

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: South Nottingham College
Date of visit: 28 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

How do overall headline success rates in 2005/06 compare with other similar colleges?

- The overall success rate in 2005/06 improved by 2.7% to 79% and remains above the national average level of similar colleges. Overall success rates for 16-18 year olds improved significantly from 67% to 72% whilst adult success rates improved from 78% to 81%. Success rates on long courses for both 16-18 year olds and for adult learners are well above national average levels.
- Success rates at level 1 and 2 for both 16-18 year olds and for adults are high. Very significant improvements were made in 2005/06 with success rates for both age groups at both levels improving by 10% or more. Overall success rates on these courses, representing approximately 60% of the college provision, are now significantly above national average levels. However, overall success rates at level 3, representing approximately 40% of college provision remain below average.
- In sector subject areas overall long course success rates improved in 13 of the 14 areas where the college offers provision. Significant improvements of over 15% were achieved in six sector subject areas with three of those six improving by an impressive 23% overall. In nine areas success rates are above or significantly above national averages and in four areas, two of which have very low learner numbers, success rates are significantly below the corresponding national average.

Have work-based learning success rates improved? How do they compare with national averages?

- Success rates on work-based learning programmes have improved although in 2005/06 overall success rates were well below the national average level. Success rates for advanced apprenticeships were very low

at 14% compared to the national average of 44%. Apprenticeship success rates are higher at 46% but are still below the national average of 53%.

- Detailed analysis shows a mixed picture of success rate performance in different sector subject areas. Overall success rates for 2005/06 are severely affected by the extremely poor performance of a health care programme that was offered through a franchised arrangement with a private provider, and by a poorly performing sports programme run by the college. Both these programmes are no longer offered.
- In the two areas where the college now offer work-based learning provision; a new sport programme and in hair and beauty, performance is much improved. In hair and beauty overall success rates have improved year-on-year and in 2005/06 both overall and timely success rates were significantly above sector averages. In both sport and in hair and beauty the majority of learners that started programmes remain on them and college records indicate that most are making at least satisfactory progress and are expected to achieve.

Quality of education and training

What actions have been taken to address the issues identified at the last annual assessment visit with regard to the observations of teaching and learning?

- The college has made good progress in addressing the concerns raised at the last annual assessment visit with regard to the monitoring of teaching and learning. Documentation has been changed so that observers are better able to record judgements which form a useful basis for subsequent discussion. Teachers receive constructive feedback from observers. The outcomes of lesson observations are now analysed well so that managers are aware of the quality of teaching and learning in a range of contexts. Information is well used by managers in the preparation of self-assessment reports, and also in determining curriculum area and college development priorities.
- Arrangements for the moderation of the observation process have improved. A small amount of external moderation is completed as part of peer review arrangements with other colleges. Moderation is also undertaken internally by a series of joint observations carried out as part

of twinning arrangements between curriculum areas. Although a satisfactory number of lessons are moderated overall the proportion moderated externally is low.

What actions have been taken to promote improvements in teaching and learning? Is the use of information learning technology (ILT) embedded within curriculum delivery?

- Actions to promote improvements in teaching and learning are having a positive impact. As part of the restructuring of college management, a post has been created with responsibility for the strategic development of teaching and learning. Closer connections are now being made between lesson observation outcomes and staff development activity. Effective analysis of observation records highlights areas for development and appropriate staff training events are arranged. College data based on its own lesson observations suggest that the proportion of teaching which is good or better has risen from 63% in 2005/06 to 69% in 2006/07. The proportion of inadequate teaching is judged to be very low.
- The college has taken actions to promote and embed the use of ILT within the curriculum. Since the last annual assessment visit the number of e-learning champions has doubled. The e-learning co-ordinator has provided several training workshops throughout the year and many staff benefit from one-to-one support on a drop-in basis. The college's virtual learning environment (VLE) is being increasingly used by staff and resource-sharing is expanding. Staff and students have remote access to the VLE although the content in some curriculum areas is limited. The college has decided not to install interactive whiteboards in classrooms but has invested in alternative technology to encourage the use of ILT in the classroom.

What improvements have been made to tutorial provision following the transfer of responsibility to student services? Is the content appropriate and is there consistency across the college?

- A team of 'guidance and support tutors' that are managed by student services, ensure all full-time learners receive a basic tutorial entitlement. A 'guidance and support tutor' is linked to each curriculum area and they are

responsible for teaching eleven 'compulsory elements' of the tutorial programme. The remaining sessions are taught by curriculum area staff. These 'compulsory sessions' are well planned; the content is appropriate and it is mapped to ensure coverage of the five themes of Every Child Matters. Good quality resource material has been developed to support the teaching of each session in an attempt to ensure consistency across the college. This aspect of the tutorial programme is managed well although too few of these sessions have been observed as part of the college's lesson observation scheme to inform further improvement. Tutorial sessions that are taught by curriculum area staff are not as effectively coordinated or managed and student services do not yet have a clear picture of the content or quality of these sessions.

Leadership and management

What benefits have resulted from the restructuring of curriculum management? Are roles and responsibilities clear?

- The college has appropriately restructured the management of the curriculum. 'Heads of school' have been established to play a more strategic role in the development of a cluster of curriculum areas whilst 'curriculum managers' have been appointed to provide operational management of courses within their areas. Roles and responsibilities are clear in some areas but in others staff are not entirely clear as to the difference between the roles or what is expected in terms of performance within each role. The college is aware of these issues and further staff training and briefing sessions are planned to address these concerns. It is too early to judge the impact of the recent changes in terms of the effectiveness of each role.

The last annual assessment visit noted that quality improvement throughout the college lacked consistency. What actions have been taken to improve quality monitoring systems and have they been effective?

- Quality monitoring arrangements have improved and are effective. The college's 'excellence team' forms part of the strategic approach to quality improvement. Heads of school and curriculum managers are effectively held to account for the performance of courses for which they are

responsible. The director of quality works closely with heads of schools to monitor the performance of each curriculum area. Frequent monitoring arrangements effectively review the quality of provision within each curriculum area. Action plans produced are detailed and are effectively monitored. Teachers are provided with clear guidance for target-setting at course level. The college now makes much better use of recent trend data and national averages to ensure that targets are both realistic and challenging. Success rates are improving in most curriculum areas.

What actions have been taken to identify and share good practice in the areas identified at the last annual assessment visit? What improvements have resulted?

- The college has taken effective steps to identify and share good practice. Good analysis of information collected as part of quality monitoring arrangements identifies good practice within curriculum areas. Staff are actively encouraged to run development activities to share previously identified good practice. Closer links have been established between the teacher training unit and the quality unit to share identified good practice.
- Improvements are evident following staff development activities where good practice has been shared. Target setting and action planning has improved with more specific, measurable and timebound targets set. The quality of teaching and learning has also improved as reflected by the colleges own teaching and learning observation records. Both these areas were identified at the last annual assessment visit as areas where good practice was not shared effectively.