

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College
Date of visit: 23 January 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

Have success rates for learners aged 16 – 18 on level 1 courses improved in 2005/06? Have issues surrounding the achievement of learners on the college's Certificate in Business Language Competence (CLBC) been resolved?

- The success rates on level 1 programmes have improved by 3 percentage points to 81%. The college has taken measures to improve the success rate of its CLBC course to ensure that learners are enrolled for the full qualification and are effectively supported to achieve. The success rate on this programme in 2005/06 was 71% a significant improvement on the previous year.

Have success rates for 19+ learners improved?

- All success rates for 19+ learners have improved. The success rate for level 1 programme, which in 2004/5 had no recorded passes, has increased to 18%. The level 2 success rate is now 100% whilst level 3 is 92%. Student numbers on levels 1, 2 and 3 were 11, 3 and seventy-three respectively. Student numbers on the college's LSC funded adult provision have continued to fall. The college is replacing this provision with full-cost recovery programmes.

Is the accreditation of the Diaconate qualification continuing to impact on success rates for adult learners?

- The college's improvement in its success rates for adults on level 3 programmes is in part due to the review of its recording of learners' achievements on its Diaconate programme. Learners' achievements are now recognised and reported in the first two years of the course as well as in the final year.

What are the value added results for 2005/06?

- Overall value added ALIS data for 2006 demonstrate that learners' performance on level 3 programmes was significantly above expectations based on prior achievement at GCSE. This represents an improving trend.

Quality of education and training

Is the college's lesson observation effective and has it been fully implemented across all curriculum areas?

- The college continues to take a two-fold approach to lesson observations. Some lesson observation focus on teachers who require support either as a new teacher or within an area of the college where success rates are not as high as other curriculum areas. In addition to this targeted approach, all teachers are observed as part of the college's two-year observation cycle. Peer observations are also used by many departments as a mechanism for disseminating good practice. Curriculum managers undertake observations within their areas. Results of observations are used to identify staff development needs as part of the college's staff appraisal process. However, the college does not have a formal system of moderating observation grades. Some recorded observation results did not focus on learners' outcomes.

What work experience opportunities exist for learners on vocational programmes?

- All curriculum areas delivering vocational programmes have either developed work placement opportunities or suitable enrichment programmes. The college has employed a work placement officer to secure suitable opportunities for learners enrolled on level one programmes in business and travel and tourism. In the areas of childcare and education, sport and media learners enrolled on level two and three programmes are offered work placement opportunities. Other curriculum areas provide an extensive programme of visits or guest speakers. In some curriculum areas, opportunities for work experience are under-developed. The college is aware of this and is putting strategies in place to address this shortfall.

What has been the impact of improvements made to the college's use of individual learning plans?

- College improvements to the individual learning plans (ILPs) have resulted in all curriculum areas now using standard documentation and undertaking reviews on pre-defined dates. Most individual learning plans

sampled contained smart targets and learners' minimum and target grades were clearly defined. Learners are given an opportunity to assess their performance and to identify their own targets. Learners stated that they knew what targets they were working towards and what was needed to improve. As part of the college's quality assurance process, curriculum managers review ILPs. Target setting is well developed on level 3 programmes.

How effective is the college's tutorial system?

- Learners reported that tutors work well in tutorials to support their progress and also to prepare them for their next step. Learners can request additional one to one tutorials if they feel further tutor support is needed. Tutors also use tutorial sessions to support learners identified as being at risk of failing their programme. The college has developed detailed tutorial plans and many tutorial topics are supported with tutor resources. Curriculum managers observe tutorials as part of the quality assurance process.

Leadership and management

Is the college intending to reduce further the adult provision which is currently funded by the LSC?

- The college continues to expand its full-cost recovery programme which the college is clear meets the needs of its local market. There has been a two-third's reduction in the last two years in Learning and Skills Council funded programmes. The Diaconate and 16 – 19 religious education programmes are still funded by the LSC and provide an effective and specific curriculum that is required by the college's adult and young learners which is supported by the local Diocese. The college may have to review this provision in light of the LSC's position in respect of non-priority funding.

How are managers in Chemistry and Geography improving AS success rates?

- The pass rate of AS Chemistry in 2005/06 was 72% which was down on the previous year by 18 percentage points. Analysis by the college has indicated that learners' performance may have been affected by fewer learners taking mathematics. The area is supporting learners by providing twice as many workshops and support sessions as well as an opportunity to attend AS classes. Managers have recognised that the low success rates of last year will have a negative impact on the success rate of

Advanced level Chemistry in 2006/07. The college continues to monitor this provision's progress.

- A 100% pass rate was achieved in advanced level geography at grades A-E. The AS pass rate of 52% is a decline of 22 percentage points on the previous year's performance. The area has implemented a more detailed system of tracking learners' progress. Weekly learners' progress meetings are held. Appropriate support is then arranged. Learners are also given opportunities to attend workshops.
- For both chemistry and geography, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of these measures.

Has learners' punctuality improved in 2005/06

- Learners' punctuality did not improve in 2005/6. The college has improved its reporting system which now enables tutors to have weekly tutee information on punctuality and attendance. The frequency of overall punctuality reporting has increased and is fortnightly. Tutors address issues of attendance and lack of punctuality in tutorials. Letters are sent to the homes of learners who are continually late. Learners are aware of the punctuality and attendance measures the college has put in place. The rate of attendance in the first term of 2006/07 was 95.2% an improvement on 2005/06 attendance at the same period, which was 93.6%. Managers at all levels continue to monitor progress of these initiatives. It is too early to judge the full impact of these new initiatives.

