

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: The College of Richard Collyer  
Date of visit: 6 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

How well did students achieve in 2005/06?

- Success rates remained very high in 2005/06, particularly in the college's core business, advanced level courses for students aged 16 to 18. Success rates are consistently well above the national average for sixth form colleges. The proportion of students achieving high grades (A or B) on advanced level courses rose in 2006. The college recognises that there is scope for further improvement in success rates on level 2 courses for this age group. Achievements for the relatively small number of adults taking long courses are satisfactory.
- Value-added data for 2005/06 show that the majority of students make good progress, and achieve results that are either in line with or better than those predicted by their prior attainment at GCSE. College managers are acutely aware that there are a small number of courses where this is not the case.

How effectively are data used to monitor and improve students' progress?

- Students' progress is carefully tracked. Frequent reviews enable staff and students to see how well students are performing against their minimum target grade, based on their performance at GCSE, and their level of attendance and effort. Evidence shows that the reviews are particularly effective in identifying and remedying poor attendance or effort. However, the extent to which the reviews, and the dialogues between staff and students resulting from them, are effective in identifying and improving under-achievement is more inconsistent. Students report different experiences between subjects, teachers and personal tutors in the rigour with which under-performance is identified and addressed through one-to-one interviews.
- A pilot electronic tracking scheme to give more details on students' progress, including comments on both their work in general and on

specific pieces of work, has the potential to improve further the rigour with which students' progress is tracked. The college may wish to consider giving students more ownership of the system, for example, by enabling them to enter action points in response to teachers' comments.

What steps are being taken to improve students' performance in the small number of weaker courses?

- Under-performing courses have been clearly identified by the college. Appropriate steps are being taken to remedy weaknesses, particularly by improving teaching and learning. Internal quality reviews, recently introduced by the college, have the potential to be used to focus even more sharply on the precise causes of the few pockets of under-performance.

## Quality of education and training

How effectively is the lesson observation scheme, and staff development, being used to improve further the quality of teaching and learning?

- Since the last visit, good progress has been made in improving arrangements for analysing the quality of teaching and learning and seeking improvements. A good mixture of formal lesson observations and peer observations is being used to generate a dialogue about teaching and learning. Internal quality reviews are giving a more detailed assessment of quality in specific areas. Senior managers recognise that a more detailed analysis of teaching and learning needs to be articulated in the self-assessment report and in curriculum area reviews.

What progress is being made in developing and implementing a coherent 14-19 strategy in partnership with other providers?

- The college is appropriately involved in local 14-19 developments. Links with the college's partner schools and with the nearest general further education (GFE) college are good. The college has made good use of both its beacon status and its partnership in a centre for vocational excellence to develop collaborative working. The college is lead partner in a bid to develop a specialised diploma in information technology, and is working with the local GFE college to offer the diploma in society, health and development.

## Leadership and management

What developments have there been since the last annual assessment visit, particularly in respect of the feedback from that visit?

- The college has responded positively to the comments made following the last visit. The lesson observation scheme is more rigorous, and is giving a more realistic profile of the quality of teaching and learning in the college. Value-added data show that performance at AS level has improved. Plans to re-organise some aspects of the management of the college have the potential to create a structure that is even more effective in building upon strengths and tackling weaknesses. The college has responded very well to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Senior managers recognise that whilst students receive excellent pastoral support, the effectiveness of current tutorial arrangements in promoting academic excellence by raising aspirations is not proven.

How effectively are data used at all levels of the college to raise standards?

- The college has very good management information systems that provide a wide range of data that can be used to analyse and improve performance. Whilst much of this data are used effectively by managers, it is not clear that the use of data to improve performance is systematic and rigorous across all areas of the college. For example, in the college's quality improvement plan data are not always used effectively to set precise targets for improvement. Current changes in the college provide an opportunity to identify more precisely the key performance indicators that should be used to analyse performance, the frequency of such analysis, and the responsibilities for taking action arising from data scrutiny.

What evidence underpins the college's judgement in the self-assessment report (SAR) that its capacity to improve is good?

- On the limited evidence of this visit, there is no reason to doubt the capacity to improve judgement in the SAR. However, the judgement in the SAR is made without appropriate evidence to support it. Senior managers recognise that such evidence needs to refer to the impact of actions taken to improve the quality of provision at the college.