

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Havering Sixth Form College
Date of visit: 20 November 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

Have students' achievements continued to rise in 2006?

- Students' achievements have continued to improve. The overall success rate for level 3 qualifications was 83% in 2006, 1% above the national average. GCE AS and A-level success rates were also above the national average in 2006 and generally show a positive picture, with a few exceptions. The overall value added score for GCE AS, A-level and vocational courses has increased over the past two years. The ALPS overall value-added score is very good for both GCE AS and A-levels. The overall proportion of high-grade passes for GCE A2 and AS courses has risen steadily for three years. On GCE AS courses it is now 33% and equal to the national average and on GCE A2 courses it is 37%, just below the national average of 40%.

Level 2 success rates remained static at 80% in 2006, although they remained significantly above the national average of 73%. Level 1 success rates rose by 25% from the previous year and are now 20% above the national average.

What actions have led to the large rise in success rates for key skills IT and communication?

- Success rates for key skills qualifications in information technology and communication at levels 2 and 3 improved considerably from 2005 to 2006, although they are still low. This is partly due to an increased emphasis on developing the skills of students to build portfolios of evidence.

Why is the application of number key skill qualification not offered by the college? Why are the results for GCSE mathematics so erratic?

- Instead of the key skills qualification of application of number, students study entry level and level 1 City and Guilds (C&G) numeracy and achieve very high success rates. At level 2 an adult numeracy qualification is taken alongside GCSE mathematics. Pass rates for the numeracy qualification were low in

2006 (25%). GCSE mathematics success rates declined considerably from 49% in 2005 to 30% in 2006, compared to the national average of 39%.

Both qualifications are offered together and students may be entered for both examinations. However, the teaching of the course is geared towards the GCSE and not tailored to the numeracy qualification; the numeracy syllabus is not mapped onto the GCSE scheme of work. Students are thus not systematically prepared for the numeracy qualification and so are unlikely to be successful. At the same time, students who require additional preparation for GCSE mathematics are not receiving it, hence the low pass rate. More clarity in selection procedures and delivery is needed to ensure the success of students on these courses.

What was the attendance figure for 2005-2006 and what are the current attendance rates?

- The college reports that students' attendance has improved significantly across the board. The attendance rate was 88% in 2006 and is currently 90%.

Quality of education and training

How is the college seeking to improve the quality of teaching and learning?

- The college has a clear focus this year on increasing the quality of teaching and learning. A team of external consultants recently carried out a large number of lesson observations. The team's findings indicate that the proportion of outstanding lessons was 14%, 53% were good and just 2% were inadequate. A total of 141 lesson observations took place and around 25 of these were joint observations involving college staff, which was a useful form of staff development.

Where lessons are judged to be inadequate, staff have discussions with both their line manager and cross-college staff on what improvements are required and then have a further lesson observation. Teachers whose lessons are judged to be satisfactory are encouraged to attend further voluntary staff training sessions. Staff are required to undertake two peer observations during the course of the year, but whether this takes place is not monitored and the outcomes of these peer observations are not formally evaluated for impact.

Level 1 courses are now structured more coherently; timetable changes lead to fewer staff being involved in their delivery and these staff are more committed to level 1 provision. More dedicated in-class support staff are also provided.

How is the college spreading the good practice that enables some subjects to perform particularly well in obtaining high-grade passes?

- Staff training sessions termed “learning and lunch” take place around three times per term. The sessions are voluntary and attended by around 25 staff per session. They are linked to compulsory weekly staff periods which are used four times each term to share good practice in teaching and learning in departments and across subject sector areas. This is an effective way to share good practice.

How does the college plan to continue to raise students’ progression rates to HE?

- The low progression rate to higher education was a weakness highlighted at the previous inspection. The college has made good progress in increasing the rate of progression from 57% in 2004 to 63% in 2005; the latest figure for 2006 is 65%. Careful monitoring is undertaken of second year advanced level students who have not applied to university and actions are taken to encourage them to be aware of the opportunities available, including individual meetings with tutors and parents where relevant, plus organised visits to university open days. In addition, all advanced level students continue to be sponsored to undertake a commercial questionnaire to help them in their choice of university course.

Leadership and management

Progress since the previous AAV

- A new principal commenced in August 2006. Staff report feeling refreshed in their work and they are optimistic about the future of the college. There is a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Progress is being made on many of the issues raised in the previous inspection and AAV.

How well has the college applied its quality assurance processes to subjects which did not perform well?

- Achievement reviews are carried out three times per year for under-performing courses. These meetings have a high profile, being chaired by the

deputy principal and attended by the principal and other key staff. Recommendations for improvement are made covering all aspects of the provision.

What student achievement targets are in place?

- Overall students' achievement targets have been set for the 2006/07 academic year which, if met, will place them all above the 2006 national average. These targets aim to improve marginally the dramatic increase in success rates seen at level 1 (from 66% in 2005 to 84% the following year) and to improve by 3% at level 2 (from 76% in 2006 to a target of 79% for 2007). The target for level 3 provision will be raised by one or two percentage points and will also incorporate value added performance measures. The targets are realistic and aligned to the college's new mission "to be an outstanding provider".

How is the ECM agenda being taken forward within the college?

- The Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda is clearly an important consideration for college staff. Staff development on ECM outcomes for all staff took place in February 2006. The ECM agenda is discussed as part of the student committee of the corporation and an audit of the main strengths in the college has been carried out. The tutorial programme has ECM outcomes embedded into it. Well-established work to meet ECM outcomes is carried out by some curriculum teams. For example BTEC leisure and sports development students work with a local primary school and PRU to run weekly PE sessions and the students organise disability swimming galas and athletic events. ECM outcomes are embedded as part of the self-assessment process, but currently no weaknesses are identified in the SAR and there is no college action plan with measurable targets to drive the ECM agenda forward.

Why have some SSA grades been changed in the draft SAR for 2006?

- Draft SAR grades for 2005/06 indicate changes in some curriculum areas from the previous year, for example the science, maths and psychology grade has dropped from good to satisfactory and grades in four curriculum areas increased from satisfactory to good. These changes are based on sensible consideration of students' achievements, the value added performance of courses and to some extent the quality of teaching and learning from the profile of lesson observations.

In what ways does the college capture the student voice?

- The college aims for student representative groups to contribute to ensuring teaching and learning is stimulating, challenging, inclusive and effective for all students. The main students' representative group is elected by tutor groups, which elect two students per group. Five students from this group who met with the inspector were generally very positive about the college. However, they were confused over the selection criteria for students from this main group to attend other student representative bodies such as the corporation committee and the equality and diversity group.