

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Derwentside

Date of visit: 21 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

Have improvements in achievements been sustained in 2005/06 and how does the college performance compare to similar institutions?

- Student achievement shows an improving trend over the last three years. In 2005/06 the overall success rate for the college rose to 81.9%, which is above the national average for similar colleges. Within that overall picture, success rates on some long courses are better than others. Success rates for adults at levels one and two are around the national average but level three is well above. Success rates for 16-18 year old students improved at all three levels last year and were around average at level two and above at level one. At level three for 16-18 year olds, there was better achievement on some qualifications than others, for example success rates on A2 provision were in line with national average but GNVQs were substantially above.

What does the most recent achievement data for work-based learners show?

- Achievement in work-based learning is satisfactory and shows an improving trend. Apprenticeships had a success rate of 58% in 2005/06 and advanced apprentices 56%. Timely success rates have improved to around the national average. The success rate in hairdressing was lower than other subject areas.

Are levels of attendance good and how well is attendance monitored?

- Attendance is good for 16-18 year old learners and satisfactory for others. The overall college target is 90% and actual attendance for last year was 88%. There are satisfactory systems in place to monitor attendance, particularly for younger students.

How does the college judge the value-added to learners' previous achievements?

- The college judges the value added to learners' previous achievements to be satisfactory overall and this is supported by data available. Within this there are variations in performance. English and sports studies are areas that have been identified as under-achieving against value-added measures.

## Quality of education and training

The college's self-assessment report (SAR) for 2005/06 identified that there was insufficient good or better teaching; what action has been taken to address this?

- Staff training is in place to disseminate good practice in teaching and learning. This involves a number of measures, including the use of subject learning coaches. All teachers are observed at least once a year and lessons judged to be satisfactory rather than good are prioritised in terms of further staff development and support. College records show an increase in the proportion of good or better lessons (76%) but managers are carrying out further work on moderation of grades to check if any over-grading has occurred. Students interviewed, and student feedback surveys, show that they are positive about the quality of teaching and learning.

Do resources for learning continue to be good?

- Resources to support learning are satisfactory overall and in some cases good. The college self-assessment report for 2005/06 identified that some bookstock needed updating but the annual assessment visit found that students have sufficient access to the resources needed for their courses. The college is developing the level of resources available electronically to support learning. Some areas of the accommodation are cramped. The college has taken action to improve this in terms of social areas and is considering further action with regard to classrooms.

Are there adequate systems in place to provide additional learning support for learners, including work-based learners?

- Systems to provide additional learning support are satisfactory. Initial assessment to identify learners who need extra help with literacy and numeracy has improved this year and support has been put in place much earlier in the students' programme. Students' attendance at support

sessions is good. The college is increasing the number of staff who are trained to support learners' literacy and numeracy needs and is starting to evaluate the impact of support provided

- Literacy and numeracy support for work-based learners has improved and is satisfactory.

Limited support for part-time learners has been an issue since the last inspection; has there been any improvement in 2006/07?

- There has been some progress in developing support for part-time learners but this is still an area for improvement. Support services are now centrally located and there is better co-ordination of support staff across the college. Information on accessing support for part-time learners has improved
- Initial assessment for literacy and numeracy support is offered on some part-time courses and the delivery of support is flexible to meet need. Progress monitoring for part-time students is the responsibility of the individual teacher and this is not sufficiently monitored
- Support for the increasing numbers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners from Eastern Europe is good.

## Leadership and management

Has the college made progress in improving the rigour of quality assurance since the last inspection?

- The college has made some progress in improving the rigour of its quality assurance since the last inspection. Performance management is more closely linked to teaching and the learner experience. Teams are developing a better understanding of the purpose of quality assurance and more confidence in the data underpinning it
- For work-based learning the college has introduced a new meeting structure within each curriculum area to better monitor learner progress and assessors' performance. There is an increased focus on timely success rates. The more formalised meeting structure has enabled curriculum heads to identify and share good practice across different areas. Assessors are now responsible for the overall success rates of individual students giving better co-ordination of different parts of the framework, such as technical certificates and key skills. Senior managers receive reports on a monthly basis showing information on all aspects of a learner's progress.

Are staff committed to the strategic and cultural changes taking place to develop the college's responsiveness to local and national needs?

- The college is undergoing a period of significant change in order to make it responsive to the needs of young people and employers. There is good communication and staff are clear about the priorities that have been set by the principal and senior team. Links with schools have improved and the college is well involved in developing the curriculum for 14-19 year olds.
- There is a new management structure for business development, giving better co-ordination of college provision. The college is becoming increasingly effective at using employer contacts to identify training needs. There are increased numbers on the work-based learning provision and a Train to Gain contract has been successfully introduced.

What is the college doing to promote equality and diversity?

- There are examples of the promotion of equality and diversity within curriculum areas but there is not yet a systematic approach to this across the college.
- There is insufficient focus on ensuring Train to Gain learners have an understanding of equality of opportunity.

Is the college fulfilling its duties to ensure the safeguarding of learners?

- The college is compliant with its legal responsibilities to ensure the safeguarding of learners. All staff are subject to enhanced CRB checks and receive training on the protection of young people. Students report feeling safe in the college and know who to approach if they need help.

How well does the college listen to the views of learners?

- The college carries out an annual survey of learner views but students are not given sufficient feedback on the results or action taken. This is an area for improvement and the college has plans for additional student surveys and greater involvement of learners in course reviews.