

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: LOWESTOFT COLLEGE
Date of visit: 2 July 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.

The college's post-inspection action plan is a comprehensive document which fully addresses the areas for development identified at the recent inspection. It contains appropriate targets and milestones and provides an effective framework for future improvements.

Achievement and standards

The low success rates on adult courses at level 1

- In 2005/06 the college's success rate for these courses was 46%, compared with its target of 50%. It has withdrawn its franchise position, which was depressing the overall rate, and has reflected this in the much higher target for 2006/07 of 67%, which is above the current national average. Data which are already available for the current year indicate that the success rates have improved significantly. Retention has improved overall and success rates for ESOL courses have increased by an impressive 22% at entry level and 34% at level 1.
- There is early evidence of success in other important areas of work. For example the retention of learners aged 14-16 has increased by 10% to 89% and progression between years to 92%. The college is confident that these rates will be reflected in improved success rates. Full framework achievements for work-based learners have also improved significantly to 72%, well above the national average.
- The college attributes much of this success to the improved operation of the assessment boards this year. The more detailed analysis of

achievement data has enabled the college to make robust plans for courses which do not make sufficient improvement.

Quality of education and training

The college's plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning

- The college's plans are well-considered. It has fully embraced the issues of differentiation, meeting the needs of all learners and adding variety to the learning activities which learners of all ages experience. Lesson observations conducted since the inspection demonstrate an improving trend. The lesson observation process itself has been improved by revising the information which will be collected during observations and reducing the number of observers to a core team of well-trained and highly competent managers.
- The college has made good progress with the introduction of its VLE and has clear plans to develop the use of information learning technology (ILT) in lessons more widely. This has been assisted by the recent opening of a new classroom block which is well-equipped to provide teachers with more opportunities to use ILT. The college's commitment to this work is reflected in the increased staff development budget allocated for this year.

The implementation of the college's 'Skills for life' strategy

- The college gives a high priority to improving its support for literacy, numeracy and language skills and reflects this in its post-inspection action plan. There has already been a thorough revision of the college's strategy, which gives a much stronger emphasis to the importance of literacy and numeracy skills to support other aspects of learning. Assessment boards are now accountable for the monitoring of the effectiveness of the new support arrangements. Future course reviews will be expected to include explicit references to literacy, numeracy and language support for learners. Records of observations of teaching and learning will also be used to capture judgements about the effectiveness of additional support in lessons.
- The college has devised a schedule of training and support for new and existing staff who lack confidence in their own literacy and numeracy

skills. This is intended to help them improve their understanding of how to integrate literacy, numeracy and language skills into their lessons. The college has also created two new posts of key skills advisor and coordinator and is currently recruiting to fill them.

Leadership and management

The use made of data on learners' prior attainment

- A project group has been formed to improve the use of data. A new database is being developed, to be introduced September 2007, which will be used to measure distance travelled. Staff training events are planned to introduce the new system, define the content of intended reports and develop the necessary computer skills amongst teachers.

The setting and monitoring of individual learner targets

- From September 2007 a separate individualised learning plan (ILP) for literacy, numeracy and language support will be completed to better identify detailed milestones and achievement for each subject. Staff development sessions regarding SMART target setting are planned for later this term.