

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Hartlepool  
Date of visit: 4 December 2006

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

The inspection report of 2006 noted that success rates for 16-18 year olds at level three need to be improved. What has been done by the college to address this issue?

- In 2005/06 the success rate for 16-18 year old learners increased by 1% to 59%, this is below the national rate of 67%. The college has a clear understanding of how to improve this success rate. Underperforming curriculum areas have been identified. Measures to be taken have been included in the college's operating statement and divisional action plans. Actions already undertaken include restructuring a division to improve management and organisation. Poor and high performing divisions have been matched in order that good practice can be modelled.

Success rates in 2005/06 have improved with many now at national averages. However, achievement for adults at level one remained static. Does the college know why this is and what is planned to improve the situation?

- The success rate for adults at level one has improved by 2% but remains 10% below the national rate. The college is aware of the reasons for this. Many learners for example have very poor or no entry qualifications. In particular two divisions with large numbers of enrolments have a significant impact on the success rates as a whole. The college is realigning its focus from adult core curriculum qualifications to a Skills for Life approach. In particular re-focussing the work of the Access information technology centre will, it is hoped, improve retention and achievement.

The SAR report states that key skills success rates in 2005/06 have improved by 5%. In E business and information technology and construction achievement rates have improved to 83% and 72% respectively. How has this been achieved? Is good practice shared across the college and what is the overall achievement of key skills when the October/November data has been processed?

- Overall success rates for keys skills have risen by 13% to 30%. This figure masks the outstanding key skills achievement in some areas such as construction that have a 91% success rate for key skills at level one. This success has been supported by the standards moderation team. The team is proactive in identifying good practice and supporting underperforming areas. For example they provide advice and guidance following moderation events and examples of assignments and portfolios. The information learning technology (ILT) team also have objectives that focus on improving key skills. For example, making materials available through the virtual learning environment (VLE) Blackboard and providing a website for the sharing of good practice.

Minimum target grades for GCSEs were used for the first time in 2005/06. How successful have they been in raising achievement?

- The systematic use of challenging targets for this group of learners is not yet well developed. The success rate in 2005/06 for the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) is 63% just below the national rate. In the same period enrolments increased from 297 to 316. The use of minimum target grades in its first year of operation has had little impact on results. Minimum target grades are introduced to learners in terms two and three during tutorial time. At the time of the annual assessment visit (AAV) they have not been introduced to learners. Learners report that they feel confident about the support they receive but they are unclear about how to systematically improve their work.

Framework success rates in work based learning at the last annual assessment visit (AAV) were improving and satisfactory. Have they improved since the last AAV?

- Over all success rates show an improvement across the curriculum areas that deliver apprenticeships and are above national rates in business administration with an 83% success rate and plumbing with a 72% success rate in 2005/06. Work based learning (WBL) is now better embedded into curriculum areas and benefits from central co-ordination. Dedicated and additional assessors have been appointed and the WBL management information system is supporting better

data collection of targets and achievements. However, success rates for some areas are unsatisfactory in particular early years with 0% and motor vehicle with 34% in 2005/06. The college is aware of these weaker areas and has strategies in place to improve performance.

How is recognising and recording performance and achievement (RARPA) being developed and embedded?

- RARPA is embedded in the majority of the college's work. Aspects of the RARPA system include initial assessment, individual development plans, smart targets, and a uniform tutorial system with a graded feedback to learners A-D for target outcomes. Part-time learners are now being included in the approach and the college is piloting a 'pro-monitor' data base that will assist tutors in providing feedback across the existing five data bases. The college plans to implement this in September 2007.

## Quality of education and training

The SAR states that 5.7% (10) observations were grade inadequate and that most of these observations were of part-time staff. What is being done to improve the teaching of part-time staff?

- Following the reduction in overall staff numbers at the start of 2006/07 the use of part-time staff has been halved. There is now better management of existing part-time staff by increasing the contact hours of more experienced staff. The teaching observation scheme in 2006/07 will give priority to part-time staff and observations will begin in December 2006. Recruitment procedures for part-time staff have been improved and appointments are now overseen and approved by a vice principal before being allocated to a curriculum division.

A substantial amount of teaching is also graded as satisfactory. How does the college plan to improve satisfactory teaching to good or outstanding?

- The teaching observation scheme is robust and has developed well over the last three years. There is very good analysis of data arising from the observation scheme both at college and divisional level. This enables strengths and areas for improvement to be accurately

identified. The college is aspirational and has set targets for all divisions. For example one division has the target to achieve 50% of teaching at grades one and two. Targets set are proportional to the performance of divisions. All staff graded as inadequate are given an action plan and re-observed.

