

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Cambridge Regional College
Date of visit: 16 October 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

- Success rates have continued to improve steadily for students aged 16-18 but are still below the national average at level 3. The college has withdrawn provision in all GCE AS and A level subjects because performance was unsatisfactory. Excluding these results, success rates at level 3 have also improved. Success rates have improved for students aged 19 or over and in 2004/05 were at the national average. Early indications from 2005/06 suggest that the rate of improvement has at least been maintained. The overall success rate in work-based learning programmes has improved significantly from 38% in 2004/05 to 59% in 2005/06 and in brickwork is very high at 92%. In most vocational areas the success rate is at least satisfactory, and where the rate is still low there has been a significant improvement, for example in engineering where the success rate has improved from 0% in the previous two years to 33%.

Quality of education and training

Every Child Matters themes

- The college has fully embraced the principles of Every Child Matters. Each section of the college has produced a detailed and useful analysis of how provision contributes to the ECM themes and a separate self-assessment for ECM is to be included in the 2005/06 report. Staff have received extremely effective training and have therefore been able to assemble very convincing evidence of the progress that the college has made. The college has produced a single central record of checks on staff, in accordance with the requirements of the Department for Education and Skills. There are appropriate policies and procedures in place for protecting young people, and the arrangements for looking after

vulnerable young people, including those who are at risk of withdrawing from education, are secure. Risk assessments are thorough.

Key Skills

- In its 2004/05 self-assessment of key skills the college judged its provision as inadequate and the disappointing outcomes for students in external key skills tests confirmed this. Since then there have been a number of important changes to the organisation of key skills, including placing the responsibility for key skills delivery firmly within the vocational teaching areas and giving sector leaders the responsibility for improvement. Staff development activities to support the changes, including the inclusion of key skills sessions in the induction programme for new staff, have been well considered. Student success rates in 2005/06 confirm the effectiveness of these measures. Although at the time of this visit not all of the results had been entered onto the college's database, there was already a fivefold increase in the number of successful completions.

Leadership and management

Staff development

- The self-assessment report identified staff development as a strength and the visit confirms this. Staff development is well tailored to individual needs and has supported improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The target for the number of qualified teachers is high, but has been met. Staff induction is thorough. Monitoring of staff development outcomes, particularly through observations of teaching and learning, is well planned and executed. The analysis of lesson observations is thorough and the resulting profile confirms that teaching has improved in areas where student success rates have also improved.

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 continues to make significant improvements to its accommodation and resources which reflect its mission to be: 'First choice for learning and skills'. Since the last AAV the 'SmartLIFE' centre, has been

built and is now in full operation. This exciting new facility provides large numbers of trainees and employees with the opportunity to learn about modern methods of construction. Its purpose is well matched to the growth area of construction in Cambridgeshire and the Eastern Counties. The college is now involved in five Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), in leadership and management (lead college), manufacturing, sports coaching, construction and in health and care.