

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Bilborough
Date of visit: 05 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

Have high overall success rates been maintained?

- College data for 2005/06 shows that overall headline success rates continue to be well above national average levels. Overall success rates and long course success rates improved slightly in 2005/06 and both now stand at 86.4%. Success rates at A and AS level continue to be above national average rates.
- Success rates improved in seven subject sector areas, with significant improvements made in the preparation for life and work area. Success rates declined slightly in three sector subject areas and in science and mathematics success rates are now below the national average level.
- Key skills success rates have improved significantly from a very low base. College data shows overall key skills success rates to be 31% in 2005/06 and further improvements continue in the current year. At the time of the annual assessment visit college data shows key skills success rates for 2006/07 at 58% with further completions expected before the end of the year.

What does value-added tell us about learners performance?

- Value-added data shows that overall learners make at least the progress expected based on their prior attainment and many learners make good progress. Learners on AS level courses generally make better progress than learners on A level courses. However, there are considerable variations in value-added scores between different subjects on both A and AS level courses.

Quality of education and training

What changes have been made to key skills provision and what impact have they had?

- Very significant improvements have been made to key skills provision. This area is now closely monitored by a senior member of staff and a curriculum leader and a dedicated teaching team has been established. The tracking and monitoring of learners progress is much improved and is now good. The profile of key skills has been raised and significant staff training has improved the understanding of qualification requirements. Specialist key skills teachers support learners well and work closely with subject teachers to ensure opportunities for collecting key skills evidence from subject specific work are maximised. A differentiated approach to the teaching of key skills focuses on supporting the individual needs of learners. More able learners can complete the qualification in a shorter timescale whilst those that need more help receive additional support and complete the qualification over a longer period of time. Key skills success rates have significantly improved and continue to do so.

How effective is the provision of 'subject support' for learners?

- It was not possible to establish the effectiveness of subject support. These sessions are timetabled weekly and give learners the opportunity to attend in order to get advice, guidance and support with any aspect of coursework. However, the actual use of these sessions varies considerably between different curriculum areas. Learner attendance at subject support sessions is not effectively monitored and results from student evaluation questionnaires indicate that a very significant proportion of learners do not attend. The college does not evaluate the effectiveness of these sessions and was not able to demonstrate that learners who attend gain any benefit. Staff however, view these sessions as an essential aspect of the support they provide for learners. The amount of time allocated to subject support has been reduced.

How has good practice been shared to improve the use of ILT in teaching and learning?

- The college has established an extensive range of development activities that are well targeted to meet the needs of staff. The programme includes

an appropriate variety of events identified by careful analysis of teaching and learning observation records and course evaluation reports. Activities are focused on improving teaching and learning and on improving the learner's experience. Formal staff development time is a regular feature of the college calendar and increasingly includes sessions delivered by teachers to share the good practice identified during lesson observations.

- The use of information learning technology (ILT) in teaching and learning is much improved. Opportunities for e-learning are now identified on schemes of work and the results of student perception questionnaires confirm that ILT is frequently used in teaching. The virtual learning environment (VLE) continues to be developed, although some of this work is at an early stage. The content of the VLE in terms of quantity and quality varies considerably between different courses.

Leadership and management

What partnerships exist with other providers and organisations and how do they benefit learners?

- Learners benefit from the good 'compact' arrangements the college has established with a number of different providers and organisations. The college is involved with the area strategy groups developing the 14-19 curriculum offer within the local authority. Links with schools are improving and the college provides bridging courses for some school leavers to aid their transition from school to college.
- Compact arrangements with eight higher education institutions provide good opportunities for progression for those learners who wish to enter higher education. A good range of information, advice and guidance is provided for learners by visiting speakers and at open evenings held at the college that are attended by university representatives.
- An employment and training careers evening held at the college benefits learners wanting to enter the world of work. This event is well attended by representatives from many different occupational areas and provides learners with an insight into the type of work completed by various industry professionals.
- The college has good links with the Connexions service and learners have access to a careers advisor within the college. A work-experience coordinator assists learners to find work placements. However,

opportunities to enable learners to undertake work-experience placements are not sufficiently formalised.

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:

- The college has strengthened its quality assurance arrangements by introducing some external moderation to teaching and learning observations and to self-assessment validation.
- Appropriate measures are being taken to manage the unplanned overspend resulting from unforeseeable additional costs incurred during the building of the new accommodation.