

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Peterborough Regional College
Date of visit: 10 January 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit (AAV). 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

- Overall success rates improved by 2% in 2005/06 and are satisfactory. The college has put in place a broad and well-considered range of actions to remedy the low achievements by students aged 16 to 18 years on level 3 courses and by adult students on level 1 courses which were noted at the last AAV. Although success rates improved slightly for each of these groups they remain low. It is too early to assess the full impact of the improvement measures which the college has taken. There are significant variations in the achievement of students between different departments and levels of course. Success rates on courses in preparation for life and work are very low indeed. The college is well aware of the further actions that are needed and expects to produce much improved success rates in this area next year. Attendance has improved to 85%. Retention rates are mostly good. Students' poor punctuality is an emerging issue, particularly in key skills and skills for life classes.
- Most framework success rates on work-based learning programmes have significantly exceeded national rates during the past three years. Overall success rates rose from 48% to 64% and timely success rates from 44% to 57%. Apprentice retention rates in 2005/06 were good, at 87%. Although success rates on a few work-based learning programmes declined last year, the reasons for the drop in performance were identified quickly and effective remedial action taken, such as providing learners with additional key skills or basic skills support.

Quality of education and training

Teaching and learning

- The college's internal lesson observation data for the current year records a higher percentage of outstanding and good teaching and learning grades than previously. Areas for improvement are clearly identified and

an appropriate range of staff development activities have been provided in areas such as the use of differentiated teaching styles, assessment planning and managing challenging behaviour. Lesson observation data indicate that part-time, and in particular hourly paid lecturers consistently receive lower grades than their full-time teaching colleagues. This is notably the case in the teaching of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), where a very high proportion of teachers are hourly paid.

Guidance and support

- The initial assessment of new learners is thorough. However, prior information from schools on learners who are beginning level 2 courses is sometimes not sufficiently comprehensive, for example in respect of potential or actual behavioural or personal issues, to enable tutors to effectively identify and plan for students' individual management, development and support. Learners aged 14 to 19 are able to use the services of a Connexions adviser at the college site but there are no onsite careers guidance services available to full- and part-time adult learners.

Every Child Matters themes

- The college has enthusiastically embraced the principles of Every Child Matters. Students enjoy their time at the college, feel safe whilst on the premises and feel that the teachers do everything they can to make their time at the college happy and successful. The college has conducted a comprehensive audit of its provision against each of the five themes. Information has been drawn from curriculum areas, cross-college self assessment, student focus groups and student questionnaires. The college is currently reviewing its tutorial provision to ensure that there are no gaps in its coverage. The identification of themes within the curriculum is good. The college fully meets all of its statutory requirements in regard to child protection.

Leadership and management

Widening participation

- The college has an excellent record of widening participation and has taken appropriate steps to modify its course offer to suit its changing student profile. This includes some exciting initiatives in the community to provide vocational skills for students of ethnic minority heritage and skills for life courses in the workplace. The college has a successful record of working with schools to provide courses for younger students and is taking a leading role in the development of the new specialised diploma courses. Plans for the diplomas build on the strengths of existing

collaboration and are both well considered and achievable. The college has put in place a range of initiatives to align itself with local employer and business development needs through collaboration, high-level involvement in employer partnership programmes and the provision of targeted training and staff development courses delivered on and off-site. Employers demonstrate a good understanding and appreciation of apprenticeship programmes, and provide good support to their apprentices.

