

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: New College Pontefract
Date of visit: 3 July 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 level 3 long course success rate for learners aged 16 to 18, is around the national average for sixth form colleges and has been at or around this rate for the last four years. The rate dipped slightly last year.
- The progress made by learners studying GCE programmes is better than that predicted by their attainment at entry to their programmes. Learners make particularly good progress in English, psychology and law with progress being less positive in art, mathematics and music.
- The level 2 long course success rate for learners aged 16-18 was particularly high in 2004/05 and is consistently above the national average for sixth form colleges.
- Adult courses were largely discontinued in September 2006 in line with learning and skills council (LSC) priorities.
- Since the last assessment visit there has been some improvement to success rates at GCE A level however success rates in a few subjects are persistently low at AS level.
- Attendance rates are consistently high and for last year was around 93%.

Quality of education and training

The visit explored the work the college is doing to improve teaching across the college by using information and learning technology (ILT).

- The college is seeking to improve the quality of teaching by implementing several appropriate strategies. These include the effective and innovative use of ILT to enliven teaching and personalise learning. The use of ILT is

monitored closely via the lesson observation system. Support for the use of ILT is linked to continuing professional development and staff appraisal. The college is gathering evidence to show how ILT is improving the work of teachers. The college intends to further develop the use of ILT to allow learners to monitor their own progress.

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 make improvements.

- A new Principal joined the college in February 2007. College and course managers are held to account to ensure that quality improvement measures have a positive impact on achievement. The Principal and his senior staff have a good understanding of areas where improvements are needed. Curriculum area action plans have been produced that clearly identify areas for improvement. However the plans do not contain sufficiently specific or measurable targets, for example, one target was to "improve communication". The monitoring of the action plans lacks rigor and sometimes simply describes what has taken place rather than judging whether a target has been achieved.
- The SAR provides a detailed analysis of learners' achievements and standards. A small number of curriculum areas have been targeted for what the college calls "quality assurance and improvement measures" and it is within these areas that the most rigorous action has been taken. The college has changed its entry criteria for some subjects this year and altered the curriculum offer. In some curriculum areas there have been extensive staff changes.

The visit explored the extent to which the college recognises its strengths and areas for improvement in relation to "Every child matters" outcomes and how this is being improved

- The college has taken great care to integrate and develop an agenda for improvement that relates to the 'Every child matters' outcomes. Many initiatives have been put in place to make improvements and these are reflected in many positive outcomes that learners described during the visit. However, the current SAR and development plan does not reflect fully these outcomes or the targets for the future.

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

- The completion of a new block is likely to provide improvements to the college facilities in science and art. The college recognises that there are some barriers to it reaching its strategic target for growth if there are no further developments to its current accommodation.