

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Cornwall College

Date of visit: 12 March 2008

### Context

Cornwall College is one of the largest colleges in the country with approximately 37,000 students and over 2,000 staff. It has seven main sites and a number of outreach centres throughout the county. The college has provision in all 15 sector subject areas. The majority of learners are adults. Most provision is vocational, with academic courses available at St Austell and Camborne. The college has a large work-based learning provision with over 900 learners aged 16-18 and approximately 700 adult learners. In 2006/07, 480 learners enrolled on Train to Gain provision; this provision is planned to increase in 2007/08. The college has four Centres of Vocational Excellence and has been awarded the New Standard.

The college was last inspected in May 2006. At that inspection leadership and management and capacity to improve were judged to be good. Effectiveness of provision, achievement and standards and quality of provision were judged to be satisfactory. In curriculum areas, the college was awarded one grade of good and five of satisfactory.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving learners' outcomes, in particular retention and achievement of adult learners?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The college has continued to improve learners' outcomes since the annual assessment visit in 2007. This is a key priority for the college and initiatives to improve learner outcomes, in particular retention, are demonstrating a clear impact. In 2006/07, the overall retention rate improved by 6 percentage points from the previous year to 76% and the overall success rate improved by 7 percentage points to 67%. The 3 year trend in success rates for students aged 16-18 has improved, and in 2006/07 the rate was 5% higher than the national rate for level 1 long courses. Success rates for level 2 and 3 long courses have also improved but remain below the national average. Success rates for level 1 long courses for adult learners have not improved substantially and remain well below the national average. The college has identified this as a matter of concern and is taking action. The success rates for adult learners on long courses at levels 2 and 3 have improved and were

close to the national average in 2006/07. Overall framework completion rates in work-based learning have improved and in 2006/07 were above national rates for both advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships. The college has continued to improve retention rates in 2007/08; the current overall in-year retention rate is 95%, and it is 85% for those learners due to complete their programmes in 2007/08. The college target for retention in 2007/08 is 83%.

What progress has been made in improving timely completion rates on work-based learning programmes?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The college has continued to improve timely framework completion rates. In 2006/07, they were above national rates for advanced apprenticeships at 43%, compared to 37%. Timely completion rates for apprenticeships improved to 41% in 2006/07, but were 3% below the national rate. However, the provider performance report did not include apprenticeships in agriculture, horticulture and animal care, and the data may underestimate timely completion rates. Learner progress and outcomes are closely monitored at monthly management meetings, and action is taken to follow up concerns. Timely framework completion is a college priority. To date, initiatives to improve timely completion have had greater impact in some sector subject areas, for example, retail and administration, than in others. For example, an internally devised electronic tracking system is used successfully in some sector subject areas to improve timely framework completion. The college plans to implement this system in all work-based learning programmes. It includes records of tutorials and employer feedback as well as details of target setting and individual progress. Recruitment and information, advice and guidance processes have also improved, with a direct impact on learner progress. The college works well to improve employer responsiveness and liaises closely with employers to meet both learner and employer needs. In-year data indicate that timely framework completion rates will continue to improve in 2007/08.

#### Quality of provision

What progress has been made in improving the use of target setting for learners?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

Since the last annual assessment visit, there has been further training for staff on target setting. Detailed guidance to help tutors set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely targets is now in use throughout the college. Senior tutors check compliance with this guidance as well as the quality of reviews. The self-assessment report indicates improved implementation of appropriate target setting. A new recording system is used across most of the college, and an electronic version of this is being piloted at each site. Once modifications have been agreed, the college plans to adopt the system across the college. In the areas that it is being used, it provides generic course targets as well as individualised targets for specific learners that

reflect their needs. The system tracks both individual learner progress and course performance. Students at risk of not completing their programmes, and under-performing courses, are identified through a traffic light system and appropriate action is taken. The system integrates well with the existing monitoring of targets in work-based learning. Further developments include provision for student access to the online system and linking the management information system to individual learning plans, so that data are available at a corporate level to enable managers to monitor performance through courses and sites down to individual students. However, it is too early to judge the full impact of these changes on learners.

What progress has been made in improving planning for effective learning, and the use of ILT?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

Since the appointment of the quality director in March 2007, lesson planning and the management of learning have been reviewed across the college. All staff have been required to use standardised schemes of work and lesson plans. The quality compliance manager has checked all of these to ensure that they reach the required standard. This use of standardised lesson plans has recently been reviewed, and the college is working towards introducing some flexibility to ensure that lesson plans are fit for purpose for different types of provision. Once revisions are agreed, they will be circulated to all staff. A new system for observations of teaching and learning is clearly linked to professional development. Regular meetings across sites within sector subject areas enable the sharing of good practice, and the outcomes are communicated to the director of quality. The self-assessment report indicates improved access to, and use of, ILT across the curriculum. A new ILT strategy is about to be launched, with agreed expenditure for the purchase of new equipment and staff allocated to teach and mentor in the use of ILT across the college. An interactive learning environment is used to good effect on some courses but is still being developed on others.

## Leadership and management

What progress has been made in linking quality assurance to quality improvement?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The college has continued to make progress in linking quality assurance and quality improvement since the last annual assessment visit. Quality assurance and improvement are managed centrally. They are implemented consistently across the college sites. Changes in the management structure have enabled subject sector areas to identify good practice across sites and to work more effectively on improving the quality of provision. Good practice identified within sector subject areas is shared during corporate training days. A programme of continuing professional development is offered to all staff to improve communication and develop systems to assure the quality of the provision. For the first time, the self-assessment process in 2006/07 was based on sector subject areas. Action plans to

improve the quality of teaching and learning have been generated through this process. Curriculum reviews takes place annually across the whole college and corporate key performance indicators inform targets for staff at all levels. All of these changes are relatively new and are not yet fully embedded.

What progress has been made in the promotion of cultural awareness and diversity in the curriculum?	Insufficient progress
---	-----------------------

The college has not made sufficient progress in addressing this area for improvement identified at inspection in 2006. The college does not have an action plan to promote cultural awareness and diversity in the curriculum, and is not monitoring progress in implementing improvements. The self-assessment report for 2006/07 includes scant reference to this aspect of provision. Few of the students that inspectors met during the monitoring visit felt that the college promotes cultural awareness and diversity effectively. Progress reviews in work-based learning provision focus on learners' experience of equality of opportunity in the workplace rather than on their understanding of broader issues relating to equality and diversity. During the visit staff cited some examples of good practice in promoting cultural awareness and diversity in teaching and learning, such as in literacy and numeracy provision. The enrichment programme also includes some activities that promote awareness of diversity. Good practice is also disseminated through the extensive initial teacher training programme. Although the college has a strong focus on educational and social inclusion, it does not have a coherent strategy to promote cultural awareness and diversity in the curriculum.