

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Queen Alexandria College

Date of visit: 12 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

Does the college successfully capture learners' progress in relation to accredited courses, the development of independence skills, and literacy and numeracy?

- Targets are identified in Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) based on initial assessment, and are appropriate in relation to courses leading to qualifications. Progress towards these targets is tracked and achievements recorded successfully within ILPs. An improved management information system (MIS) has led to more effective tracking and recording of student progress and achievements on accredited courses. Targets set for learners in relation to personal development and independence skills are in need of further development to ensure they relate sufficiently to long term learning objectives or destination goals. Achievements in these skills are not yet sufficiently captured.

Have good achievement rates for learners in relation to vocational qualifications and employment been maintained in 2005/06?

- Achievement rates on vocational courses improved in 2005/06 and remain good across college programmes. Residential Training Unit (RTU) learners achieve satisfactory progression outcomes, with 46% going onto further education or employment. Retention rates for 2005/06 are high and in line with other specialist colleges.

Quality of education and training

What progress has been made since the last Annual Assessment Visit in raising standards in teaching and learning?

- There is a lesson observation scheme which includes both teachers and learning support assistants. The college aims to observe all teachers and learning support assistants at least twice a year but did not meet this target in 2006/2007. Any teacher whose lesson was judged to be less than good was prioritised and observed at least twice. The college effectively supports its learning support assistants and eight of them gained level 3 National

Vocational Qualifications in 2006/07. There have been marked improvements in the college observation grade profile for the work of learning support assistants.

- Some joint lesson observations to improve consistency of observers' judgements take place. However, the college does not systematically moderate lesson observation feedback or grades and inconsistencies and gaps in procedures exist. Written feedback on the observations is sometimes over descriptive, and action plans are not always completed. For those that are, specific actions that a teacher needs to carry out to improve the quality of teaching and learning are not always clear. Many lesson observation records do not comment on how well equal opportunities or disabilities are promoted.
- A detailed learner involvement strategy is in place, which is effectively implemented by staff to elicit learner feedback. In 2006/07, improved arrangements are in place for the dissemination of good practice via staff training sessions and through the college intranet.

Have links between the day and residential provision been effectively developed?

- Communication between residences and day provision has improved with the re-organisation of the tutoring arrangements. Learners are allocated a personal tutor. It is the tutor's responsibility to improve links with residential staff and parents and to provide useful information about students' progress across day and residential provision.

How well is the behaviour management policy being implemented?

- The behaviour management policy is being developed to provide a consistent college approach to tackling inappropriate learner behaviours. The behaviour management team are working closely with an educational psychologist, which has resulted in identified learners having comprehensive behaviour plans in place. However, the quality of recording in relation to their implementation is inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Does the college now comply with equalities and safeguarding legislation and guidance?

- The college has carried out some good work reviewing equality and diversity policies and procedures and is compliant with current legislation. There are improved procedures to ensure the college updates its policies and procedures in line with legislation and guidance. All staff have now had a short training session relating to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. No plans yet exist to offer additional training or to evaluate the impact of raising staff awareness

on the promotion of equal opportunities within curriculum activities. There are comprehensive procedures to ensure staff are appropriately checked in accordance with safeguarding best practice.

Have improvements made to the accommodation had a positive impact on the quality of the learners' learning programmes?

- The new Bradbury building provides modern, spacious and flexible accommodation. It includes better information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, Learning Resource Centre, and increased space and improved facilities for many activities, including art and music. Visually-impaired learners indicated that they experienced initial difficulties in using the new building, with concerns including the acoustics in the atrium, visual signage and the paint colour of the walls and floor. Improved signage is now in place and the paint colour has been appropriately adjusted. The atrium remains a large, open space next to classrooms and the noise level can detrimentally impact on learners and learning. Plans are in place to use this space more effectively for exhibitions and to provide a better sited student common room to alleviate the noise in the corridors.

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

- There was insufficient time to judge whether the curriculum provides sufficient breadth and diversity to cater for the full range of learners needs. However, the college plans to offer more courses from September 2007 to improve the breadth of the curriculum for level 1 students

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

- The college has enhanced its specialist support to learners with the employment of a speech and language therapist who works closely with tutors to provide guidance on communication skills development. New assessment arrangements include speech and language therapy and low vision assessments for learners with sight impairments.