

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Cadbury Sixth Form College
Date of visit: 26 June 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 action is the college taking to resolve the very low level 1 long course success rate and to ensure that the long course level 2 success rate is less variable?

- Although level 1 provision represents only a small proportion of the college's work, between 2003/04 and 2005/06 long course success rates at this level were very low. The college recognises this as an issue and is taking robust action to resolve the low success rates. Students on level 1 courses now receive an initial assessment to establish their particular learning requirements. Planning takes better account of students' learning needs. Reviews of students' progress occur more regularly. Staff check and review attendance more closely. Where learners are at risk of leaving early the college provides support to help them complete their studies including strengthening child care arrangements. At the time of the annual assessment visit it was too early to assess if these initiatives to increase success rates were effective.
- The long course level 2 success rates between 2002/03 and 2005/06 were variable, with a particularly sharp decline in 2004/05 to substantially below the national average. The college has put in place comprehensive actions to improve success rates and ensure less variability. A thorough review of what students do less well has taken place with clearly targeted actions to resolve problems and to maintain what is done well. The college has strengthened the planning of learning to ensure its relevance to the specific needs of level 2 students, particularly those re-sitting GCSE English and mathematics. Students receive greater additional support, especially for language. Teachers previously relied mainly on presentations to explain topics, now they use methods which involve the students more in different types of learning activities. If appropriate, the

college provides students with additional time, introductory programmes and more appropriate qualifications for level 2 work. Success rates for 2005/06 indicated that these initiatives were effective with the rate returning to the national average.

What is the position with long course success rates for GCE AS and A2 provision, the proportion of higher grades and the progress students make in comparison with their levels of attainment at entry?

- In 2003/04, the college overall long course success rate for GCE AS and A2 qualifications was below the national average. Since then the gap between the college's success rate and the national average has narrowed and in 2005/06 was around the average. The proportion of learners achieving high grade at GCE A2 between 2004/05 and 2005/06 has increased significantly to the national average. However, for GCE AS provision, the percentage of high grades in 2005/06 remained the same as in 2004/05. At the last inspection, most students achieved the GCE AS and A2 grades expected based on their GCSE results. Since then, the proportion achieving better than their expected grades for GCE A2 has increased slightly with the increase for GCE AS being more marked. However, as the self-assessment report recognises, in some subject areas there was no increase.

What is the college doing to increase success rates for key skills?

- Success rates for key skills in 2005/06 were low. Nevertheless, they were similar to the sixth form college national average and had increased significantly on 2004/05 when they were very poor. To improve key skills success rates the college has ensured learners are entered for a key skills course which meets their precise learning needs, and when they have difficulty with key skills the college provides further teaching to support learning. Teachers now place a much greater emphasis on students' completing their portfolios of evidence and the tests for key skills. At the time of the annual assessment visit it was too early to judge if these actions were effective in leading to higher success rates for key skills.

Quality of education and training

Has the college ensured that the enrichment curriculum appeals to all cultural groups?

- The college is particularly aware of the diverse background of its students and what enrichment activities will appeal to their different cultural needs. For accredited enrichment courses, the college selects awarding body syllabuses that it considers covers the perspectives of a broad range of cultural groups. The college has a good understanding when planning social events and visits to take account of the different requirements of cultural groups for particular forms of social behaviour. The college promotes student groups that aim to develop interest in particular faiths and respect for human rights. Managers and staff are discussing ways to improve recreational sport programmes to take better note of the needs and interests of different groups including single sex fitness classes and better provision for cricket.

Leadership and management

Has the college maintained the improvement in quality assurance arrangements found at the last inspection, which had a more rigorous and clearer focus on retention and achievement and teaching and learning?

- At the last inspection, inspectors considered that quality assurance arrangements had much more rigour and a closer focus on retention and achievement and teaching and learning than at the inspection in 2001. This rigour and focus has been maintained and improved. In addition to thorough subject reviews, improving success rates, comprehensive arrangements for teaching and learning observations and the collection of students' views, the college has taken note of the concern in the last inspection report of insufficient concentration on what students are learning. Staff development now focuses significantly on how to provide a range of different learning approaches which fully engages all students and meets their specific learning needs. The college has reviewed its approach to tutorial provision and re-focused it to concentrate on ensuring tutors monitor more closely learners' progress and that tutorials better support learning and students' personal support needs. The college has strengthened its reviews of subject areas. In addition to the regular

subject area reviews, when performance of an area is of a lower standard than the rest of the college an internal quality review takes place. This review has a more comprehensive analysis of issues, followed by tighter monitoring of performance by senior managers and a stronger focus on actions to improve.

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

- No

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

- No