

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Halesowen College
Date of visit: 1 February 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

What does the college data for 2005/06 indicate about current performance?

- Achievements for learners aged 16-18 at level 1 are outstanding. The overall success rate for these learners on long courses was very high in 2005/06. The success rates for learner aged 16-18 on level 3, AS and A/A2 level courses was high. Both were significantly above the national average and all other success rates in 2005/06 for learners aged 16-18 were above the national average. Long course success rates for learners aged 16-18 have all increased between 2003/4 and 2005/06. The increase was significant for learners at level 3 on non AS and A/A2 courses. Key skills success rates declined between 2003/04 and 2004/05. However, although not high key skills success rates in 2005/06 returned to well above the national average.
- Achievements for adult learners at level 1 are outstanding. The success rate at level 1 for long courses in 2005/06 was extremely high. At level 3 the success rate for long courses in 2005/06 was also high. All long course adult success rates were above the national average particularly at level 1. Long course success rates for adults between 2003/04 and 2005/06 have all increased. The increase was substantial for learners at level 1.
- High grades have all increased between 2003/04 and 2005/06 and for provision other than AS and A/A2 courses were well above the national average in 2005/06. However, although the college has taken action to improve high grades for AS and A/A2 courses they remain below the national average in 2005/06.
- Learners' attendance is very good. Attendance rates for all groups of learners with the exception of those on access courses were very high.

- Advanced apprentice success rates increased between 2004/05 and 2005/06 to be well above the national average with a high proportion achieving the national vocational qualification (NVQ). However, success rates for apprentices declined markedly between 2004/05 and 2005/06 to substantially below the national average, with just over a third achieving the framework. The action taken by the college has been to discontinue childcare programmes which were the primary cause for the decline. Success rates for apprentices achieving the NVQ were better but were just below the national average. Framework success rates in 2005/06 were particularly high for administration and accounting and finance.

Quality of education and training

How effective is 14-16 provision and 14-19 collaboration?

- Collaborative arrangements with schools continue to be a key strength of the college. The Increased Flexibility Project (IFP) has been running since September 2002 and is a very successful partnership with local schools. Outcomes for young people aged 14-16 are very good. The success rate in 2005/06 was high with outstanding retention and high levels of attendance being maintained. Progression from the IFP to college courses is also good. The range of provision meets the needs of a wide range of learners. Courses are provided at entry level, level 1 and 2 and a limited number of level 3 courses catering for gifted and talented learners. The self-assessment report for the area is self-critical and recognises the most of the key areas for improvement. However, no mention is made of the low pass rate on the BTEC first certificate in animal care in the curriculum self-assessment report or the development plan. The strengths of the IFP project are reflected in the excellent relationships and liaison with local schools.
- The college is developing innovative 14-19 collaborative arrangements. It is working closely with three local schools to become a Pathfinder Trust for September 2007. The establishment of the trust would formalise the well established collaboration that has taken place very effectively in Halesowen over the last 5 years. The college is well placed to deliver the new specialised diplomas and is the designated college in Dudley to deliver the International Baccalaureate from September 2008. The college is working closely with the other three colleges in Dudley to look at the curriculum offer in order to develop and review provision and in identified curriculum areas.

Progress made on teaching and learning and additional learning support since the last AAV.

- The college has continued to develop the rigour of teaching and learning. There is a clear trend of improvement since 2004/05. The number of lessons graded as good or better for teaching have increased since the last inspection. There is good analysis of the impact of the 'no notice' drop-in lesson observations with further developments planned. Staff development to improve teaching and learning remains a priority of the college. The e-strategy has been developed and priorities agreed. The use of Moodle, a virtual learning resource, is being developed within the curriculum.
- Additional support arrangements are effective. The college has clear procedures to identify learners that need support with literacy, language and numeracy. Learners identified as needing support receive help promptly. The college uses a range of effective methods to provide help including individual and group sessions and specific support in lessons. Most learners identified as requiring support take up the support the college offers. The success rates of those learners receiving support are similar to those not requiring help.

Leadership and management

How rigorous and accurate is the 2005/06 self-assessment report?

- The self-assessment report gives a rigorous evaluation of the college's position on major areas of the college's work. It is self-critical and acknowledges the improving trend in performance and areas of decline such as the subject sector area of science and mathematics. This area has declined from good to satisfactory. The college judgement is based on low pass rates and low retention on a few courses and a weak teaching profile. The college clearly knows what it needs to do to improve. There is evidence to support the Every Child Matters outcomes and these are also reviewed in curriculum self-assessment reports.

How is good practice shared in the college to improve performance?

- Arrangements for sharing good practice are good. The college, through lesson observations and staff appraisal, identifies teachers who have high

standards of teaching skills. The college uses these teachers to provide staff development for all staff and particularly for those who require additional support through workshops, presentation, mentoring and individual help. These arrangements are successful and ensure learners receive high standards of teaching and learning and that learners' success rates overall are improving and are high.

