

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: RNCB Hereford
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

Do standards and achievement continue to be good? How well is the college measuring learner progress?

- Standards are good across all age groups. Where learners take national qualifications, they achieve above or at the national rate. In 2006, there were good results in GNVQ intermediate art and in NVQs in business and customer service. The GCE A level pass rate was 90% and GCSE results were in line with the national average.
- The college is also very effective in helping students to develop their independence skills.
- Systems to track the progress students make against their previous attainment are not fully developed. The college has introduced an electronic system to ensure progress against starting points is more systematically evaluated. It is leading a group within the West Midlands seeking to develop and implement student tracking systems within provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

What is the college doing to help learners achieve economic well-being?

- The college has put in place a strategy to improve employability outcomes. The new strategy was implemented in September 2006. Learners are encouraged to research likely jobs in their home area before starting at college. Future employment is fully explored at the initial assessment stage and learners complete an employability skills assessment. Curriculum areas have mapped jobs and salaries for each level of the NVQ programmes and have matched the curriculum to job requirements. Students have targets related to jobsearch, where appropriate. The college has started a jobclub where learners can get

help and advice on a range of issues relating to employment. It is too early to fully evaluate the impact of this strategy.

Quality of education and training

Does the provision for additional support continue to be outstanding? How well are learning resources adapted to meet needs?

- The provision for additional support is very good. The college provides a wide range of specialist support for students. It makes good use of technology to support individual needs in the classroom. Learners speak highly of their experience in the college and the level of support they receive to help them succeed. The college is planning to increase its staffing expertise in autism to cope with the changing needs of its student population.

How successful is work to embed literacy and numeracy in learners' programmes? To what extent do learners benefit from work placements?

- The college has an effective strategy to ensure literacy, numeracy and other key skills are embedded into learners' programmes. All new staff are given training on this aspect of their work and teaching observations monitor whether lessons successfully incorporate these skills. A cross-college group brings together staff from all teams to identify issues and take appropriate action. There is good awareness of the need for ongoing training to ensure best practice is spread across the college.
- Arrangements for work placement are good for those who access places. In 2006, 44% of students benefited from a placement. Learners report that the placements are directly relevant to their courses. Adult learners all have an employment plan, from which their training plan is derived. Younger students are assessed to determine their readiness for external work placement. The college is currently extending its internal placement scheme, whereby students can gain work experience by job shadowing within the college.

Leadership and management

Do quality assurance arrangements continue to be robust? What training have staff and governors received in the last year?

- Quality assurance arrangements are good. There are clear monitoring arrangements for all aspects of the college work. There is an appropriate focus on the quality of teaching and learning and the new principal has prioritised the need for a greater proportion of lesson observations to take place. The college has excellent partnership arrangements with a wide range of local, regional, national and international organisations, which help it to measure its own performance against other providers. Communication is good and there are effective links between education and residential staff. Learner feedback is gathered in several ways, but some adult learners would like more direct access to senior managers.
- Training for staff and governors is good. All staff and governors are kept up to date with legislative requirements relating to disability, health and safety and safeguarding. In addition, staff development is in place to take forward college priorities in its development plan. There is strong leadership to ensure the college responds to changing local and national priorities.

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

- The college has made good progress since its last inspection in improving its accommodation and addressing accessibility issues
- The college is involved in a wide range of projects, including European projects. These are well focussed on the needs of learners. Research work for some of the projects is carried out by learners, thus giving them experience of work as part of a multi-national co-operative.