

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
Date of visit: 12 December 2006

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit (AAV). 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

Have the high standards previously attained been maintained in 2005/06?

- In 2004/05, the level 3 success rate for students aged 16 to 18 improved to 86%, significantly above the national rate. At level 2, success rates for these learners were at the national average. Success rates for adult learners were above the national averages, particularly at level 2. At the time of this AAV the data for 2005/6 were not fully available.
- The GCE A-level pass rate is 99%, including general studies, with over half of learners achieving high grades of A or B. At AS level, the overall pass rate is 91%, including general studies, with 43% of students achieving high grades. The college has taken action through the 'Queen Elizabeth expects' initiative to improve attendance and retention further at advanced level. This has had a positive impact on overall attendance and on retention rates on specific courses. The 91% target for attendance was met, an improvement of 1% on 2004/05.
- Low retention rates on level 3 vocational courses, identified in the college performance report for 2004/05, is an area for improvement. The college plans to capture data more effectively where learners have combined or changed courses during a two-year period.
- The GCSE pass rate at grades A*-C is 66%. The GCSE pass rate for evening provision is high, with 81% of students achieving A*-C grades. Achievement on level 2 vocational courses is also high at 95%, with 60% of students achieving higher grades.

Value added in 2005/06

- Learners make significantly better progress than expected compared with their attainment on entry. For example, under the advanced level information system (ALIS) value added shows further improvement over 2004/05 and is significantly high at institutional level. Advanced level performance system (ALPS) data confirms the overall picture places the college in the top 5% of participating colleges for the period 2003 to 2005.
- The large majority of subjects at GCE A level are performing consistently well or in line with expectations over a three-year period. At AS level, 12 subjects are doing consistently very well; in others learners are performing as expected. Vocational courses showing significantly high value-added residuals are the six unit award in leisure and recreation and the 12 unit award in information and communications technology (ICT); others are in line with expectations. Learners have made good progress on the majority of new applied GCE A levels. At AS level, there is some underperformance in drama and theatre studies, music, English language and history. Teachers are taking prompt and appropriate action to bring about rapid improvement.

Quality of education and training

Progress in developing teaching and learning

- The summary self-assessment report (SAR) emphasises the profile of lesson observations. The college has recently reviewed and updated its guidance on the internal observation of lessons. A new training and development team, composed of teachers and managers, disseminates good practice. Course leaders find peer observations helpful in strengthening good practice. The college's detailed analysis of curriculum performance includes learner questionnaires.
- The 2006 operational plan identifies clearly the areas for improvement in teaching and learning and approaches to be taken on specific courses. The plan is closely monitored. Teachers and curriculum managers feel very well supported by senior managers.

Learners' views of the college

- Learners are very positive about college life. They feel treated as equals and enjoy freedom balanced with structure. They are encouraged to aim high. Some learners describe the college as 'everything they wanted it to be'. In assessing students' work, teachers give very detailed feedback and clear guidance on how to improve further. A few learners said they would

like more interaction and dialogue with their teachers in one or two subjects.

Leadership and management

Progress since the last AAV

- The college has made very good progress since the last AAV in maintaining and further improving the already high levels of achievement. High levels of value added have been maintained, to the extent that, under ALIS, value added is significantly positive at college level for the ninth consecutive year.
- Staff and learners work together with mutual respect. Teachers have the interests of learners at heart and are very focussed on maintaining and improving good achievement and standards. The college judges its overall effectiveness to be outstanding. Senior managers show effective leadership skills and clearly identify what actions need to be taken to maintain standards.

Actions taken to improve subject performance

- Managers take prompt and effective action where the need for further subject improvement has been identified. Such actions include changes to the curriculum content, improving teaching and learning, particularly the lesson activities, tailoring the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to the subject, and changes in subject management. There has been some positive impact on performance in 2006.

The self-assessment process and draft 2005/06 SAR

- The draft SAR reflects a very thorough self-assessment process and is a live internal document. The process for curriculum-level self assessment is systematic, thorough and includes the outcomes of internal reviews and robust data analysis. There is scope for greater evaluation in the draft SAR for aspects of overall college judgements where the assessment is brief. For example, in evaluating the college context and in identifying more fully the impact of leadership and management.

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

- The college has implemented the latest DfES guidance for child protection.
- The college campus reflects improvements made to accommodation and resources - clean, airy spaces with a wealth of lively artwork on show. Learners in the student association comment that managers are seeking to make further improvement by creating larger social spaces. There are plans for new accommodation to replace outdated 1960's buildings.