The self-assessment report (SAR) reports a projected increase in the numbers of learners pursuing Skills for Life qualifications (a projected rise of 40%). Does the remodelling of the college's curriculum organisation support this development and are there sufficient numbers of qualified staff to deliver this development?

- The college has steadily increased the numbers of staff qualified to levels three and four in literacy and numeracy. However, the college recognises that it remains an area for development. In 2006/07 17 staff are working towards level three and four qualifications in literacy and numeracy. The college has also restructured its provision for literacy, numeracy, communication and Skills for Life to allow for better use of staff expertise and resources.

The SAR reports active involvement in the Train to Gain programme and a prioritisation of qualifications identified as priorities by the Sector Skills Councils, the Regional Skills partnership and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). How successful has the college been in its delivery of Train to Gain and how is it developing capacity to increase quantities of work in this area?

- Train to Gain constitutes a success story for the college. In 2005/06 the European Social Fund (ESF) /Learning and Skills Council (LSC) train to gain contract achieved all its targets including an 87% success rate. The new contract is set for 188 learners or £250k across five curriculum areas. Progression opportunities for learners are good and there are also opportunities to develop additional full cost programmes for employers. The college has been inventive in developing assessors across the range of areas. For example developing college cleaning and caretaking staff to assess national vocational qualifications (NVQ) in cleaning and support services. The LSC has recently encouraged the college to continue recruitment in priority areas. The Adult Learning Inspectorate has also identified the college as one of England's most successful WBL providers in the chief inspector's annual report.

How is the performance of learners receiving additional support monitored and measured?

- The monitoring of the performance of learners receiving additional learning support is good. Collection and analysis of data is now sophisticated providing data that is deep and broad. Data for 2005/06 shows that learners receiving support performed better than their peers. For learners aged 16-18 years old who declared a learning difficulty and or disability achievement rates have risen over the last three years from 84% to 87% and for 19+ learners rates have risen from 63% to 83%.

## Leadership and management

At the last inspection the promotion of equality and diversity in particular responses to the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRA) were areas for improvement. Have managers taken effective action to improve this area?

- Effective action has been taken in relation to the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRA) and an amended and comprehensive policy is now in place. In addition senior managers benefited from working with a training consultant becoming more proactive in relation to promoting race equality and diversity. The college has also been proactive in relation to new disability legislation developing a revised policy and recently setting up a disability advisory group comprising both staff and students. Plans for the future include divisions supporting an equality and diversity champion who will have the opportunity to undertake a qualification in equality and diversity from the University of Teesside. Marketing materials are suitably diverse and challenge traditional stereo-types for example, women in construction. So far the college has been moderately successful in attracting non-traditional learners into vocational areas.

The management of literacy and numeracy was identified as an area for improvement. What has improved since the last AAV?

- Management and coordination of this area have been moved to the sixth form division. As well as the head of division of the sixth form a cross college co-ordinator and another member of staff have been identified as being responsible for coordinating the strategy across the college. Strategic management of the area is overseen by a member of

the executive team. These arrangements are in the early stages of development. Roles and responsibilities are not yet clarified. Ways of linking Skills for Life, key skills, literacy, numeracy and communication are not yet fully formed.

Is financial management still good? Is the college still operating within its budget?

- Sound financial stewardship has seen the college move from a deficit of £300k brought about by the withdrawal of the new deal national contract in 2004/05 to a break even budget of £20k in 2005/06. While the LSC rating has moved from category A to B, a successful approach to redundancy and restructure has successfully realigned the college. Future plans to diversify college income include: developing the Train to Gain initiative; offering full cost and bespoke programmes to employers and developing the higher education programmes. Currently these include four foundation degrees with the University of Teesside and teacher education programmes with the University of Sunderland. The college is proactive in seeking other funding including ESF and learn direct.

Senior managers recognise in the SAR “the need for a step change” in relation to improving success rates. How are managers helping this to happen?

- Senior managers are committed to improving success rates. The 2006/07 operating statement is now focussed on improvements in for example 14-19, 16-18, Every Child Matters, WBL, higher education and key skills. In particular the alignment of professional practice observations, appraisal, curriculum scrutiny and continuing professional development with priority curriculum needs is key to supporting improvements. All operating statements are focussed on identifying under performance and putting in place measures to address issues. The identification of key performance indicators to monitor divisional performance supports this initiative.

Operational and /Key performance indicators.

Are child protection procedures in place and are all CRB checks compliant with recent guidance from the Department for Education and Skills and the LSC?

- The college is fully compliant with the recent CRB guidance from the Department for Education and skills. All staff undergo criminal record

bureau checks including all contracting and part-time staff. The college retains a data base for information.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- None

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

The college operates a satisfactory complaints procedure. Individual complaints are investigated and responded to promptly and appropriately. However, there are no over-all records of complaints, or analysis of trends, in order that the college may take corrective action.