

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Totton College  
Date of visit: 26 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

What do college data show for achievements and standards in 2005/06?

- Overall success rates rose in 2005/06 by two percentage points to 82%
- For students aged 16 to 18, success rates at level 1 rose five percentage points in 2005/06 and are well above the national average for 2004/05. At level 2, success rates rose by four percentage points and are also well above the previous year's national average. At level 3, success rates rose one percentage point in 2005/06 and are at the national average for 2004/05. Overall success rates for this age group rose three percentage points in 2005/06 and are high
- For adult students, success rates at level 1 declined two percentage points in 2005/06 but are still well above the national average for 2004/05. At level 2, they declined three percentage points but are still above the previous year's national average. At level 3, they rose two percentage points and are just above the national average for 2004/05. Overall success rates for this age group rose two percentage points in 2005/06 and are high. The college attributes the slight decline in success rates at levels 1 and 2 to a change in a qualification in information and communication technology (ICT) which many students failed to complete within the agreed time-frame; and to a decline in pass rates by students undertaking modern foreign language courses through franchised provision in two local schools. As part of a significant restructuring of the curriculum offer to adult students from 2007/08, both of these above qualifications are being withdrawn or revised
- Key skills success rates for students aged 16 to 18 have risen by 12 percentage points in 2005/06 but are still low. A much higher proportion of students than achieved the full qualification did pass their key skills test and so did reach the required standard. There has been effective

leadership of a renewed and revised approach to key skills in the college over the last year, and more efficient management of the collation of students' portfolios.

What do value added scores show about the progress made by students on various courses, and how does the college use value added data to set targets and monitor progress?

- Value-added scores that indicate the progress made by students from their starting points when they enter the college are positive for GCE AS, A level, advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) and national diploma courses – but no scores are statistically significant. Similarly, scores measuring the progress made by students on GCSE and intermediate general national vocational qualifications (GNVQ) are positive but not statistically significantly so
- Under the value-added system to which the college subscribes, the score for GCE A levels have been static for two years at grade 4 ('good') and have risen one grade for AS courses to grade 2 ('excellent'). This system has also identified English and biology at the college as subject 'sites of excellence' at A level
- The percentages of students gaining high grades (grades A or B) rose in 2005/06 for both A levels (up five percentage points to 35%) and for AS courses (up two percentage points to 27%)
- The college makes astute and meticulous use of a number of measures to set and monitor targets for individual students. Likely and potential value-added scores are used throughout a student's course as part of a comprehensive system to monitor their performance and progress.

## Quality of education and training

How has the Hanger Farm Arts Centre been developed and what has been its impact on students?

- Since June 2005, just after the last inspection, the college has made use of the Hanger Farm Arts Centre, a shared-use community arts facility, to house a large proportion of its performing arts provision. This is an eighteenth-century timber-framed long barn that has been

imaginatively and ambitiously renovated and transformed into a potentially inspirational space for making and performing work. It currently houses mostly GCE AS and A level course activity in drama and theatre studies, performance studies, dance and national diploma in music. There is exhibition space for visual arts display. The college has well-developed plans to offer first diploma in performing arts from 2007/08 and national diploma in performing arts from 2008/09. This space is very well suited to house these courses.

- The use of the arts centre space has given students' work high production values in a stimulating environment and a strong sense of aspiration to professional standards. Since the centre operates as a fully functioning public venue in Totton, students are able to enjoy regular exposure to a wide range of performance work, both amateur and professional, and to the real working environment of a small community and promoting venue. They work with the centre manager and technician to negotiate use of spaces and equipment and enhance their understanding of the contexts and conditions in which performance is made and played. They are able to build links with professional touring practitioners. The disciplines of drama, dance and music have become more closely collaborative in this setting.

How well does the college use tutors and tutorials to support, monitor, advise and enrich students?

