

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Tresham Institute
Date of visit: 27 November 2007

Context

Tresham Institute is a large further and higher education college with four main campuses in four towns; one in Kettering, one in Wellingborough, one in Corby, and the Rutland College in Oakham. In 2005/06, there were around 13,500 learners enrolled at the college, of whom one quarter were aged 16-18 and the others were adults. The college provides courses in almost all sector subject areas with the largest numbers of learners following courses in health, public services and care, and preparation for life and work.

Achievement and standards

How successful has the college been in improving the achievement and standards of learners in 2006/07?	Reasonable progress
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At the time of the monitoring visit in November 2007, around 1.5% of the qualification outcomes were still unknown. The overall success rate on long courses in 2006/07 was around 69%. This figure is similar to that of the previous year and is likely to be close to the national average. The overall success rate for learners aged 16-18 increased by 5% in 2006/07 and is likely to be similar to the national average. Success rates for these learners improved at levels 1, 2 and 3. The overall success rate for adult learners decreased by 4% in 2006/07 and is likely to be close to the national average. Success rates for adults decreased at levels 1 and 2, but remained largely unchanged at level 3. The main reason for the decline at levels 1 and 2 was the low retention rates on skills for life programmes. The college has put in place several strategies in 2007/08 to address this issue, including improved guidance onto courses, additional training and support for teaching staff, and closer monitoring of learners' progress. Success rates on apprenticeship frameworks were above national averages in 2005/06. In 2006/07, the success rate for advanced apprentices increased by 12% and the success rate for apprentices remained largely unchanged.

Quality of provision

What progress has the college made in improving the quality of teaching accommodation?	Reasonable progress
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The two college campuses in Kettering have been replaced by a single new campus that opened in September 2007. The new campus provides a good learning environment with good facilities and resources, and is valued by both learners and staff. Disruption to learning was minimised during the transition to the new building which took place during the summer vacation in 2007. The removal of the old campus building on the same site and provision of the new car park are due to be completed by the end of January 2008. The self-assessment report for 2006/07 identifies some uninspiring learning environments across the college as a whole. The college has well thought out plans for the development of the ageing Corby and Wellingborough sites, for which it is now seeking approval and funding. These plans are linked well to a review of the curriculum provision across the main sites. The college continues to maintain and invest in the existing accommodation, and in particular is developing the facilities for construction and engineering provision.

How successful has the college been in improving the use of individual learning plans to promote the progress made by learners?	Reasonable progress
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All full-time learners now have an individual learning plan (ILP) and most learners on substantive part-time courses also have an ILP. The college has successfully raised the profile of ILPs with staff and learners, including the role played by ILPs in promoting progress. There is a strong emphasis on the completion and use of ILPs during the induction of learners. The use of ILPs is also promoted at staff meetings and through staff development. Learner responses to questionnaires indicate an increase in the use of ILPs. Nevertheless, there is some variation in the quality and usefulness of ILPs in different curriculum areas. Some areas use them well, but in others their use is underdeveloped. Typical weaknesses include the lack of sufficiently challenging targets, targets that do not link to longer-term objectives and insufficient planning on how to achieve targets. The college is aware of the need to improve the quality of ILPs in some areas and is beginning to address

this through staff development, the observation of tutorials and sharing examples of good practice.

How successful has the college been in extending the range of level 3 courses available to learners?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection in January 2006 the level 3 curriculum was judged to be good. The college has continued to develop this curriculum, in particular in preparation for the new diplomas. There has been an increase in the number of learners progressing from level 2 to level 3, and also of those progressing to higher education. The college has rightly identified in its self-assessment report that it failed to achieve the LSC target for level 3 qualifications in 2006/07. The college is continuing to identify opportunities to further develop the level 3 curriculum, and has appropriately linked this to the development of new facilities at Corby and Wellingborough.

What progress has the college made in assessing the impact of additional learning support?	Reasonable progress
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The college has improved its systems for assessing the impact of additional learning support. The college routinely compares the success, retention and pass rates of learners receiving support to those not receiving support. This data is further analysed by sector subject area to identify any differences in performance and target interventions. Improvements have been made in the organisation and quality assurance of additional learning support. The overall success rates on long courses for those receiving support are significantly higher than for those not receiving support. Learners with more complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities are monitored by assessing the progress made against individual targets. The impact of additional learning support on developing literacy and numeracy skills is monitored closely for individual learners, but this assessment data is not used to monitor performance at the faculty or whole college level. The college recognises that there is scope for greater use of other impact measures, such as learner satisfaction ratings and feedback on support from faculties.

Leadership and management

How successful has the college been in managing the impact of changes in senior management in 2006/07?	Reasonable progress
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The previous Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive left the college in March 2007. The Chief Executive was replaced with immediate effect by an Acting Chief Executive. A new Chief Executive has now been appointed and will take up his role in January 2008. The key priorities for the Acting Chief Executive have been to complete the move to the new campus in Kettering, to improve internal communications and to enhance staff morale. Interim promotions have been used to address the problem caused by the departure of the Deputy Chief Executive. This has worked well, with few problems encountered in terms of managing resources. More notable difficulties have been created by the Deputy Principal with responsibility for the curriculum not playing an active role in the running of the college since August 2007. This has increased the workload of the senior leadership team and reduced the pace of some quality improvement activities. Overall, staff are positive about the impact of the enforced changes in management in 2007, particularly in terms of improved communications, and report that there has been very little negative impact on the experiences of learners.