

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: New College, Telford
Date of visit: 12 June 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 perform in 2005/06, and what is their performance like in the current academic year?

- Final data for 2005/06 show a small improvement in success rates to close to the national rate for students aged 16 to 18 years old studying at level 3, at which level the large majority study. Success rates for this age group studying at level 2 improved markedly to above the national rate. Success rates for the much smaller numbers of students aged 19 and over improved at level 3, but dipped at levels 1 and 2. Rates for this age group all remain below the national rate. For both age groups and at all levels, nearly all retention rates improved.
- In the current academic year retention rates have improved by 2% across the college, in line with the improving trend over recent years. Attendance rates have also improved and are good. Early indications of improved levels of achievement include improvements in January examination results and November GCSE resit results. Nearly 200 students have been entered for a level 3 wider key skill. Progress based on the college's own tracking and feedback from students indicates that progress towards achievement is good.

How well are students making progress compared to their prior attainment?

- Finalised reports based on national value-added measures show that, for 2005/06, students made broadly satisfactory progress overall, a position that was an improvement on the previous year. However, there were still a number of subject areas, especially at GCE AS level where progress was less than satisfactory. The college has made a very careful analysis of these data and has taken a number of actions to bring about improvement. Early indications of progress by current students compared with their minimum target grades based on prior attainment show better than satisfactory progress in a number of cases. The college also requires students to work towards the wider key skill of 'improving own

learning and performance' which is proving effective in encouraging students to reflect on their own performance more critically and raise their aspirations. Reinforcement of aspects of the tutorial process, including setting of challenging targets and prompt intervention where under-performance is becoming apparent, have also contributed to an improving picture.

Quality of education and training

How effective have actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the use of information and learning technology (ILT) since the last inspection proved to be?

- Work is ongoing to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The college is part-way through its cycle of lesson observations in the current year and has completed three-quarters of the total number. All teachers are observed. The process is very rigorous and used well to support and develop teachers. The focus is clearly on evaluating learning and this has been well supported by relevant staff development and guidance. Observers and teachers have taken this very seriously. The profile of grades from lessons observed indicates, based on observations to date, that the quality of lessons is similar to the previous year, with about two-thirds of lessons graded as good or better. The very small proportion of inadequate teaching has largely been eradicated. The college's target of a higher proportion of good or better teaching in 2006/07 is unlikely to be met.
- Opportunities for teachers to undertake peer observations have been extended and are proving valuable in helping teachers to improve their practice. The sharing of good practice is increasing, but takes place largely in subject areas and is not yet widespread across the college.
- The use of ILT has increased and students gave many good examples of how it is used in learning. Increased, up-to-date resources are planned and budgeted for, to be in place for the next academic year. A detailed ILT development plan is in place, which covers relevant training needs.

How have physical resources and accommodation been improved to ensure an adequate learning environment in the areas judged at inspection to be unsuitable or poorly equipped?

- The college has been involved for several years in careful consideration of various options to improve its overall accommodation, including potential new build projects at several alternative sites. This has taken considerable management time but has been done thoroughly with a view to securing the best long term solution primarily for students but also with consideration of local and regional stakeholders. A final decision about the future is not yet fully agreed but as an interim measure the college has planned and found funding to make a number of much needed improvements over the summer 2007. These include a change of use for an under-used science laboratory, conversion of staff offices into classrooms, refurbishment of classrooms and improvements to sound proofing.
- The college has also funded considerable improvements to the ILT resource base, including more data projectors and digital media systems as well as a new server to allow remote access to the intranet for staff and students.
- The college manages its finances well and has been able to ensure that funding is available for these improvements. It recently successfully negotiated an improved level of funding and has managed a reduction in the number of staff well.

Leadership and management

What level of progress has been made in improving the areas identified at inspection?

- In the short period of time since inspection the college has made good progress in bringing about improvement. A detailed post inspection action plan is in place and this is closely aligned to the college's improvement plan. Plans are monitored carefully and good progress is reported in most cases. The number of areas identified as of concern at the start of the year has been considerably reduced. The role of middle managers has been strengthened and they acknowledge their accountability for the quality of provision and achievement. Additional management roles in improving teaching and learning and quality assurance are proving effective.

What improvements have been made to target setting at course level?

- Targets are set comprehensively at course level for a range of indicators including success, retention and pass rates as well as attendance, achievement of high grades and for value-added measures. All full-time students are now set minimum target grades and review of performance against these targets is given a very high priority.

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

- The college is involved in some innovative work as part of the 13 – 19 curriculum in the Telford area. This includes taster days for Year 8 pupils in advance of specialist diploma introduction in 2009. Its provision is included in the 13 – 19 area prospectus.
- The central register of security checks of all staff members, in line with safeguarding legislation, is now complete.
- Governors have not yet undertaken child protection training, although this is planned for the summer term. One governor has specialist child protection expertise.