

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Luton Sixth Form College
Date of visit: 06 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

How do college success rates compare with national averages? Do success rates continue to improve?

- Headline success rates as recorded in the college performance report (CPR) for 2004/05 shows a decline in overall success rates to below national levels. Detailed analysis shows this overall decline is due to poor achievement rates on a number of additional qualifications. The college identified inadequacies in the collection and recording of learner achievement data as the cause for the decline. Swift action has been taken to ensure the situation does not reoccur. Overall success rates for A and AS level courses improved during 2004/05 and success rates for all advanced level courses were above national rates.
- Data for 2005/06 shows further improvement in A level success rates. Overall the A level success rate improved to 95.4% which remains above the latest available national average of 91.5%. Overall the college AS level success rate declined slightly to 78.1% but is above the latest available national average of 77.3%. Overall success rates on GCSE courses and on vocationally related courses remain significantly above national rates. College data for 2005/06 shows significant improvement in success rates on many of the additional qualifications that underperformed previously. Overall success rates at both levels are now above national rates.

Has there been any improvement in the proportion of high grades achieved?

- In 2004/05 the proportion of learners gaining high grades improved in almost all sector subject areas at both A and AS level. In 2005/06 college data shows a further improvement in the number of learners passing with high grades. However, overall the proportion of learners achieving high grade passes remains below the national average.

What does value-added show us about students' performance?

- ALIS data for 2006 indicates that overall learners continue to make good progress. Value-added measures show many courses showing significantly positive value-added including; law, business studies and sociology. However, physical education shows significantly negative value-added. Managers recognise the areas of the college where value-added data show that students could do better.

Quality of education and training

How robust is the scheme for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning? How is the process quality assured?

- The lesson observation scheme continues to be thorough and well-managed. Information gathered by observations is collated and detailed analysis is completed. Staff development activities are informed by the results of the observation process. A framework for learning has been adopted to further improve the quality of teaching and learning across the college. The observation system has been refined with improvements made to the moderation process. Further changes include the introduction of joint observations and the possible involvement of an external observer.

How effective is the provision of key skills? Are they effectively co-ordinated and are monitoring procedures effective?

- The college has appropriately revised its policy on key skills. College data for 2005/06 shows significant improvement in key skill success rates. The co-ordination and monitoring of key skills across the college is much improved. The monitoring of learner progress is more effective and procedures to report successful completion have been introduced to improve the management of data.

What actions have been taken to improve attendance and have these had any impact?

- The last AAV noted that although overall attendance was satisfactory the proportion of high attendance across individual courses was too low. The college closely monitors learners' attendance and analysis by individual course and by qualification type is completed. Learners are made aware of attendance expectations which are documented in the contract signed by each learner. Staff contact learners, and where appropriate parents

and carers to ascertain the reason for any non-attendance. College data shows an improvement in overall attendance rates during 2005/06 compared to 2004/05 and an improvement in the number of courses with high attendance levels.

What actions have been taken to improve the provision in science?
What impact are these measures having?

- The science curriculum is the only area where the college self-assesses provision has satisfactory. The college seeks to improve provision and to provide support for the area. A new curriculum manager has been appointed and several initiatives have been introduced. Teaching and learning are more closely monitored and the number of lesson observations completed has increased. Best practice is now shared across the curriculum area and development activities are better targeted. The performance of individuals and of courses is more closely monitored with appropriate action taken to aid improvement. Success rates on some courses within the curriculum area improved during 2005/06.

Leadership and management

How do college leaders and managers ensure the promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity within the college?

- The college's commitment to equality and diversity is well reflected in its values statements. Promotion starts on enrolment with expectations clearly stated in the learner contract. An active student council with an equality and diversity officer meet on a frequent basis. Equality and diversity is a standard agenda item at council meetings. The college has appropriate policies and procedures in place which are regularly reviewed. College marketing material and other visual images on display around the college promote equality and diversity well. An extensive range of multi-cultural events take place within the college and all learners have the opportunity to attend. A standard tutorial programme provided to all learners includes sessions where equality and diversity is promoted.

How effective are links with other providers, employers and other organisations in promoting education and well-being?

- The college has strong links with local and regional groups including schools, other post-16 providers, higher education institutions and employers. Senior managers and staff are involved with local partners in

14-19 curriculum meetings, collaboration with other colleges on peer referencing projects and work with employers to enhance the provision of vocationally related courses. Guest speakers from industry give talks to groups of learners and work-experience is provided for learners in some curriculum areas. The college provides good access to a wide range of other support, advice and guidance services to promote learners well-being through student services.