

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Craven College

Date of visit: 11 June 2008

### Context

Craven college is a medium sized further education college that provides programmes in all sector subject areas. The college draws its learners from the dispersed towns and villages in the Yorkshire Dales and the Aire Valley corridor. The college works over six main sites and a number of outreach centres. The two principle sites are located in Skipton town centre and Aireville. The college has a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in business, leadership and management, together with two joint CoVEs in tourism and aviation.

In June 2008, 1,563 of the college's 5,332 learners were full-time, with the majority of these being 16-18 learners. The college is a member of the North Yorkshire 14-19 partnership and provides occupational training for 166 pupils from local schools. A commercial training division of the college, Tyro Training, provides workforce development provision for local and regional employers. The college also has 259 learners on apprenticeship programmes and 219 enrolments on the college's Train to Gain provision.

The college was last inspected in April 2007 and received good grades in all areas apart from achievement and standards, which was satisfactory. Educational and social inclusion were outstanding.

Since the previous inspection, the college has developed a number of new partnerships with colleges and private organisations. The college is currently at the initial application stage for a new college build with an expected completion of September 2010.

### Achievement and standards

To what extent has the college implemented strategies to improve success rates?	Insufficient progress
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During 2006/07, the college success rates declined and in some cases fell below national averages at all levels for all learners apart from adults at level 3. Success rates for 16-18 year olds declined at all levels during 2006/07 and at level 1 and level 3 are 3% and 5% below 2005/06 national averages. Success rates at level 2, have declined against the national average but remain 4% above. Success rates at level 3

for adults have improved from a low 49% during 2004/05, to 67%, which is 4% above the 2005/06 national average. Success rates at level 1 and level 2 have declined. Level 2 success rates have remained 9% below the national average for the last three years.

During 2006/07 pass rates were slightly improved at levels 1 and 2 for 16-18 year old learners but declined further below national averages at level 3. Conversely, adult pass rates declined at levels 1 and level 2 but improved some 3% at level 3.

The college has a good understanding of the issues relating to underperformance. A comprehensive analysis at individual programme level resulted in a detailed quality improvement plan, which divisional managers and the quality unit thoroughly monitor. Monitoring of attendance, retention, learners progress and those learners designated as at risk is more focused. The college offers positive and timely interventions to help divisional managers support learners at risk. Additional revision and assignment support sessions are timetable for all learners. Senior managers more closely monitor curriculum performance against improvement targets. Many of these strategies for improvement were already in place. However, the college has re-emphasised the importance of learner achievement and success through staff development, performance monitoring and newly introduced appraisal documentation. More emphasis has been placed on correctly recruiting learners onto the right level of programme. The college recognises that some staff were adopting poor recruitment practices. New course requirements are in place and tutors are required to take good account of the experience and qualification of their applicants prior to enrolment.

How effectively has the college embedded and further improved the success rates for apprentices and Train to Gain learners?	Reasonable progress
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Learning and Skills Council returns indicate that success rates on the college's apprenticeship provision have improved considerably. Overall success has improved year on year from 53% during 2005/06 to the current high 75%. Timely success rates have improved from a low 20% to 55% over the same period.

Advanced apprentice and apprentice programmes have both seen improvements and are now 11% and 7% above national averages. Health and social care have particularly high success rates of 91%, construction is now high at 74%, as is retail and commercial enterprise at 76%. Success rates for the small number of learners in agriculture, horticulture and animal care remains low at 50%, as does business administration and law. Overall success rates on Train to Gain provision have improved from 62% during 2005/06 to 79% during 2006/07. The college has sustained this improvement during 2007/08, with the current in-year overall success of 73%. Timely success has also improved from 50% during 2006/07 to the current 75%.

What progress has the college made in improving the retention rates of learners, particularly adults?	Reasonable progress
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During 2006/07 retention rates on long programmes declined at levels 1 and 2 for 16-18 year olds and although slightly improved at level 3 remain 3% below the national average. Adult retention on long programmes, an area for improvement at the previous inspection, was maintained at level 1, slightly improved at level 2 with more significant improvement at level 3. However, retention remained 11% below the national average at level 2.

