

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: City of Wolverhampton College
Date of visit: 28 February 2007

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

What does the college data for 2005/06 indicate about current performance?

- Since the last inspection in January 2003 the overall success rate for long courses has increased significantly, at a rate better than other colleges of a similar type. The success rate in 2005/06 for long courses was around the national average. For learners aged 16 to 18 overall success rates for long courses at all levels in 2005/06 were similar to the national average and have increased since the last inspection, although at level 3 the increase between 2003/04 and 2005/06 was only slight. Learners on BTEC national diploma, AVCE, GCE AS and A level courses in 2005/06 made good progress based on prior levels of attainment. Most success rates for sector subject areas in 2005/06 were similar to the national average.
- For adult learners the success rates in 2005/06 at levels 1, 2 and level 3 provision, including GCE AS and A level, were similar to the national average. The success rate was above the average for adult learners at level 3 on courses excluding GCE AS and A level qualifications. Just over half of the adult success rates for sector subject areas in 2005/06 were above the national average with most of the remaining at the average.
- The overall short course success rate for programmes over five weeks has increased significantly since the last inspection. In 2005/06, the rate was above the national average. Short course success rates for programmes under five weeks increased slightly between the last inspection and 2005/06 to just above the national average. Key skills success rates in 2005/06 have increased significantly since the last inspection. However, they remain low, but are above the national averages.

- The overall success rates for learners on the Employer Training Pilot in 2005/06 were high. For work-based learning the framework success rate for advanced apprentices in 2005/06 was low and well below the national average. Figures for the first part of 2006/07 show that advanced apprentice success rates are improving to around the national average. Apprentice framework success rates between 2003/04 and 2005/06 increased substantially. However in 2005/06 the rate remained low and well below the national average. Apprentice success rates for the first part of 2006/07 indicate the rate is continuing to improve to just below the national average. Progression rates for learners on Entry to Employment programmes running in 2006/07 were satisfactory.

Quality of education and training

How effective is 14 to 16 provision and 14 to 19 collaboration?

- The college delivers a broad range of programmes for 14 to 16 learners which includes the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP), young apprenticeship programmes and provision for excluded and disengaged learners. The IFP programmes show a mixed picture of success. Courses in beauty and child studies have success rates under 50% due to retention issues. Success rates on administration and construction courses are high. The problems with retention on the child studies course have continued and current figures show retention under 70%. The college has put in place a number of well focussed staff development sessions to address staff needs in teaching learners aged 14 to 16. These include workshops on classroom management and assessment strategy. There are well structured documents to support staff. Good progress is being made with the young apprenticeship programme.
- The college contributes well to the local 14 to 19 agenda and is involved in many partnership and networks. It has applied to be involved in all five new diploma courses that are being developed. The college undertakes many effective events with schools and has a member of staff seconded on a part-time basis to the local authority.

Progress with group tutorials

- The college is making good progress in improving the delivery and quality of group tutorials. A small number of observations of group tutorial have identified good practice but the analysis is less clear on the aspects which are less effective. The college recognises there is further work to be undertaken to improve the consistency of group tutorials. There have been some innovative developments in the delivery of group tutorials which include the delivery of citizenship for A/AS and Connect programmes and a stronger focus on the Every Child Matters themes for pre-vocational learners. The introduction of the graduation of level diploma (GOLD) for level 1 learners has been beneficial in encouraging learners to achieve their main qualification, maintain high levels of attendance and take-up enrichment opportunities.

Leadership and management

How rigorous are quality assurance procedures?

- The college has a good range of evidence for the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The ECM outcomes are covered well in tutorials and evidence is also identified from curriculum areas. The college rightly identifies a number of priorities in order to move the ECM agenda further forward. It needs to continue to assess the impact of policies and campaigns in relation to the five outcomes.
- The college has assessed the impact of the new system for observing teaching and learning. The teaching observation report for 2005/06 clearly draws out the impact of the new scheme and offers a detailed analysis and breakdown of lesson observation grades both at a whole college level, for part-time and full-time staff and curriculum areas. The key strengths and weaknesses for teaching and learning have been identified. Alongside the teaching observation report there is a comprehensive report on the teaching and learning service run by the college. The college has invested a number of resources to improve teaching and learning through mentoring, the peer development scheme and workshops. There is reference to teaching and learning in curriculum quality improvement plans. It is unclear how the college will address the lower percentage of good or better teaching for part-time staff.

Progress made in improving English as a second language (ESOL)

- At the last inspection, ESOL was unsatisfactory. At the re-inspection, inspectors found the college had made insufficient progress and considered the area was still unsatisfactory. Since the re-inspection the college has taken substantial action to improve ESOL. This has included a reorganisation of provision to better respond to the needs of learners, new managers and staff, a significant programme of staff development to improve teaching and learning, a strengthening of quality improvement arrangements, particularly the observations of teaching and learning and closer monitoring by senior managers. The college secured significant levels of external advice and guidance from experienced ESOL practitioners on how to raise standards. College observations show a substantial improvement in the standard of teaching and learning. There has been a marked increase in pass rates in 2005/06. However, the college recognises that, although most success rates in 2005/06 were at the national average and some above, retention rates have either stayed at a similar level or declined.

