

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Derby College
Date of visit: 21 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

Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on long courses rose between 2002/03 and 2004/05. Have they continued to improve in 2005/06 and are they above national averages? Have success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on long courses at level 2 improved in 2005/06, compared with 2004/05 and are they above national averages?

- Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on long courses overall and on level 2 courses in particular continued to improve significantly in 2005/06 and are above national averages.

Success rates for adult learners on long courses rose between 2002/03 and 2004/05. Have they continued to improve in 2005/06 and are they above national averages? Have success rates on level 1 provision improved to the national average?

- Success rates for adult learners on long courses overall and on level 1 courses in particular continued to improve significantly in 2005/06 and are above national averages.

Success rates for learners of all ages on short courses rose between 2002/03 and 2004/05. Have they continued to improve in 2005/06 and are they above national averages?

- Success rates for learners on short courses continued to improve significantly in 2005/06 and are above national averages.

What are the key skills success rates by level and by each key skill? Have they all improved in 2005/06, compared with 2004/05?

- Between 2004/05 and 2005/06, key skills success rates have improved by between 10 and 19 per cent. Wider key skills success rates have also improved and some are well above national averages.

Have success rates improved in 2005/06 in the engineering, construction and information and communication technology (ICT) areas?

- Success rates in engineering, construction and ICT improved in 2005/06 compared with 2004/05 and are above national averages. Work-based learning (WBL) framework success rates in ICT improved significantly between 2003/04 and 2005/06, albeit for a small number of learners.

Have the improvements in apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship success rates between 2003/04 and 2004/05 continued in 2005/06? Are they at national averages? Have the overall and timely success rates in work-based learning (WBL) engineering and construction improved in 2005/06?

- Overall apprenticeship success rates improved significantly between 2003/04 and 2005/06 and are above the national averages. Overall framework success rates for engineering and construction have improved significantly between 2003/04 and 2005/06. Timely success rates are very low and below national averages in both areas of learning. However, this is partly due to the college taking over the management of other providers' contracts, which necessitated extensions of learning.

Quality of education and training

What is the college's involvement in 'Train 2 Gain'? How does the college assure the quality of this provision? How successful is the provision of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in the workplace?

- The college has a large 'Train 2 Gain' contract covering regional and national provision and which builds on previous NVQ and employer training pilot (ETP) provision. The college covers a wide range of curriculum areas through dedicated teams. It works with a diverse range of multi-national companies and small and medium sized enterprises. The college manages and monitors the programme well. Quality systems are thorough. Standardisation meetings are regular and managers monitor retention, achievement, attendance and punctuality rigorously. All learners complete an induction and exit questionnaire and the college seeks employers' views. Financial management is effective. The NVQ success rate is well above the

national average for adult learners and just below the national average for learners aged 16 to 18.

How successful has been the first year of provision at the Joseph Wright centre? How high were retention and pass rates in 2005/06? Has enrolment increased in 2006/07?

- The first year of operation has been successful. The overall retention rate is above the college's average. Success rates on GCE A level subjects are above the national averages, except for biology. Success rates on GCE AS subjects are at national averages, but are not as high as the college wishes. Most learners met or exceeded their minimum target grades, except in biology. Enrolment has increased in 2006/07 compared with 2005/06. Managers have raised the entry requirements and the requirements for progression from GCE AS to GCE A level. The college has resolved the early problems associated with settling into a new building and has made the accommodation more learner-centred. The campus has an increasingly distinctive sixth form centre ethos.

Has the proportion of inadequate lesson observation grades decreased in 2005/06? Do lesson outcomes link to appraisal and staff development? How are observations moderated to ensure grading accuracy and consistency? Are key skills lessons and tutorials observed?

- The proportion of inadequate lesson observations has decreased in 2005/06, compared with the proportions at the last inspection and during 2004/05. Lesson observation outcomes do link to appraisal and staff development, through relevant documentation. Two college staff internally moderated a large sample of lessons in 2005/06, but this team is small for a large college. Their observations reduced the proportion of good or better lessons and increased the proportion of inadequate lessons, compared with the college's internal lesson observation profile. The number of paired observations to standardise grading is small but is to be increased in 2006/07. Teachers in some areas know when the lesson observation period will be and can prepare accordingly. The college observes and evaluates the performance of additional learning support staff and communications staff thoroughly. Lesson observations include key skills and tutorials but the college does not analyse these grade outcomes and compare them with the overall observation profile. The college plans to increase the size of the moderation team and to improve its standardisation systems.

What were the main outcomes from learners' surveys in 2005/06? Do the surveys link to the common inspection framework and the 'every child matters' (ECM) agenda? What actions have been taken to resolve learners' concerns from these surveys? How does the college communicate the surveys' outcomes and resultant actions to learners?

- The college takes learners' views very seriously. Managers analyse the main outcomes of induction and exit questionnaires thoroughly and produce a detailed report and comprehensive action plan. The college ensures effective communication of outcomes by informing learner representatives, the student union and the marketing team. Learners value the opportunity to comment anonymously on matters of concern.

Leadership and management

How well are key skills managed? What is the effect of actions taken to improve key skills provision?

- The college has made significant developments in its management of key skills and has made a major investment in skills for life (SFL), key skills and basic skills. The number of staff in these areas has trebled since 2003 and key appointments include a vice principal responsible for the area and a new SFL operations manager. About one third of new front line staff has level 4 qualifications. All staff are graduates and are teacher trained. The college is a developmental centre for level 4 qualifications. The SFL policy and strategy are well established. The college has seen recent significant improvements in overall key skills success and retention rates.

Has the college met the requirements for the verification of staff identity, qualifications and criminal records checks?

- The college is taking reasonable steps to meet these requirements and has set deadlines for the completion of the checks. It is also taking appropriate steps to ensure that contractors and agencies comply with these requirements.

Have all the actions from the post-inspection plan been completed? Does the self-assessment report (SAR) reflect the main common inspection framework aspects and the ECM outcomes? Are all staff

involved in producing the SAR? How effectively are the SAR actions monitored and reviewed? Is the SAR accurate?

- The college has completed all the actions from the post-inspection plan. The new and simplified self-assessment process relates clearly to the common inspection framework and to the ECM aspects. Staff at all levels develop the SAR and managers and external consultants assure its quality and accuracy. The recent SAR monitoring process resulted in fewer, but more significant key strengths and areas for improvement. Support staff have moved from service level agreements to self-assessments of the quality of their provision to internal and external clients. This is relatively new and managers aim to refine the process and improve the accuracy of grading judgements.