The college adopted a number of strategies during 2007/08 to curb the declining retention rates. Retention has improved at all levels. The retention rates on long programmes for 16-18 year old learners are currently 86% and for adults 87%, both of which are above the college target of 85%.

### Quality of Provision

How successful has the college been in sustaining and further developing the quality assurance of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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The teaching and learning standards team have changed the focus of observations to provide better support for staff. The primary focus is on poor performing staff, new staff and helping staff to improve their performance from good to outstanding. Improved practices include more timely interventions and the inclusion of tutorial observations. All staff are observed annually regardless of full- or part-time status. The observation can be of a teaching session, a group tutorial or an individual tutorial.

An increased number of dual observations now take place in order to moderate and standardise grades. Every observer is expected to complete a dual observation each year. Teaching and learning performance remains a key staff development topic. Peer observations have been piloted in 2007/08 with a view to a full launch in 2008/09. Teaching coaches provide guidance, support or the sharing of practice in all curriculum areas. Divisional managers can direct observations of teaching to target identified areas of concern.

What actions have taken place to consider the learner voice?	Reasonable progress
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Learners have a good range of systems and processes to make their voice heard. Externally managed questionnaires that check perceptions on a range of key factors are issued each term to all learners. The college consolidates the results into reports that are placed on the intranet. An active student union arranges course representative meetings where they discuss identified issues. These meetings are effective and the college is responsive in taking action or in reporting back when they cannot tackle an issue. Tutors are approachable both during and out of official

tutorial time to resolve individual problems or issues. The college also uses student focus groups and course team meetings with student representatives to gather learner views.

## Leadership and management

What progress has been made in improving the inadequate provision identified during self-assessment in information and communication technology and mathematics?	Reasonable progress
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The 2006/07 self-assessment report identified two occupational areas as inadequate that had been satisfactory at the time of inspection. Following a detailed evaluation, the college has changed the line management of the areas. The new managers have introduced new staff learners caseloads with agreed performance targets. Focus on the quality of teaching and learning and the monitoring of learner's progress has increased. Communication issues resulting from a number of part-time staff working in isolated locations in the college's many sites has been improved through consolidating teaching hours. Early indications are that performance is improving. The mathematics A-level January pass rate for 2006/07 was 33%; this has significantly improved to 83%. The applied A-level double award in information and communication technology shows an improved grade profile. However, it is too soon to assess the extent to which these measures will improve learner success rates.

What progress has been made in improving the analysis of, and effective use of data, particularly the impact of additional learning support, the success rates of diverse groups and trends and judgements compiled through the observation of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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The analysis and use of management information was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. The range of, and access to management information is now improved. A suite of standard reports is available to divisional managers to monitor performance. These include divisional statistical reports, staff development, good practice and a range of observation profiles. Additional reports can be created on request. A recently introduced system allows staff to access data from home. Detailed reports analyse and review the performance of learners receiving additional learning support as well as the performance by gender and ethnicity. Data is analysed at both course and learner level with any under-performing areas monitored using a colour coding system. Plans are in place to include value added and distance travelled using the learner achievement tracker. In 2007/08, the college piloted e-registers with the intention of full implementation in 2008/09.

What progress has been made in improving the self-assessment moderation and validation practices?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection, the insufficient external involvement in validating the college self-assessment was identified as an area for improvement. The college has changed the validation of curriculum self-assessment to a two-stage process. The divisional manager completes the first stage of course validation and the second stage of moderation is completed by a small group from the senior management team. Previously this process was completed on an individual basis. Once grades are consolidated the self-assessment is externally validated using staff from similar colleges in the region. The college intends to extend membership of the external panel to include employers.

The self-assessment process has improved, although some aspects of the validation of grades remain insufficiently thorough. Managers compare divisional success rates using headline national averages for notional levels rather than curriculum or sector subject area specific averages. Some areas validated as outstanding have declining success rates and some do not reach the college target of 76% for success rates.