

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Loreto College
Date of visit: 7 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

Are most learners still achieving well and making excellent levels of progress across most courses?

- Learners' achievements and progress remain outstanding. Success rates improved at all levels for those aged 16 to 18 in 2005/06 to remain well above national averages. All success rates are continuing to rise faster than the national rate. Value added data show that learners on most programmes continue to make excellent progress in relation to their starting points. Significant progress was made in GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) art, AS drama and A2 media in 2006 and very good progress was made in AS media and in A2 three dimensional design. Overall success rates also improved within the art, design and performance courses, particularly on AS programmes. The college is looking to expand the area further, with plans in place to relocate the provision using the renovated chapel as a core centre for the arts.
- A high proportion of learners successfully progress from level 2 to level 3 courses and from AS to A2 programmes within the college. Rates of progression to further or higher education are very high. The number of learners successfully accepted into Oxbridge colleges this year has increased to nine.

Quality of education and training

In March 2006 inspectors judged the college's approach to Every Child Matters themes to be outstanding. How effectively is the college moving forward the Every Child Matters agenda?

- The college are making excellent progress in their approach to the five themes of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being.

- Learners have a sound understanding of what contributes to leading healthy lifestyles. The college effectively encourages them to pursue healthy living and provides a wide range of information and activities to support learners' choices, including an extensive range of sports and outdoor activities and a variety of healthy food options.
- Managers and teachers view the safety of their learners as paramount and learners spoken to during the annual assessment visit confirm this. They feel safe and very well supported. The college has a zero tolerance approach towards any forms of bullying.
- The college has a genuine commitment to social and educational inclusion. It continues to have an open admissions policy and work closely with local schools to help raise learners' aspirations in this disadvantaged area of Manchester. Learners of all abilities achieve exceptionally well academically and develop outstanding personal skills that enable them to be articulate and confident individuals.
- Learners have a strong voice at Loreto. There is a high profile student council who engage regularly with managers to help bring about improvement and increase enjoyment. Recent learner-driven initiatives have included planning a 'culture' week and introducing a college magazine. A considerable number of opportunities exist to enable learners to make a positive contribution.
- The tutorial programme is wide-ranging and effectively supports learners' economic well being. It continuously evolves each year to include new material. For example, additional sessions this year for the upper sixth have focused on listening skills, budgeting and global warming. Two external speakers have been invited to the college to speak to learners about their own life changing experiences and to share with them what can be achieved through adversity.

Since introducing a range of actions and interventions to ensure all learners turn up for lessons on time, have there been improvements in learners' punctuality?

- Very good progress has been made in addressing punctuality to lessons. Latecomers are more carefully tracked. From 55 students identified by student support as regularly arriving late to lessons in the first term, over

half improved their punctuality significantly in the second term. The college has analysed individual learner punctuality in detail and is now in the process of comparing this data against individual learner achievement.

- Further strategies have included a punctuality session built into the tutorial programme and increased 'visible' challenging of lateness by teachers and managers. Punctuality is improving but the college recognise more work is needed and is organising a further carefully targeted approach for 2007/08.

Leadership and management

Have strategies to address the low retention rates on a minority of courses had an impact? What do 'in-year' retention rates suggest?

- The range of strategies employed by the college to improve retention is having a positive impact. In 2005/06 retention rates improved for all levels for those aged 16 to 18 to be above the national average and remained high for those aged 19+. The college's 'in-year' retention data show a further month by month comparative improving trend, and suggest retention will remain at least at its current level. Where, on a small minority of courses, retention was low in 2005/06, this has been swiftly identified and appropriate action has been taken.

How effective is the college's self-assessment process and subsequent report as a tool for driving improvement across all areas of its work?

- The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the self assessment report (SAR) is thorough and evaluative. Both are used to effectively drive improvement across the college.
- Improvements have been made to the report to ease navigation, such as colour coding, annexing data sets and providing an executive summary. Since the last inspection further aspects of the college's support work, such as the examinations department, have been included in the process. Improvements have also been made to the process with external validation now supported by an additional board of internal cross-college staff representatives to validate the individual self-assessment reports.

- The SAR does not explicitly identify key strengths and key areas for improvement by either the whole college or by faculty to give full clarity to its priority areas for development and celebration. In some cases the grades awarded for faculties do not fully reflect some of the overarching judgments made about provision. The college are aware of this and plan to review the process further for the 2007/08 SAR.

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

- The college has grown significantly over the last 5 years by 78%. The college's successful programme 'pathways to independence' for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has also grown rapidly with around 57 students now enrolled for September 2007.