- The college now judges its support and guidance of students to be outstanding. Particular strengths cited include the very thorough induction and enrolment processes and an unusually flexible use of the wide curriculum range to enable students' individual interests and aptitudes to be met. Formal group tutorials, a relative area of weakness at the last inspection, have been reviewed and improved. The role of pastoral adviser has been developed. These experienced members of staff are specifically trained to act as team leaders to a group of tutors. They review their work and its impact regularly and observe a sample of tutorial activity. They also monitor and contribute to the enhanced group tutorial meeting that all students experience weekly. The central tutorial programme has been carefully designed to cover a range of personal, social, emotional, civil and transitional issues at appropriate stages of a student's course. No student tutorial

activity was reviewed during the visit, but the design and recorded implementation of the programme suggest that student's experience as tutees has been considerably enriched by it over the last year

- A well-researched and very accessible computer-based system is now used to track, record, review and report on the individual progress of every full-time and substantial part-time student. This works very well to support the setting of targets and to monitor students' degrees of progress towards them. The system has the significant advantage of enabling curriculum managers and pastoral advisers to monitor the quality of tutoring activity, teaching, and the setting of targets by tutors with their students. It is a valuable part of the overall quality assurance network
- The impact of student support services is thoroughly evaluated by all the main services, as part of the self assessment of this part of the college's work. The evaluations are quality assured and moderated by the vice-principal with responsibility for student support services. Data are used where appropriate and meaningful, but the college considers that the impact and quality of some services (for example, confidential professional counselling) requires assessment through evaluative narrative, over and above the use of quantitative measures. The college carries out very effective self criticism of its work in this area
- On the basis of the limited evidence available for scrutiny at this visit, the college's own proposed judgement of outstanding is well founded

## Leadership and management

How effective is the self assessment process in helping the college to improve?

- The self-assessment report is the result of a comprehensive and inclusive process of continuous review and self evaluation by all parts of the college. The summary report is very succinct and clear, although by its very brevity it omits reference to some key strengths of the provision. Key areas for improvement are identified and considered in more depth in the development plan that accompanies the self-

assessment summary, but this separation has the unintended consequence of distorting some parts of the summary paragraphs in the main report. There is no explicit differentiation between provision for students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. An overall grade is given for the quality of the provision, but separate grades are not published in the summary for teaching and learning, the range of the curriculum or guidance and support for students.

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

- The lesson observation scheme is robust and insightful. Thorough documentation supports the college's analysis that the proportion of lessons graded as outstanding or good rose from 65% in 2004/05 to 77% in 2005/06. Firm, supportive actions are triggered by any lesson that is deemed to be unsatisfactory, and there are now very few of those. There is evidence of very clear, specific interventions taken to address relatively low pass rates or value-added scores in some particular subject areas, exploring precise aspects of how a particular course is being taught or assessed.
- The college has expanded ways of disseminating good teaching practice: coaching interventions address particular skills needs; close collaboration with an outstanding neighbouring college provides rigorous external validation of graded judgements; departmental workshops explore teaching strategies by drawing on the best practices exhibited in outstanding lessons; and the ICT learning coordinator works across departments to proselytise the stimulating use of ICT in lessons
- The college continues to expand its curriculum range and its partnership working in response to the well-researched needs of the local community. It has just successfully fulfilled its first year of a contract to teach a cohort of 45 entry to employment students (E2E), and consequently the contract has grown by 10% for 2007/08. In partnership with two other colleges and three private training providers the college has delivered a 'train to gain' (T2G) contract in 2006/07 and a further contract has been won for 2007/08. After an initial recommendation by the assessor, the college had its bid for Action for Business accreditation rejected by the regional panel in January 2007; the college will be reassessed in July 2007. The college

has also submitted a bid to run young people's apprenticeships in 2007/08, and is exploring offering adult apprenticeships in 2008/09

- The college is responding positively and generously to the changing funding methodology for courses undertaken in the college by school students aged 14 to 16. Despite the removal of any pooled partnership funding for this work, the college intends to offer a number of established courses in 2007/08 at half price to local schools who would otherwise be unwilling to offer these courses to their students.