

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: York College
Date of visit: 20 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

The visit explored students' success rates and progress, and the extent to which these are reflected in the college's self-assessment report (SAR)

- The long course success rate overall, for learners aged 16 to 18, is high. The rate is improving but not as quickly as the national average rate. The level 3 rate, where most students study, is consistently high. At levels 1 and 2 the rate is low.
- The long course success rate overall, for adults, is close to the national average. This rate is improving more quickly than the national average. The rates for courses at levels 2 and 3 are above average and close to the top quartile. At level 1 the rate is below average.
- The progress made by learners studying GCE programmes is slightly better than that predicted by their attainment at entry to their advanced level programmes.
- Key skills success rates have improved significantly and are now well above average. At level 3 the rate has improved but is low.
- Apprenticeship framework success rates overall are improving markedly. The latest college data shows that they are at the average at level 2 but still low at level 3. Timely success rates are also improving but are still low.
- The SAR provides a detailed analysis of learners' achievements and standards. The SAR judgements broadly accords with the above analysis. They correctly identify, for example, the strengths at level 3, and the improvements required at levels 1 and 2 and in apprenticeship work.

Quality of education and training

The visit explored the work the college is doing to improve teaching across the college.

- The college is seeking to improve the quality of teaching by implementing several appropriate strategies. These include:

- an extended professional development programme, “promoting active learning” which has been received well by teachers.
- internal inspection, which includes the observation of teaching and learning, and is targeted at particular curriculum areas or at particular areas for improvement.
- The work of a network of senior tutors and subject learning coaches who work within subject areas and with individual teachers. Areas targeted include key skills achievements which have seen a marked improvement.
- The college’s lesson observation profile indicates that most teaching is good or better and there is very little unsatisfactory teaching.

Key skills provision was judged to be an area for improvement at the last inspection. The visit tested the judgement in the SAR that provision is now satisfactory.

- The quality of key skills provision is rigorously evaluated in the SAR. Success rates have improved rapidly at levels 1 and 2 and are well above national averages. The SAR identifies correctly that the success rate at level 3 is a key weakness

The visit explored the work the college is doing with employers

- The college’s work with employers is substantial. For example its income from related activities is £5.5m. Train to Gain work is increasing and is already considerable. Currently some 55 assessors work in this area. Within construction, where the college is the Yorkshire and Humberside broker, 3000 learners have been referred. There is a substantial programme of distance learning work within health and social care. The college uses innovative methods to provide training, for example for large construction employers. Several foundation degrees are provided.
- The college is involved in four Centres of Vocational Excellence (rail, stone masonry, hospitality and tourism) either as lead or partner.
- Several energetic steps have been taken to improve apprenticeship training. For example management arrangements are improved, individual reviews of progress are more comprehensive, key skills is taught early in the programme and additional support arrangements are targeted better. Innovative methods of collecting evidence using, for example, the virtual learning environment and digital technology have been introduced.

The visit explored developments in 14 to 19 work

- The college has extensive provision for students aged 14 to 19 and offers a wide range of programmes and initiatives, including the increasing flexibility programme, young apprenticeships, and links with schools and pupil referral units. Pupils make good progress and where they sit formal qualifications pass rates are high. The college is collaborating with a several schools to produce specialist diplomas and has led a national pathfinder project.

Leadership and management

The visit explored the extent to which the college recognises courses on which achievements are high or low, and what is being done to improve provision where required or share good practice.

- College and course managers have a good understanding of the issues. Good practice is shared appropriately through mechanisms such as the professional development programme, the work of senior tutors and subject coaches and through internal inspection. The course managers of those courses identified as under-performing have a good understanding of the issues and are taking appropriate steps to improve the provision.

A tour of the new college was undertaken

- The completion of the new build is likely to meet the deadline and be within budget. It provides an imposing, spacious and high quality environment for learning.

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:

- None