

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Sir John Deane's College

Date of visit: 6 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

Has the college maintained its high overall success rates in 2005/06? There are variations in the value-added grades awarded to different subject areas on GCE AS and GCE A-level courses. How effective are college strategies in improving these variations?

- The college has continued high success rates in most subjects in 2005/06. Success rates for the college overall remain significantly above those for similar colleges at GCE AS and GCE A-level. Most students make more progress from GCSE than would be expected and value-added continues to be good in most subjects. However, the college is aware of added value differences at subject level. Where there has been a decline or low added value scores at subject level in 2006, for example in AS design technology and sociology and A2 religious studies and Spanish, the college has put in place a range of actions aimed at improving examination grades.

Achievement at all levels show a close match between male and female students. Is there a similar close match between students achieving high grades? How well is the college encouraging students to achieve the highest grades?

- There are no discernible differences in success rates between male and female students. However, the college does not currently analyse student examination grade differentials by gender or ethnicity.

Most adults study and succeed well at level 1. How does the college promote progression?

- To promote progression for adult students the college provides course information about other programmes running at the college. It also signposts students to other local and regional provision and provides qualification and career advice and information where required.

Key skill success rates at level 2 improved between 2003/04 and 2004/05. Has this improvement been maintained in 2005/06 and what has been done to improve level 3 key skill success rates over the same period?

- The college has rationalised its key skills programme since the last annual assessment visit (AAV) and now only offers a highly successful key skill provision at level 2 in information technology.

Quality of education and training

How accurate and effective in securing improvement is lesson observation?

- Teaching and learning observation arrangements have been refined since the last AAV. New arrangements have restated the standards of teaching and learning required and observations are more closely moderated by senior managers. The college is also developing joint observation arrangements with another sixth form college. These new arrangements will allow staff to observe teaching and learning across both colleges using common documentation. The college is aware that these new arrangements will provide a better and more structured approach to the identification and sharing of good practice.

Additional support is judged by the college to be outstanding. How does the college gauge the impact of its support and how many students take-up the offer of additional support?

- The college provides comprehensive additional support, including study support, for approximately 10 per cent of its students. Adaptations, specialist equipment and specialist support staff are readily available. To gauge the impact of support interventions the college closely monitors the attendance, retention and success rates of all students receiving support. It also conducts exit interviews with all supported students to further gauge the effectiveness of these arrangements.

The college website states that a significant number of students use their GCE A-level qualifications to gain direct employment. What does the college mean by significant, and how effective are the college employability support arrangements to meet the aspirations of these students?

- Approximately 8 per cent of college students gain direct employment. The college has comprehensive careers and higher education information and advice arrangements. For those students who progress into work the college offers a broad range of additional employability support.

Leadership and management

How accurate and robust are the self-assessment report (SAR) and improvement planning arrangements?

- There is a robust cycle of quality improvement, supported by comprehensive quality control and assurance policies and procedures available to all staff through the college intranet. As a feature of this cycle each teaching department and support team prepares an individual SAR and development plan. Senior managers also develop from these personalised development plans which they monitor closely throughout the year. The areas for development identified by the college accurately reflect the judgements in the SAR. However, the college has missed an opportunity in its development plans to clearly show how it will maintain the strengths and satisfactory aspects of provision identified in the self-assessment reports.

The college is in the process of replacing senior staff. Has this had an impact on quality improvement or the accommodation strategy?

- The college has recently made three new senior staff appointments and restructured its senior staff team. The succession planning and staff changes have been carefully managed to minimise any impact on quality improvement or the college's comprehensive accommodation strategy.

The college also provided a brief up-date on the following themes.

1. Developments around the college race equality policy
 - The race equality policy has been reviewed and staff perception training has taken place alongside an increased promotion of diversity issues through the student tutorial process.
2. How the college has addressed its obligation to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA)
 - The college is now fully compliant with its DDA and SENDA obligations. There are still two first floor teaching areas with access problems for students with mobility difficulties. However, the college has rearranged its provision in these buildings to support learning for students with mobility difficulties.
3. The arrangements the college has in place to deal with addressing and recording complaints
 - The college has well established complaints procedures and personal protection policies and has recently developed a complaints logging system to supplement its established practice whereby all serious complaints are reviewed by the Principal and college governors. The college has recently introduced a more refined whistle-blowing policy, separating this function out from the previously combined fraud and whistle blowing policy.
4. Criminal records bureau (CRB) checks on staff and child protection training for staff and governors
 - CRB checks take place for all new staff and enhanced CRB checks have been undertaken for all existing staff. All staff and college governors have undertaken child protection awareness and level one training.
5. An overview of college participation in specialist diploma development and the regional 14-19 strategy
 - The college participates fully in regional 14-19 strategic developments, and is part of a successful specialist diploma



gateway consortium, although it is not directly involved in the first stage of specialist diploma delivery.