

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: South Trafford College  
Date of visit: 14 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

Has the college maintained the previously recorded outstanding levels of achievement? What strategies have been developed to maintain or further develop learner success rates and improve those under-performing?

- The college has maintained and improved on the previously recorded outstanding levels of achievement. The combined headline performance figures record a 2 per cent improvement on 2004/05 performance at 77 per cent. The long course performance score has improved by 3 per cent. The long course success rate for learners aged 16-18 has improved by 2 per cent to 71 per cent. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 on short courses have declined from 74 per cent to 66 per cent. For adults on long course success rates improved by 2 per cent to 70 per cent. Success rates for adult learners on short course scores have improved by 3 per cent to 77 per cent.
- Managers recognise that it is very high achievement rates which contribute significantly to the success rates. Retention rates are at or around national average levels for similar colleges. Low retention rates were particularly important in GCE A level and in Foundation Learning programmes. Managers and staff employ a range of strategies to improve the retention rates on all programmes. These include a review of the tutor support process with greater emphasis placed on one-to-one processes rather than group tutorials. The Deputy Principal now monitors all learner withdrawals more closely and counter-signs each withdrawal form. Specialist staff conduct motivational interviews with learners identified as potentially at risk of leaving their courses early, in order to re-motivate them and to encourage them to complete their programmes.

- A good relationship exists between middle and senior managers and this enables a productive and constructive review of curriculum programme performance. All have participated in leadership development programmes from which designated groups now focus on key aspects of performance for improvement.

What actions have been taken to improve the success rates on some GCE A-level and work based learning (WBL) programmes? How successful have these been?

- Success rates in GCE A levels and work based learning (WBL) have improved. Effective actions in both areas include better induction, clearer and more rigorous application of entry criteria and improved monitoring of students' progress.
- There are significant improvements in overall and timely WBL success rates – taking overall success to over 70 per cent. A range of improvement measures have been introduced, for example, a six week pre-apprentice induction, use of work based learning coordinators to manage review and support, weekly reviews of learners progress by staff and improved engagement of employers.
- A successful range of actions, specific to the GCE A-level programme focuses on the early identification of issues with learners. Actions taken by the college have improved punctuality and attendance resulting in increased retention rates to 86 per cent in 06/07. Senior tutors are now responsible for the close monitoring and tracking of learners. Assessment in the induction period and wider use of concern notes from tutors are effective in identifying learners at risk of leaving much earlier than previously.

## Quality of education and training

What are the outcomes of the last year's observation of teaching? Have high standards been maintained across the board? What actions are being taken to raise the quality of all teaching?

- The college has introduced a system of peer observation in 2006/07. The formal system of observation is now limited to observations of new staff

and GCE A level programmes. Within the 'A' level team, although formal lesson observation takes place, greater emphasis is placed on identifying improvements to teaching and learning as a method of raising success.

- Peer observation is an integral part of the college ethos that everyone should take responsibility for improvement. All staff, including part time and agency staff have been trained in lesson observation. Feedback from the process is largely encouraging; the majority of staff have participated and have gained value from the observations. Outcomes for the peer observations are being used in performance reviews to identify individual staff development needs and in the college staff development programme. Critical feedback from the observations lack rigor. Observers do not all currently record or identify practices that sufficiently challenge their peers to improve.
- The use of information learning technology (ILT) in teaching and learning has significantly improved throughout the college. All staff have had access to a comprehensive range of training and a drop in facility to improve their skills. However, ILT is not used to its full advantage by all staff, particularly those on part time courses.

Are all learners now fully informed of the complete range of enrichment activities available to them? How is this monitored and checked?

- Learners on all programmes are now better informed of enrichment opportunities. Tutors now place greater emphasis on curriculum and course specific activities with some cross-college provision also delivered. Regular 'Theme Weeks' take place in the college and provide good opportunities for learners to engage in a broader and more diverse range of programmes. Good use is made of 'Aim Higher' funding to enable visits to universities. Monitoring and checking takes place using the Every Child Matters (ECM) criteria and this is effective in identifying both the range of activities as well as take up and outcomes.

How has employer engagement and workforce development impacted on the college provision?

- Very effective actions have taken place to improve employer engagement. A work-based learning coordinator ensures close links between the

curriculum teams and work based learning. Significant increases in level 2 work-based learning provision include both commercial and Train to Gain programmes. These have focussed on specific curriculum areas, particularly from within the three COVES.

- A staffing restructure has been effective in promoting the most effective use of staff skills. Train to Gain provision has so far reached 81 per cent of the target for the college, with achievement at 80 per cent to date in the contract year. The college has a strong focus on meeting the needs of employers and provision is flexible and responsive in many areas. Contacts with employers are coordinated through the workforce development unit. The college has a number of contracts with large local employers that are effective in meeting both the employer needs and contributing well to national targets.

Are there examples of where guidance and support has had a profound impact on individual learners?

- The College continues to develop extensive systems to manage and deliver guidance and support for all learners. All full time learners are initially assessed. Skills for Life tutors also undertake diagnostic testing of learner's needs. Free-writing exercises and on-going monitoring of work by tutors also identify additional learning support needs. Guidance and support for learners is well resourced. Fifteen learning facilitators provide good support for learners on entry and level 1 courses, as well as some level 2 courses. These are in addition to specialist classroom support workers for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).
- The College is able to identify many examples where the support mechanisms have resulted in dramatic progress by some learners. Staff undergo training and development in understanding and meeting specific learner needs and this is effective in challenging existing stereotypes. Some learners have also chosen to attend training when learners with specific needs have been attending their classes. This has been effective in developing their understanding.

## Leadership and management

How do senior managers evaluate their performance?

- The latest self-assessment records grade one for leadership and management. A wide range of evidence types supports this judgment and the identified key strengths and areas for improvement. The report itself, however, does not refer to governance systems, feedback on college management by the governors or the performance of the governors.
- The evaluation of senior managers is achieved by review against a range of targets derived from a number of sources. Weekly management meetings review college performance against business objectives. The governors review the management of the college by way of structured committees and these are effective in interrogating managers regarding performance.
- The senior management team currently have no formal system to evaluate their individual performance. The principal does not formally appraise the senior managers. A new system of staff appraisal is under development and will be implemented after the college merger.

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:

- South Trafford College will merge with North Trafford College in September 2007 forming a new Trafford College.
- Information from Ofsted is that this will mean the new College will be classed as a new institution and a new inspection cycle created to meet the needs of the new institution.