaching rooms at Woolwich now have data projectors and interactive whiteboards in the use of which staff have received training. All staff are assessed for their effectiveness in the use of ILT and training is planned accordingly. Currently, over 75% of staff have been assessed in the use of ILT at level 2 or 3. Learning resources and other curriculum materials are being placed on the college’s intranet, although this is not progressing uniformly in all areas. Action plans for all areas are monitored by the Academic board.

What actions are taken to improve under-performing curriculum areas?

- The principal’s review is a high-profile meeting where the performance of each curriculum area is evaluated and a plan of action is agreed. These action plans are closely monitored. Some courses, for example motor vehicle, were at risk of closure yet subsequent work has improved the quality of the provision and the programme has been maintained. Provision in other areas has been closed where the success and long-term future of the course is doubtful: for example, access to higher education (HE) in business. In other cases the provision is converted to a more relevant course, such as the access to HE in science which is to become a ‘year zero’ degree course.

How effective is the support offered to learners?

- Learners that the inspectors met were very positive about both the general level of support they received from their teachers and additional support. Documentation from the college for the 2004/05 academic year demonstrates that the success rates of learners receiving additional learning support (ALS) and/or educational maintenance allowances (EMAs) was significantly higher than for those learners not receiving ALS or EMAs.

Leadership and management

How is the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda being taken forward within the college?

- A detailed self-assessment report (SAR) has been produced on Every Child Matters with clear judgements and supporting evidence. Unlike other sections of the SAR, it is not currently graded. The college has made good progress in addressing child protection issues and the child protection policy is reviewed annually. The college has a designated child protection officer who has undergone training. The corporation receives a child protection report every year, but governors have not received any training on their specific duties in relation to the ECM agenda. All staff employed in the last eight years have undergone an enhanced CRB check and students' work placements also undergo checks.
- The college offers a wide range of enrichment activities, which support learners in their personal and social development. For instance the 'wise girls' project engages a number of teenagers in exploring issues of sexual health and relationships. Through the key skills programme, work experience placements and other activities such as presentations, students are gaining satisfactory preparation for work.

What progress has been made on provision for students aged 14 to 16?

- The college's SAR reports that provision for students aged 14 to 16 is satisfactory. There are high pass rates on health and social care programmes, but they are low on motor vehicle courses. Retention is generally good. The college has expanded this provision and there are over 100 students attending the college. The provision is now coordinated by a specific member of staff and regular contact is maintained between schools and the local authority.

In what ways does the college capture the student voice?

- There are effective systems for gathering and responding to students' views. Students' opinions are obtained through course quality reviews and students feel they have good opportunities to evaluate the course. There are examples of changes made to courses as a result of student feedback. For instance, students on a fashion course identified the need for more work on technique and this was addressed the following year. Law students wanted more practice with exam questions and this was quickly done. Formal student representation in the college as a whole is appropriate. All courses have

student representatives who inform the student council. Two student council members are represented on the governing body.

The previous inspection in May 2006 reported that the strategic direction of the college is clearly defined. Is this still the case?

- The principal and senior managers have continued to work hard at identifying strategic opportunities and have a key role to play with their partners in a wide range of major developments. After consultation, the college's management structure is undergoing re-organisation and longer-term plans include the likelihood of forming a federal partnership with two neighbouring colleges. The enormous opportunities in the area for regeneration are closely followed and the college is a leading player in a number of projects with local authorities and employers. Curriculum development is keeping pace with the changing external environment and new provision is being developed in line with new employment opportunities, for example gaming and customer service. The development of international work is also a key objective for the college. At the same time, existing work such as the 14 to 19 partnership is continuing to be developed and increasing numbers of students aged 14 to 16 are involved with the college. Overall, the college is moving in a positive direction.