

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Runshaw
Date of visit: 19 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 the very high retention and success rates continued to be maintained in 2006?

- Using college supplied data for 2006 success rates continue to show improvement at all levels for learners aged both 16-18 and 19 or over. Success rates for long qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 for both age groups continue to remain significantly above the national averages for similar colleges. In 2006 retention rates for all long qualifications were significantly above national averages for similar qualifications. During 2007 retention rates have been maintained or further increased. At levels 1 and 2 the college has had a particularly strong focus on further developing pre course guidance, on course support, and monitoring of progress and this has had significant impact on retention and success. These developments are now being rolled out to other course provision, for example level 3, apprenticeships and adult courses. Further improvements to attendance monitoring have included the use of attendance league tables to motivate and maintain high expectations on foundation and intermediate programmes. The winning groups from each of the leagues win a free group visit of their choice. Foundation programmes showed particularly significant improvement in attendance between May 2006 and May 2007 from 88 to 92%. High rates of attendance on other programmes have been maintained or further improved over the same time period. Course performance is rigorously monitored at senior management, faculty and programme level. This monitoring includes a review of retention, attendance, and lesson observation results.

In 2005 retention on GCSE courses was below the college's high targets. Have strategies to improve retention on GCSE courses been effective in 2006?

- GCSE courses have been part of the wider college strategy to improve retention. Particular actions have included closer monitoring of at risk learners, further improvements in support for those judged to be at risk, and increased celebration of early success. For learners aged 16-18, retention on GCSE English increased from 83 to 91% between May 2006 and May 2007 whilst retention on GCSE Mathematics increased from 86 to 94% over the same period. Both of these are significantly above national averages for similar colleges. For learners aged 19, the retention on GCSE English was maintained at 85% in 2007 whilst retention on GCSE Mathematics increased from 75 to 82% between 2006 and 2007. Again, both of these are significantly above national averages for similar colleges.

Are most students still making outstanding progress as indicated by value added data? Has the college met its demanding targets to further improve its value-added scores?

- The college uses both the ALPS and LSC learner achievement tracker (LAT) systems for measuring value added on AS, A level and national diploma courses. Using the LAT data for 2005 and 2006 the number of significantly positive A level subjects has increased from 10 to 12 and significantly negative has reduced from 5 to 2. Whilst AS data is not available for 2005, the 2006 data shows 12 AS subjects to be significantly positive with 4 significantly negative. The number of significantly positive national diplomas has increased from 4 to 6 with none significantly negative in either year. Clear action plans are in place to address the significantly negative provision. ALPS data judges the AS and A2 overall institutional value added grade to have improved year on year, from good to outstanding between 2003 and 2005, placing the college in the top 10% nationally. Information communication technology (ICT) and sport at AS level were both grade 1, best value added scores in the country, in 2006. Direct comparison of the 2006 institutional score is difficult due to changes in methodology and course composition.

Has the strategy to improve key skills achievements had a significant impact in 2006?

- The college has continued to develop its clear and effective strategy to improve key skills achievements. This forms part of an overall strategy for the delivery of essential skills, which includes the delivery of key skills and skills for life. The strategy combines a clear vision, good curriculum management, an effective tracking system and the engagement of curriculum managers and staff at all levels in the process. There is a very good bespoke, computerised, management information system which enables the tracking of individual learner progress in relation to key skills and is used as a tool to manage and monitor the delivery, moderation and testing of key skills. Support and staff development for teachers delivering key skills are good. Key skills are delivered in the curriculum areas by curriculum experts and are well integrated with the learners' main programme of study. There are key skills champions in the curriculum areas. Heads of school identify one key skill which will form part of the curriculum for learners in their school. The delivery of key skills is monitored through observation of teaching and learning. The time allocated to the study of key skills is used effectively to benefit and provide progression opportunities for learners through the key skill levels. In 2004/05 the overall success rate for key skills was 37 per cent with college data indicating a significant rise to 99 per cent in 2005-06.

Quality of education and training

A key strength of the last inspection was the high quality, and often outstanding, teaching and learning. Has the proportion of good and outstanding teaching been maintained or further increased?

- The college has a robust and rigorous lesson observation model. Announced observations are carried out by a trained team and dual observations are used as part of the quality assurance process. In addition to these observations all lecturers undertake peer observations. All satisfactory and unsatisfactory grades result in targeted staff development and another observation. The model is currently being further revised for implementation in September 2007. Overall the number of observations increased from 363 in 2005/06 to 389 in 2006/07

with the results showing a continued improvement in outstanding and good grades from 76.31% to 80.98% and a reduction in the number of unsatisfactory lessons from 1.9% to 1.28%. There are a good range of staff development activities to bring about continued improvements in teaching and learning including sharing of good practice between subjects and teams, individual mentoring, best of class visits, a programme of staff development based around key teaching and learning themes, and staff development carousel days led by teachers with lessons judged to have been outstanding during observation.

How effective have the year 10 mini school link courses been in increasing participation?

