

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: EPPING FOREST COLLEGE
Date of visit: 22 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 performance of learners aged 16-18 on level 3 courses:

- The college has implemented a number of initiatives to improve success rates, including the implementation of a new management structure in August 2006, the abolition of the former Centre for Technology (which had been responsible for both of the grade 4 areas at the last inspection), the creation of twelve new teaching and learning advocates, the introduction of teaching and learning workshops and the establishment of a quality improvement unit.
- Although the success rate for learners aged 16-18 on level 3 courses in 2005/06 improved slightly to 62%, this was below the improvement in national rates, so the gap between the college's performance and national average performance widened. This was mirrored in the college's success rates overall. The poor performance in some areas, particularly mathematics and science, persists and depresses the college's overall success rates.

The success rates of students aged 16-18 of black African and black Caribbean origin:

- Success rates for students aged 16-18 of black African and black Caribbean origin in 2005/06 were 77% and 69% respectively, figures which were well above the national averages for these groups of learners. The college's success reflects the high levels of individual support that these learners receive, together with the effectiveness of the

college's equality and diversity policy and the embedding of equality and diversity issues in the curriculum.

Attendance:

- The college monitors attendance carefully and the most recent data indicates that attendance has improved from 79% in 2005/06 to 82% in 2006/07. The overall figure has been depressed by poor attendance in areas such as mathematics, science and computing where the college's performance is also weakest. Although a number of measures have been taken to promote improvement in these areas, they have been unsuccessful this year.

Quality of education and training

The college's response to the ECM agenda:

- The college's response to the five outcomes for Every Child Matters is clearly outlined in its self-assessment report. A wide range of evidence from college activities has been used to determine the judgements including enrichment activities, educational visits and elective activities. The elective activities are organised as cross college events and provide a particular emphasis on improving health and fitness. Plans to introduce a college calendar with activities that more closely reflect the ECM themes are in the early stages of development. Proposals include the allocation of dedicated time to subject sector areas to ensure that all learners are given the opportunity to attend enrichment.

Developments in 14-19 education and training:

- Until recently the college's collaboration with other education providers has been weak. There were few curriculum links with other schools and take-up of Increased Flexibility places by local schools was low. The mapping of curriculum pathways within and between institutions was slow to develop. The college was successful in a submission for a specialised diploma with one Hertfordshire school, but the submissions involving local schools were unsuccessful. The college has now developed a 14-19 curriculum development action plan which, despite lacking precise targets, provides a much sharper focus for future developments. The college and its partner schools are intending to resubmit for approval to offer specialised diplomas in business, ICT, and in hair and beauty.

The provision and impact of additional learning support:

- Additional learning support is identified as strength in the college's self-assessment report. In 2005/06 some 22% of students aged 16 -18 received some form of additional learning support. Data produced by the college demonstrate that this support is improving the success rates of those learners who receive it. The revised interview process provides a clear focus on barriers to learning and enables more effective and timely referral of learners to learning support services or to one of the newly appointed team of learner coaches. Once on programme, learners are referred to additional learning support or to a learner coach at any point during their course, but particularly if their progress is unsatisfactory, or if their punctuality and attendance are poor.

Leadership and management

The college's lesson observation process:

- The lack of strategic information and insufficient focus on learning in the lesson observation scheme was highlighted at the last AAV in June 2006. Since then a range of improvements have been made. A new teaching and learning observation scheme has been introduced that more appropriately focuses on learning and links to staff development and appraisal. Appropriate support is offered to teachers who are awarded an inadequate grade. A sample of observation records is selected for moderation and useful feedback is given to observers. To date 90% of teachers have been observed. A comprehensive database has been developed which captures data from the observations alongside information highlighting strengths and areas for development. The database is used to produce reports for senior managers which identify where improvements are needed. However, the links between lesson observations and success rates have yet to be fully explored.

The college's accommodation strategy:

- The college's development has been constrained by its unsuitable accommodation. Redevelopment of the site has now begun, with an expected completion date of August 2008. The college has made appropriate arrangements to minimise disruption to learners and has suitable contingency plans should building be delayed. The college will need to increase enrolments by the time that the redevelopment is completed. This will be a major challenge as it did not meet its growth target for 2005/06.

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