

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Middlesbrough College  
Date of visit: 13 March 2007

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 on long courses for learners aged 16 to 18 have improved at all levels over the last three years and are all around the 2005 national averages for similar colleges. What action has been taken during this academic year to maintain these trends?

- The college has carried out a detailed analysis of 2006 success rates and from this has identified strategies which were successful in raising standards during 2005/2006 and highlighted areas for improvement for 2006/2007. Effective action has been taken to continue to raise standards. For example, more rigorous monitoring of levels of learners attendance at lessons has been carried out by senior and other managers. Text messaging is used to follow up learners missing classes and there is more rigorous monitoring and reporting of withdrawals and transfers from courses. On GCE advanced subsidiary and advanced level courses arrangements are being put in place to improve communications and share good practice between subjects. Levels of attendance improved and retention has increased by 8%.
- Five new heads of department have been appointed. They have been provided with training and support to develop strategies to raise standards on underperforming courses. Staff development designed to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to help develop the skills of managers has continued this year.

Success rates for learners aged 19+ on long courses improved at levels 1 and 2 but at level 3 they fell by 8% to significantly below the 2005 national average for similar colleges. What action has been taken to address this issue?

- To continue to raise standards on level 1 courses for learners aged 19+ the college has reviewed the curriculum and has taken the decision to cease working with an external agency for the delivery of IT training and to offer alternative courses within the college.

- A comprehensive review of level three programmes has been carried out and a range of actions have been put in place to improve success rates. For example, the teaching and health science strands of the access to higher education course are being delivered in one year instead of two with additional support for the learners provided using blended learning. Retention on these courses has improved significantly. In order to improve retention and achievement on BTEC national diploma courses, national awards and other qualifications are being introduced to provide appropriate certification at the end of the first year.
- Termly assessment boards are now rigorously monitoring levels of retention and achievement at course and individual learner level. Additional learning support and more rigorous tutorial review is provided for those learners identified to be at risk of underperforming.
- Retention of learners aged 19+ has improved by 6%.

How is the college using value-added data to inform quality improvement strategies?

- The college has taken effective action to increase the use of value added data to raise standards. The local authority has agreed to share electronic information with the college on the GCSE qualifications of learners who enrol at college. Training has been provided for teachers on the use of the Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT) to set targets for learners based upon their prior qualifications. Good quality guidance and exemplar materials have been developed to help teachers and learners understand how target setting can help to raise standards. Plans are in place to use the college virtual learning environment to record learners' targets and monitor their progress. The college recognises that more work needs to be done to ensure that the use of value added data and target setting is consistent across the college.

What further measures have been identified to maintain improvements in the success rates on work-based learning (WBL) programmes?

- Good measures have been taken to continue to improve success rates. The college now hold monthly departmental meetings to review learner's progress on WBL programmes. Managers make effective use of data to review learners' progress and identify those at risk of not completing their programme. Additional key skills workshops and revision sessions prior to external test dates are provided for learners who need them. A new guide for employers has been developed to ensure that they understand their role in helping learners to achieve.

- Arrangements to ensure that learners are enrolled on the correct programme have been tightened. Increased use of Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) tests to measure aptitude and ability are used in construction.

## Quality of education and training

What action is the college taking to ensure that the curriculum offer is responsive to the needs of employers and the local community?

- The college has taken an appropriate range of actions to provide provision to meet the needs of employers. An employer engagement officer has been recruited to lead a new department focussed on providing solutions for local business in areas such as transport and logistics, manufacturing, customer service and management. Distance learning provision is provided for employees in the care sector. The college is involved in three centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs) and has an LSC Train to Gain contract. A range of evening courses are delivered to meet the needs of the local community.
- The college works collaboratively with local schools and other agencies such as Connexions to provide courses for learners aged 14 to 19. Well-planned provision designed to meet the needs of learners aged 16 to 18 not in education training or employment (NEET) has been offered this year and successful programmes are offered for around 700 pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools. The number of full-time learners aged 16 to 18 enrolled this year has increased by 100.

## Leadership and management

What arrangements does the college have to ensure that judgements made and grades awarded through the self-assessment process are moderated?

- The college is a member of two well-established peer referencing groups. One is made up of colleges from across the North East; the other FE+ has representation from the Tees Valley colleges. These groups provide the colleges with support to externally validate self-assessment judgements and to share good practice. For example, the colleges have agreed common quality performance indicators and have shared the development of a programme leading to a qualification for observers.
- The college has robust systems for moderating the outcomes from self-assessment which involve staff at all levels of the college. Reports are moderated internally before presentation to a panel made up of senior

managers, governors and external members. However, the college agreed with inspectors that the grade 2 (good) awarded to achievement and standards was not supported by sufficient evidence.

How does the college ensure that areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report are addressed?

- Targets and actions to address areas for improvement are set out in course reviews. These feed into quality improvement and annual operating plans at department and whole college level. Monitoring of progress is carried out regularly through course team and management meetings. Underperforming courses are identified and appropriate action taken. However, the monitoring of some key performance indicators is inconsistent across curriculum areas.
- A new system for annual appraisal of all staff has been introduced this year. Outcomes from the observation of teaching feed into this process.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- None

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

- The college is in the process of implementing a £68 million campus development on a new site in Middlesbrough. The new build is planned to be ready for handover to the college in early June 2008 following a period of decommissioning and moving of major equipment which will begin in March 2008.