

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Furness

Date of visit: 27 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

What has the college done to improve retention this year and has it been successful?

- College data show that retention on long courses is currently 88%, which is an improvement on previous years. A new electronic registration system is in place and follow up of unauthorised absences is timely and thorough. In addition, the college has further improved aspects of student support and an extended enrichment programme is having a positive impact on students' attendance.

What evidence is there to show if the college is on track to reach achievement targets for 2006/07?

- The inspection in November 2006 identified good student achievement. The college set an increase in achievement targets for 2006/07 and college data indicate it is on track to achieve this. Data are based on a rigorous system of performance management. This includes termly curriculum reviews that incorporate all aspects of student achievement. The reviews draw on monthly tracking data that shows the proportion of students on course to achieve.

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

- Overall success rates for work-based learning are showing a satisfactory upward trend. Problems within specific areas such as hairdressing and care have been accurately identified. Actions have been taken, in negotiation with employers, to address the issues and include the earlier introduction and completion of key elements of the apprenticeship programme. Improvements in target-setting have enabled the college to individualise learning much more and to increase timely success. Key

skills are contextualised well to make them relevant to both students and employers. Delivery of programmes is increasingly flexible to meet the needs of both employers and learners, and college staff work productively alongside partners in industry to share expertise.

How does the college judge the progress of students in terms of their personal development?

- All aspects of the learner programme are monitored well. There are strategies to monitor students' personal development through tutorials and enrichment activities as well as on their main programme. The college is successful at developing students' confidence and raising their aspirations to continue into further training or higher education.

Quality of education and training

Does college evidence for 2006/07 show that the quality of teaching and learning remains good? What has the college done to address the minority of less effective teaching identified at the last inspection?

- The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and college records show that the proportion of teaching that is good or better is now over 70%. Staff have access to a number of initiatives to improve teaching and learning. These include the dissemination of good practice from within and outside the college, and the opportunity to develop their skills in the college's 'teaching and learning zone'. The college has strengthened its internal observation programme to ensure training is provided for less effective teaching and this has led to improvement.

What has been the impact of changes to improve the tutorial system and individual learner programmes (ILPs)? Do learners understand their targets and rate of progress?

- The college has carried out effective training for staff and students to improve understanding of target setting. Students are clear about the targets they are working to in terms of main qualifications and wider personal development goals. An electronic ILP is planned for September, which is designed to better integrate all aspects of a learner's programme. Progress reviewing is systematic and students show good awareness of their rate of progress. Arrangements for enrichment programmes to enhance the tutorial provision have improved. A co-ordinator for this work is centrally located in the college and is providing an additional channel of

support for students. Elements of the college's enrichment programme successfully disseminate useful information on health and well-being to students.

- There is greater involvement of students with college wide activities. A student council has been formed with representatives from a range of courses; the college recognises that this is an area for further improvement.

Leadership and management

Has the college responded adequately to issues at the last inspection regarding the need to better embed and monitor the promotion of equality and diversity?

- The college has made satisfactory progress to better embed equality and diversity. All staff and governors are receiving equality and diversity training. The college uses students as ambassadors to promote non-traditional career paths to prospective students and monitors its success in attracting new groups of learners. An external agency produces good quality promotional material incorporating best practice in its imaging. Plans for student induction for September include more activities on equality and diversity. The college has started work on assessing the impact of its equality and diversity policies but this is at an early stage of development.

Are governors clear about their statutory responsibilities with regard to safeguarding?

- The college has made satisfactory progress to ensure governors receive training on safeguarding. Governors attended an information session in May and further training is planned for the autumn. All staff have had training to update their knowledge of statutory duties in relation to child protection and to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities.

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

- The college is restructuring its management team in line with its response to local and national priorities for 14-19 year old students, the skills agenda and higher education provision. Staff are clear about the changes that will be implemented in August 2007 and the rationale for change.

Plans are on schedule to replace parts of the accommodation with a substantial new building due to open in 2010.