

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: New College Stamford  
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 actions has the college taken to try to improve retention rates and what has been the impact of these actions?

- The inspection in November 2006 noted that most courses at the college showed good retention and achievement rates. Retention rates on a few programmes, however, were identified as an area for improvement. The college has undertaken a number of actions to try to increase retention rates in 2006/07.
- Improvements have been made to the arrangements for initial advice and guidance in order to ensure that all learners are placed on appropriate courses. Learning mentors work closely with learners, teachers, learning support staff and, where appropriate, parents to try to ensure that learners receive well-co-ordinated and effective support. Changes have taken place in the curriculum to provide more flexible learning opportunities and make the curriculum more relevant to learners.
- All staff now have access to a range of information about learners and this is used to track progress and identify those who might be at risk of failing to complete their courses. Early intervention to monitor and support these learners is being used to improve retention rates.
- The inspection in November 2006 identified low retention rates on some national diploma courses in art and design. Retention rates on these courses are much improved in 2006/07. Retention rates have also improved on AS and A2 courses. Retention rates on a minority of other courses, however, remain an area for improvement.

## Quality of education and training

What actions has the college taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning? What has been the impact of these actions?

- The college has a comprehensive and well structured lesson observation system. All staff are observed annually and provided with detailed feedback. The outcomes from observations are used for staff appraisal, to share good practice and to plan professional development activities. Individual support is provided to help teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. Observation grades are also used in curriculum areas to inform self-assessment.
- Professional development activities during 2006/07 have been used to address the teaching and learning issues raised at the inspection in November 2006, including better use of questioning to assess understanding and planning lessons to meet the individual needs of all learners. Integrated learning technology (ILT) resources have improved and there has been much staff training on the effective use of ILT to support learning. Greater use of ILT has been observed in lessons but the college recognises this as an area for further development.
- The proportion of lessons judged to be good or better in observations of teaching and learning increased from 63% in 2005/06 to 73% in 2006/07.

How has the college further enhanced its thorough monitoring of learners' progress in order to raise standards?

- The inspection in November 2006 identified the extremely thorough monitoring of learners' progress to be a key strength of the college.
- All learners have appropriate individual learning plans (ILPs). Initial targets are based on learners' attainment at the start of the course and these targets may be amended as part of the review process. Progress is monitored formally once each term, during which action plans are reviewed and new actions are agreed. Learners receiving additional learning support have a review of their ILP for this support reviewed once every six or seven weeks.
- Close working between learning mentors, teachers, support staff and external agencies ensures that effective support is provided for learners who are underperforming and at risk of not completing their courses.
- The college has further improved its arrangements for monitoring learners' progress in 2006/07 by providing additional training for staff on how to set targets that are specific and measurable, and by making better use of data to get a more accurate view of progress against national standards.

- Learners at the college are very positive about the monitoring of progress and the support they receive. The overall success rate of learners receiving additional learning support is similar to that of the college as a whole. Value-added indicators indicate that the progress made on graded advanced qualifications has improved in recent years.

## Leadership and management

What actions has the college taken to improve the quality of self-assessment? What has been the impact of these actions?

- The college has made a number of amendments to its quality assurance arrangements in order to improve the overall quality of self-assessment.
- Training has been provided for all staff on correctly identifying key strengths of the provision and areas for improvement. Clear and detailed guidance is provided to staff to support the production of curriculum self-assessment reports, which are now more focused, judgemental and closely linked to the *Common Inspection Framework*. All staff now have access to management information to enable them to make more informed judgements about achievement and standards. The moderation process for curriculum self-assessment reports is more robust and, in 2007/08, the college will be using peer review arrangements with another college to help validate self-assessment judgements.
- Quality improvement plans are linked appropriately to strengths and areas for improvement identified in self-assessment reports. In many cases, however, the college recognises that milestones towards completion of targets are not specific enough, nor are they linked to quantifiable indicators to enable a clear and detailed view of progress.