

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Leyton Sixth Form College
Date of visit: 20 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

What do the college 2006 data show about success, achievement, and retention rates in 2006?

- College data for 2005/06 show an improvement in the overall success rate from 2004/05, due largely to an improvement in retention rates. The headline success rate for all courses was 81%, eight percentage points above the national average for similar colleges. However, success rates still vary significantly between curriculum areas, and between subjects, with excellent success rates on some courses, and poor success rates on others. In 2006 the overall success rate for the GCE advanced subsidiary (AS) level programme improved significantly although that for the advanced level declined. The proportion of students gaining high grades at advanced level is still low. Success rates for long courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 remain above the national rates and have risen at levels 2 and 3 although those at level 1 declined in 2005/06.
- Value-added data show that advanced level GCE students make satisfactory progress in comparison with their prior attainment at GCSE. This hides some significant variations between subjects and has declined since 2004/05. For those students following vocational courses progress is consistently and significantly good on BTEC programmes, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT). Progress is satisfactory on the vocational A level programmes. Although significantly good progress is made in visual arts and media, it is consistently poor in health and social care and has declined in business.

Have the progress of students on advanced subsidiary (AS) level courses and the progression rates from AS to A Level courses improved?

- At AS level students make significantly good progress. The success rate improved in 2005/06 due mainly to an improvement in retention. College data show that the rate of achievement also improved. The college has

developed robust systems to quickly identify and support students at risk of leaving early. Value-added data indicate that students make significantly good progress at AS level, particularly in science and mathematics, social sciences, languages. The college no longer systematically enters all students for general studies. There is a greater focus on identifying individual students' needs with further study skills being offered where required. High achieving students are offered an additional AS level course in critical thinking. The proportion of students who progress from AS to A level studies has improved since the last inspection.

What actions have been taken to improve retention and punctuality in areas where these have been identified as problems?

- Good progress has been made in improving retention rates. The college has improved the quality of the management information provided to staff. Managers and teachers have now been trained in the interpretation and use of the data. More rigorous attention is applied by managers to monitoring attendance and retention rates and stronger emphasis is given to supporting students to complete their courses. Retention rates improved across the college in 2005/06 and the college reports a further improvement in 2006/07 compared with the same time last year.
- There is still some poor punctuality to lessons. The college intends to introduce a bell system for the beginning and end of lessons. The improved availability of management information has the potential of enabling tutors to deal with individual punctuality concerns more quickly. However, senior management does not yet systematically analyse punctuality data across the college.

Quality of education and training

How is the college seeking to improve the quality of teaching and learning in 2006/07? Does this include the sharing of good practice? How are observations moderated to ensure grading accuracy and consistency? What evidence is available about the impact of these actions?

- The improvement of the quality of teaching and learning was identified in the college's self-assessment report as a key objective for 2006/07. The college has strengthened its lesson observation procedure with every observation being moderated by the senior management team (SMT) before the teacher is informed of the grade. Observers received training on effective observations in the summer. Sharing of good practice is now a standing item at course team meetings and a mandatory cross-college

peer review scheme has been introduced. However, because teachers can choose which two lessons they observe this system does not ensure that they will see good practice. The impact of the new procedures on the quality of teaching and learning has not yet been analysed for 2006/07.

What improvements have been made in identifying and responding to learning support needs? How is its effectiveness evaluated?

- The college has very recently introduced a more standardised process for initial diagnosis of learning support needs. Prior to that, assessments concentrated on literacy needs and few students were assessed for numeracy ability. The results of the assessments are disseminated to relevant staff including teachers, tutors and the learning support department. Learning support is provided in the classroom and in the separate learning support area. Students speak very highly of the support they receive and say that there has been an improvement compared with the previous year. A drop in centre for study skills support has also been established. However, the college does not yet systematically analyse the impact of learning support. Tutors regularly check on student progress using improved individual learning plans (ILP). Whereas some ILPs contain aspirational targets that are regularly updated, others contain targets that are not always based on academic progress.

How have tutorials been improved?

- Students attend one to one tutorials with their tutors twice a term in which their ILPs are used as the basis for the discussions on progress. Group tutorials also take place for more general issues. The college has a timetable for these meetings to ensure full coverage of the 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) themes throughout the year. Since September regular 'student briefings' have been issued to provide the background for the ECM outcomes. Students also respond to college questionnaires on national issues, for example, on the banning of smoking. The quality of tutorials is regularly checked and assessed for student participation and there is staff development for new tutors.

Leadership and management

What developments have been made to the quality assurance procedures to ensure impact of quality improvement at all levels? How are performance targets used in self-evaluation, and how is the college measuring their impact?

- The corporation has tasked the principal to develop a management structure that provides more focus on, for example, quality improvement

of the college. The quality review process and use of management information have been improved since the last inspection. They have the potential to ensure that managers are better informed about areas for improvement in their departments. Performance targets are set at course level which need to be agreed by the SMT. The college measures the impact of improvements through course reviews and through the achievement of performance indicators. These then form the foundation of the departmental self-assessments. The college also uses consultants to carry out in-depth reviews across curriculum and support areas.

How is the lesson observation scheme linked to the staff appraisal and the college's self-evaluation?

- The grades from lesson observations form part of the evidence in the teacher's appraisal. However, a formal action plan, that can be used to check progress against targets, is not produced from lesson observations unless the lesson is graded unsatisfactory. Mandatory staff development on teaching and learning has recently been introduced for those staff whose lessons are graded satisfactory or below. The grades also feed into the course reviews, but the college is not yet sufficiently evaluative in reviewing their impact.

How complete is the implementation of the health and safety action plan? What, if any are the barriers to completion?

- At the time of the last inspection the college had just developed a health and safety action plan. Approximately half of the plan has been completed over the past twelve months. Although the college is carrying out its statutory requirements with regard to health and safety, monitoring of the processes does not yet take place. Risk assessments have been carried out on all rooms, including workshops and laboratories, as well as on student work placements and educational trips. Relevant personnel have been trained, for example, to a qualification awarded by the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH), as fire wardens or in first aid. However, there is not yet a systematic programme for refresher training in, for example, the control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH). There are plans to recruit a dedicated health and safety officer by the end of the academic year. Staff are now made aware of their health and safety responsibilities during their induction irrespective of when they start. Staff and students are kept informed of health and safety issues through regular bulletins and briefings. However, the college is very aware of the need to develop a culture in which all staff fully accept their responsibilities for health and safety across the college.

What progress has been made in providing adequate accommodation for performing arts, one to one tutorials and additional learning support?

- The college is short of good accommodation. An application for a £30million capital project is being prepared with support from the Learning & Skills Council. A mobile classroom has been refurbished to provide additional rehearsal space for the performing arts department. A small room has been set up in the learning support centre for one to one tutorials and a drop in centre for learning support has been created in the learning resources area.