

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Reaseheath College

Date of visit: 1 May 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

#### FE success rates

- Overall success rates remain very high for all students on long courses except for adult learners at level 3 where the success rate is 1% above the national average. In-year retention data supplied by the college suggests these will rise in 2006/07, because overall retention is currently 5% higher than at this time last year. There is a strong focus on monitoring retention and achievement and taking early action to address areas causing concern.

#### Key Skills overall

- Key skills achievement is high and improving. The college target for key skills achievement is 63%, which is well above the national average. In 2005/06 most courses achieved this target. The college has worked to improve results on programmes which did not meet target: for example, achievements in one area are projected to rise from 41% last year to 75% in the current year.

#### WBL success rates

- There has been a steady improvement in success rates of apprentices though success rates of advance apprentices are only at national average. The college is aware of the need to improve success rates in some apprenticeship frameworks such as Floristry and an action plan is in place which makes use of the good practice in other areas. At the time of the inspection many apprentices made slow progress compared with their action plans. The college has since made good progress in increasing the timely completion of frameworks.

## Quality of education and training

How the college is maintaining the high standard of teaching and developing it further?

- A comprehensive system of teaching observation underpins measures to improve teaching and learning. Both internal and external observers are used, including a team from another land-based college. Careful attention is paid to moderation and standardisation to ensure results are accurate. Two rounds of observations have been held in the current year. Course teams receive comprehensive reports, including grades and key strengths and areas for improvement. In addition, extensive use is made of peer observations to share good practice in teaching, and regular tutor briefings provide an opportunity for sharing ideas and good practice. Internal lesson observation grades show that the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is increasing; overall it is up from 71% last year to 80% of lessons in the current year.

How the use of ILT is being encouraged?

- The college has strengthened management of this area through the establishment of a Head of Technical Services post, with responsibility to develop the ILT competence and confidence of staff. The college is developing a training programme for all teachers in ILT. The ILT infrastructure is strong, with nearly all teaching rooms equipped with data projectors. Plans for new buildings fully recognise the need to incorporate ILT facilities and resources. Managers make use of tutor briefing meetings and peer observations to encourage the use of ILT and share good practice. Reaseheath is developing its VLE through trials with HE students at present, and is planning to launch it for other learners in 07/08.

Progress made to further embed key skills into learning programmes

- The college action plan includes measures to further embed key skills, and course teams report stronger team work between curriculum teachers and learning support teachers to achieve this. Key skills are introduced earlier in work-based learning programmes. In one area they are now delivered with the additional qualifications which students value for employability as well as through the main qualification.

Action taken to improve the consistency of tutorial reviews and target setting in ILPs

- At the inspection learner reviews were found to be inconsistent in the effectiveness of target setting. The college has now introduced an audit process to monitor the quality of ILPs and action plans. Apprentices

receive one to one tutorials and group tutorials in addition to reviews. They are well informed about their progress and what they need to do to be successful.

## Leadership and management

Further development of systems to share good practice and identify areas for improvement

- Programme area staff meetings are now regularly scheduled with an agenda to share good practice. Recent topics have included planning to meet the needs of all learners the use of interactive web links in teaching, and setting smart targets for learners. The enhanced reports from observations of teaching provide each course team with a report on the strengths and areas for improvement in its area. The college holds a mid-year review panel, chaired by the principal or vice-principal, for all courses. This identifies areas for improvement so that action can be taken at an early stage.

Progress with plans to improve facilities

- The college has successfully developed its plans for an impressive range of new facilities, including new animal care and construction units, a new learning resource centre, and additional hostel and catering facilities. Investment is also planned in the dairy farm and horticulture facilities. The new facilities, which represent an £18m investment in the campus over the period to 2010, will raise the standard of teaching and practical facilities to a very high level. The construction projects are being carefully managed: for example, phase one of the animal care building development is currently under construction. Much enabling work and forward planning is in place to ensure that the learning experience is enhanced and not limited during the period of construction. Students have been involved in this development gaining a range of skills.

Progress with plans to move construction and work-based learning from satisfactory to good

- The college is expanding its construction programme to provide new progression routes. Recruitment of 14-16 learners has improved. The college is successfully supporting new staff who bring good industry skills to the college but are new to a training environment. Support includes team teaching and peer support in addition to instructor and teacher training.

Actions taken in work-based learning include; a new operational level agreement between the central work-based learning unit and curriculum areas which has clarified roles and responsibilities; improved interview and induction processes; and clearer criteria for apprentices to progress to the advanced apprenticeship. Key skills and technical certificates are introduced early in the programme and success rates have improved.

#### Measures to ensure coverage of ECM topics

- The college was judged to be good or outstanding in this area at the inspection and has continued to develop its provision of group tutorials, making use of student feedback to develop new areas such as money management.

#### Preparation for the introduction of specialist diplomas

- The college has a strong programme of co-operation with 21 local schools. Programmes for 14-16 year olds have high success rates and very high rates of progression of young people into further education or work with training. The college took the lead role in preparing the successful Gateway self assessment for the specialised Diploma in Engineering, and successfully bid for capital funding to enable the construction of an engineering schools academy on the campus. Reaseheath will lead the county bid for the Land and Environment specialised diploma next year.

#### Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- None

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

- The college achieved outstanding results in the inspection in 2006. Since then the college management has sought to maintain momentum and has set further targets for improvement. Further progress has been made in key areas since the last inspection.
- The college has developed new provision to widen participation, building on its work with 14-16 year olds. New level one programmes in Sport and Motor Vehicle engineering will be offered in 2007/08.