

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Linkage College
Date of visit: 2 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

Achievement in Skills for Life is reported in the self assessment report (SAR) as good, and based on effective baseline assessment and individualised target setting. Is there a clear picture for each student of the progress made during their time at the college?

- There is a clear picture of the progress made by each student at entry level. This is aided by the good use of targets based on the adult core curriculum; these targets are regularly reviewed. There is good achievement of external awards, where these are appropriate to individuals' needs. The college is aware of the need for greater consistency in the quality of pre-entry level initial assessment across its two sites. The college has made a substantial commitment to training staff in the teaching of literacy and numeracy, and the use of this expertise to support all staff.

The college is looking to strengthen its tracking of progress in the development of independence skills. How far has this been developed?

- Learners value the college's emphasis on helping them to be more independent. There has been a review of the curriculum and baseline assessment to ensure a closer match between the two. The six weekly reviews held for each student ensure targets continue to match their needs. Information about the achievement of these targets is entered onto the new college database. Achievement of previous targets is being merged with the new computerised system to give a complete picture of progress. However, at present there is too little routine and rigorous monitoring of the quality of key aspects of this provision to ensure it is of high quality and progress is as good as it could be.

Quality of education and training

The judgement in the SAR regarding the quality of teaching and learning is that it is good. However, the information provided is not sufficiently detailed to demonstrate this, in that only the percentage of 'satisfactory or better' observations is provided. Is there more detailed information? How evaluative are teaching and learning observations? Is there evidence that these lead to improvement in quality?

- There are termly observations of all staff who teach. While there are indications that improvements had been made from previous observations, there is not sufficient evidence to support the overall 2005/06 SAR judgement of good. There is too wide a variation in the grades awarded over time, without sufficient analysis of these differences, and the observation report is not always as helpful and evaluative as it could be. The college is aware of the need to develop its moderation of teaching and learning observations.

The Emotional Intelligence (Quiet Place) initiative is reported to have progressed since the last annual assessment visit, with improvements made by learners following a six week programme. What are the improvements made by the learners?

- The college has some initial evidence to indicate improvements in behaviour following the six weeks emotional intelligence programme. The college is aware that it needs to provide more rigour and focus to this evaluation to have confidence in its value.

Leadership and management

What has been the development of the management information system (MIS) since the last annual assessment visit? Is there now a clear overall picture of progress made by each student? How is the information used?

- Implementation of the computerised database has progressed. It enables progress against targets to be tracked and a picture of progress over time to be seen. This information is not yet being used sufficiently at a departmental or college level to contribute to quality monitoring and improvement, for example, in ensuring that learners' targets are individualised.

How is the college seeking to promote itself to minority ethnic groups? Has there been any success in this?

- Indications are that the college has a successful strategy to promote recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups, with a significant increase expected for next year. This strategy has included attendance at school events in areas of the country where there has previously been low levels of recruitment. It is also exploring recruitment issues with the local Connexions service and with other national specialist colleges in order to further increase its awareness and develop its strategy accordingly.

The college is increasing its information about the representation of staff from minority groups with respect to the local community.

Has the college followed recent DfES guidance regarding a centrally held record of staff information regarding safeguarding checks and qualifications?

- The college reports that difficulties with its central human resources database have required a new system to be developed. It does not yet have a single central database as required by the DfES. This is in the process of completion. The college has a clear policy to ensure that staff do not begin work until appropriate checks are complete.