- As part of its widening participation strategy the college delivers short taster sessions through all the vocational schools and aimed at year 10 pupils forecast to achieve GCSE's at grades D to G. The provision has been very successful and there has been a rapid increase in the number of pupils benefiting from the offer from 196 in 2004/05 to 533 in 2006/07. The college has not yet carried out detailed analysis of the progression of these pupils when leaving school but recognises its value and has planned it for the next academic year. The numbers of learners recruited to pre-advanced courses has also increased rapidly since 2004/05 from 435 to 573 in 2006/07 and a planned intake of 742 in 2007/08. The college also provides a broad range of other 14+ courses in 10 vocational areas through the increased flexibility project, with applications for these courses increasing from 196 to 371 between 2004/05 and 2006/07. A further planned development is a hairdressing salon to be based at one local school. There is good progression into further education, training and employment from those attending the 14-16 programme, with 58% progression onto a Runshaw college course in 2006. The Principal is chair of the Learner Entitlement, Action and Development Group (LEAD) a partnership between local schools, training providers, Runshaw college, the Education Business Partnership, Connexions, the LEA and the local LSC.

The 2005/06 self assessment report for the preparation for life and work area, identifies the following as areas for improvement: a review of the curriculum and, underdeveloped work place, train to gain and project work. What actions are being taken to improve these areas and are they effective?

- The curriculum in the subject sector area, preparation for life and work, has been reviewed. Previously about 80% of courses in this area led to a college certificate. In 2006/07, 86 per cent of programmes led to an externally accredited qualification with the remainder leading to college certification. Skills are delivered in the work-place through Runshaw Business Centre. Organisations are offered a training needs' analysis and consequently programmes are designed to meet the needs of the organisation and the employees. A range of programmes will be delivered for example train2gain, NVQs, and apprenticeship frameworks. For 2006/07 the college was expecting a larger train2gain contract than it was awarded. There have been 185 enrolments on train2gain programmes leading to NVQ and 36 enrolments leading to basic skills. The area of improvement for project work related specifically to a European Social Fund project which took place in 2005/06. The project, entitled 'Community Learning', was delivered in partnership with the Lancashire College Consortium. To successfully achieve the planned outcomes of the project learners needed to achieve 50 basic skills qualifications. At the time of writing the self-assessment only two basic skills qualifications had been achieved. The full 50 qualifications were achieved by learners by the end of the project.

What progress is being made in implementing plans for the full integration of skills for life in curriculum areas?

- Skills for life have been fully integrated into the curriculum areas as part of the essential skills strategy. Staff in curriculum areas have been trained to support them in identifying the need for, delivering and tracking learner progress in relation to skills for life. Staff are well-supported; they attend surgeries facilitated by skills for life experts.

The last AAV identified that some aspects of Every Child Matters (ECM) would benefit from further development, for example, employability skills for A level students. What further developments have taken place?

- The 2005/06 self-assessment report contains an analysis of strengths and areas for improvement for all ECM themes. The areas for improvement identified by the college have been addressed during 2006/07. There has been a particular focus on developing employability skills for A level learners. A new tutorial module covering employability skills has been developed; it will be introduced in 2007/08. Employability skills were delivered in one tutorial session and the new module is delivered over six sessions. A range of subject-specific enrichment activities also develop essential skills related to employability. An A level assembly includes an input from the principal on employability skills. Staff have worked to develop an ethos amongst A level learners that key skills are employability skills and all learners take the communication key skill as an integral part of their programme

Leadership and management

The 2005/06 self assessment report judges Runshaw Training work based learning programmes to be good. Is there a strategy to continue to improve this provision? Is there evidence of impact?

- There is a clear strategy to move the self-assessment grade in work-based learning from good to outstanding. The college has stopped offering apprenticeship frameworks in social care. In 2005/06, a retention officer was appointed; this has had a positive impact on learner retention. It is planned to appoint a learning mentor for work-based learning in 2007/08. There has been staff development in teaching and learning, work-based learning documentation and learner tracking. Two senior instructors have been appointed, one with specific responsibility for quality, tracking and key skills, another with responsibility for internal verification, standardisation and 14-16 apprentices. Key skills are now being completed at the beginning of the programme and integrated within the vocational teaching. There has been a review of initial assessment and recruitment processes which has informed improvement. The documentation used to record the observation of assessments and

reviews has been updated. The college has participated in the Learner Agreement Pilot (LAP) project, which aims to provide training for 16-18 year olds in jobs without training. Sixty-eight learners have participated in the project this year and those who have achieved NVQ level 1 during the pilot will move on to apprenticeship programmes in 2007/08.

- The college has not achieved recruitment targets for this year. Over the year learner numbers have been 15 (average in learning) below target. The college conservatively forecasts that by the end of this year overall achievement will be 75%, an increase of 16 percentage points on last year. The forecast for timely success rates is 58%, an increase of 13 percentage points on last year.

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

- The college has introduced a number of improvements for collecting and acting upon learner feedback. In addition to collecting feedback from the whole college survey a number of other methods are used to gather feedback for example, from the students' union, student representatives, the student council, focus groups and 'management walkabouts'. Learner voice feedback is reported to the senior management team and is used to inform improvements. Teachers are encouraged to devise their own innovative methods of collecting feedback on the quality of teaching and learning at subject level and to implement improvements. Managers are actively involved in collecting and monitoring learner feedback.