

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Worcester Sixth Form College
Date of visit: 18 June 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

How well did students achieve in 2005/06 and in the current academic year?

- Students aged 16 to 18 years old produced high levels of achievement at level 2 and 3 in 2005/06, as has been the case consistently for the last three years. Retention rates were sustained or improved at all levels and were at or above the national rate. However, at level 1 where a much smaller number of students study, the success rate, whilst improved from a low point in 2004/05, remained below average. Success rates for adults were below average at level one and three, but above at level two. Below average retention rates were a significant factor and these rates had all declined since 2004/05. Attainment of high grades was much higher than the national rate at all levels and for all ages.
- National measures of added value for 2005/06 were significantly positive although slightly lower than the previous year. The college has analysed this dip carefully and is making good use of its findings to ensure improved added value in the current year.
- Retention rates in the current academic year are much improved for adult students, especially at level one where the majority of students study. Retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 years old are sustained at level three and much improved at level one.
- Attendance has improved at 88%. The college has worked hard to reinforce the importance of full attendance and is formalising its approach to challenging poor attendance still further. Attendance at tutorials has improved, but is still lower than average at key skills lessons.
- Achievement of key skills qualifications at level three in both application of number and communications in 2005/06 was considerably higher than the national rate. However, the achievement of key skills in information technology at level two was lower than average because too few students completed their portfolios.

What are the outcomes of the college's work to promote the 'Every Child matters' (ECM) theme of 'enjoying and achieving' to students during their time at college?

- Levels of achievement and enjoyment are high in the college. A considerable number of activities, across a wide range of different interests, are made available to students, with high levels of participation. Students can suggest additional activities at the start of term during induction. Surveys are used well to gauge students' response to these activities and to gain feedback on levels of satisfaction and enjoyment.

Quality of education and training

What improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and learning?

- The college has self assessed the quality of teaching and learning as outstanding based on a comprehensive range of evidence. Analysis of the results of lesson observations is detailed and areas for improvement clearly identified. A teaching and learning group ensures that where aspects of learning are identified that require research or development work, appropriate work is undertaken and disseminated. It is fulfilling a valuable role in promoting good practice and encouraging a creative approach to developing the teachers' role. A new scheme to pair teachers with mentors and develop an individually tailored development plan has made a promising start. Staff development activities are comprehensive and meet training needs.

Leadership and management

What progress that has been made in improving quality assurance, including the self-assessment process, since the last inspection?

- Self assessment makes good use of quantitative data to support judgements and managers at all levels show considerable skill in analysis and evaluation. However, too little evaluation is made of performance in key skills qualifications in self assessment. Work to ensure clear identification of strengths and areas for improvement has proved successful in ensuring sharply focused evaluations of the college's provision. Judgements include reference to ECM themes where appropriate, especially theme three, however evaluation of students response overall to the specific aspects of each theme is more limited.

The college does not formally evaluate its overall effectiveness or its capacity to improve.

- Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:
- The college is very proactive in developing its curriculum in line with national developments and in response to the needs of stakeholders. It has been active in developing bids within a local consortium to run the specialised diplomas including taking a lead in the Society, Health and Development bid. It has prepared itself well for the new GCE A Level specifications.
- The college has further improved its support for students by developing tailored career advice and development programmes for six major career options including the medical and legal professions. These have been well received by students. It also continues to support a number of students with complex disorders such as Asperger's syndrome or Tourette syndrome very effectively.
- The central register of all staff containing a record of safeguarding checks is complete.