

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Myerscough College

Date of visit: 6 May 2008

### Context

Myerscough College is one of the largest specialist land-based colleges in the country and is located near Preston in Lancashire. The main campus is situated on a 600 hectare estate which includes a farm, horticultural production, a sports centre, a golf academy, animal care and equine units. The college runs courses at centres in Blackburn, Burnley, Liverpool, Manchester, Dorset and Blackpool. The college has residential accommodation for 700 learners at the main campus.

In 2006/07 the college enrolled 3,900 further education learners of which 41% were aged 16-18 and 59% were male. For learners aged 16-18 and 19+, the largest proportion of enrolments was at level 2. Additionally around 589 work-based learning apprentices enrolled. In 2006/07, 2.2% of learners were from a minority ethnic background.

The college is a partner in two Centres of Vocational Excellence. These are in farriery, in association with the Farriery Training Council and in arboriculture and forestry, in association with the University of Central Lancashire.

Myerscough college was last inspected in 2006. Effectiveness of provision, capacity to improve, achievements and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management were all satisfactory. In the curriculum areas animal care and veterinary nursing, horticulture and golf, sport and leisure were good whilst equine studies and access programmes were satisfactory.

### Achievement and standards

What evidence does the college have for continued improvements in success rates?	Reasonable progress
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Success rates for students aged 16-18 on long level courses have improved. Between 2005/06 and 2006/07, success rates on level 1, 2 and 3 courses improved from 71%, 67% and 62%, to 76%, 75% and 70% respectively. Level 2 success rates are now at around national bench mark levels. However, level 1 and 3 success rates remain slightly below.

For those students aged 19+, no consistent upward trend was identified between 2004/05 and 2006/07. However, success rates have improved at all levels to 67%,

69% and 68% respectively, and are either at or just above national benchmarks. In 2006/07, achievement at levels 2 and 3 improved by over 10%.

The college has an increasing focus on improving higher level achievement. It is currently piloting an internal system of value added measurement and increasingly recognising the learner achievement tracker in judging its achievement and standards. The central monitoring of student's progress towards achieving target grades has been further developed.

What impact has the revised retention strategy, implemented in 2006/07 had, particularly on level 3 learners aged 16-18?	Reasonable progress
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The system for monitoring and reporting attendance and achievement has been further strengthened. Attendance and retention is routinely monitored against key performance indicators by curriculum management. Appropriate members of staff have increased access to central attendance and retention data. The course portfolios in some curriculum areas have been revised to more appropriately meet the needs of students. The processes for contacting students absent from college have been revised to provide a quicker response. Data for in-year retention rates for students aged 16-18 indicate significant improvements at long levels 1 and 2 to above 92% and 95% respectively. However at level 3, whilst improving on the previous year, the in-year retention stands at 84%. Retention rates are still low on some level 3 courses. For example on the national diploma in sport for the 197 students starting the course and due to complete in 2007/08 the retention rate is 72%. For the 152 students starting the course and due to complete in 2008/09 the rate presently stands at 88%. For students aged 19+ in-year retention shows significant improvement at levels 1, 2 and 3 to above 90% across all levels.

What evidence does the college have of improving success rates for work-based learning and in particular for timely success rates?	Reasonable progress
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The college has carried out restructuring, combining work-based learning, business skills, and employer engagement into the directorate of skills and enterprise. The virtual learning environment has been further developed to support work-based learners. A significant development of the system to monitor learner and assessor performance, introduced two years ago, has begun to impact over last 12 months. This includes a traffic light system to identify possible at-risk learners and the monitoring of overall and timely success rates measured at different levels of aggregation, to meet management, assessor and individual learners' needs. Electronic portfolios are ready to be piloted and some assessors have already been trained in their use. A dedicated quality improvement group for work-based learning has been introduced to monitor and further improve the quality of the work-based learning provision.

College data indicates continued improvements in success rates in 2007/08 with apprenticeship programmes, the largest group, improving to 67% for overall success

rates. Advanced apprenticeships also continue to improve but still remain below national benchmarks. Timely success rates, whilst continuing to improve, remain well below national benchmarks. College data indicates that amenity horticulture apprenticeships are performing particularly well with overall success rates of 80% or over for 2007/08.

### Quality of provision

What progress is the college making in continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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The college has invested in equipment and software to support information learning technology developments. Information learning technology champions and the learning and development staff support teachers well in developing information technology skills. However the use and impact of information learning technology is not yet specifically stated in the self-assessment report in each curriculum area.

The observation of teaching and learning has developed further into a thorough system and joint observations are now completed with staff from other colleges to provide consistency in the standard. The newly formed quality improvement group shares the outcomes of observations to assist the sharing of good practice across the college and to inform staff development and training needs. Following observation all staff complete an action plan which is monitored by their line manager. The profile of grades has increased in 2007/08 to 70% graded good or better. However, monitoring of the quality of tutorials across the college is insufficient, with only eight tutorial observations completed in 2007/08.

All teachers have good access to many staff development opportunities and methods of sharing good practice. These include the teaching and learning newsletter, subject learning coaches, and the learning and teaching, information learning technology champions in each curriculum area. Peer reviews are encouraged to share good practice but these are not formally monitored centrally. The support for new staff has improved through the new teachers group and all new staff are allocated a mentor.

What progress has the college made in resolving the issues noted around the satisfactory tutorial provision at the last annual assessment visit and in providing a more coherent coverage of <i>Every Child Matters</i> themes in group tutorials?	Reasonable progress
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The college has rearranged its student welfare and support services and a dedicated team of experts now provide input into learners' tutorial programme. The generic group tutorial scheme of work covers the *Every Child Matters* themes in outline but not all courses follow this scheme. The individual reviews and target setting progress is monitored through an audit of students' individual learning plans. This, along with a recent staff development day, indicates that whilst many features in the system are good more work is required to ensure consistency in the clarity of student target-

setting and monitoring of application across the college. The college does not yet have a comprehensive picture of the quality of its guidance and support/tutorial system but has plans in place to improve this.

In March 2008, Ofsted children's service inspection of the residential care at the college was graded as outstanding and also outstanding for each of the five *Every Child Matters* themes. The college was recently awarded Matrix accreditation with much student praise in the 'extra mile' that members of staff go to help them achieve. Healthy eating is very much improved as student opinion noted in the catering working group. Enrichment opportunities and contact with parents has also been improved.

### Leadership and management

At the last annual assessment visit improvements in quality assurance processes were noted but it was too early to judge the impact. What evidence does the college now have of their impact?	Reasonable progress
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The new management structure implemented in August 2007 has clearly increased the emphasis on quality assurance and accountability for students' success through the learning managers. The new learning managers have been well supported with training and regular meetings. Three quality improvement groups for curriculum, student support and work-based learning have been established to review progress against quality improvement plans, resolve key issues of concern and promote sharing of good practice. Analysis of quality improvement plans against the self-assessment report indicates a clearer link between actions and areas for improvement. Student data indicates an upward trend in success rates and better use is now being made of key performance indicators to monitor performance. The college has introduced rapid action teams to be set up with the most appropriate personnel to quickly solve short-term problems and these appear to be effective. For example, attendance monitoring indicated an issue with the buses so a rapid action team was formed and solutions quickly found. Since September 2007 support staff have been involved more in quality improvement processes but it is too soon to judge the impact of this.