

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Selby College
Date of visit: 22 May 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 have been the main changes in learners' achievements and standards since the last visit?

- Improvements for courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 have been marked, leading to success rates in 2006 which were high for students aged 16 to 18 and adults. Short course success rates are high. Male students' success rates have improved to be comparable with those of female students
- GCE A-level success rates are high, consistently above sixth form college averages.
- Significant improvements have been made to the key skills success rate, and to apprenticeship framework success rates. The key skills success rate is high. The advanced apprenticeship overall and timely success rates are high. Apprenticeship rates are now close to the national averages.
- Attendance rates are high.

How have these improvements been made?

- Factors involved include detailed analysis of course achievements, continued attention to the quality of teaching, close individual support for students, changes in curriculum leadership in some areas, thorough analysis of attendance and in-year retention and particular attention to how male students learn and what interests them.

Quality of education and training

The self assessment report (SAR) presents a picture of improving teaching and learning and with much good teaching and very little which is inadequate. How reliable is the evidence for this and how is it being achieved?

- The college undertakes lesson observation systematically. The small team of observers is composed of senior managers and external consultants who have inspection experience. Moderation takes place and judgements

on teaching quality are cross-matched to other evidence such as success and attendance rates and students' views. There are appropriate arrangements to follow up areas for development and, through professional development, to improve teaching. The small sample of completed lesson proforma perused during the visit suggests that judgements are broadly accurate but insufficient reference is made in some to how much the students are learning.

The college SAR says that the college is responsive to employer needs. Does the evidence support this?

- The evidence collected during the visit suggests it does. The college provides NVQ training, much of it at level 2, to over 300 companies, with over 1,000 enrolments, much of it work-based. The success rate is high. There is a substantial distance and e-learning programme for employers, which has a high success rate. Apprenticeship work has improving success rates and the success rate for advanced apprenticeships is high. The college has exceeded its target for Train to Gain full NVQ2 qualifications. It is a major contributor to the North Yorkshire college consortium Train to Gain programme. A low proportion of this provision has been through broker referral and the college has met with the brokers to explore the reasons why. In order to meet identified local need the college has increased its construction provision. In health and social care and early years work partnership working is good between the college and employers and there is a good student work experience programme. In the information and communications technology curriculum area, as the SAR acknowledges, there are insufficient work placements.

What contribution is the college making to 14-16 work and 14-19 developments?

- The college has productive and supportive links with local schools and the local area partnership and offers an extensive programme of work for pupils in key stage 4. It provides a joint prospectus for this work with Askham Bryan College and offers provision in several curriculum areas. Over 300 pupils are provided for, drawn from 10 schools in and beyond the Selby area and success rates are high. A successful young apprenticeship programme is established in business administration and will be extended to two other vocational areas in September. The college is a lead partner for the development of specialist diplomas and led on the bid for a specialised diploma in construction. The bids were not successful for the pilot round of work.

Leadership and management

How secure is the evidence used to form judgements on the curriculum areas of leisure, travel and tourism and in hair and beauty therapy (HBT), two areas graded outstanding in the current self assessment report (SAR)?

- The strengths are clearly identified and include substantial ones relating to students' achievements and teaching and learning. The data provided on students' attainment are comprehensive and used effectively to promote improvement. The data for 2005/06 broadly support the judgements although there is some variability in previous years. Sustained high success rates (i.e. over more than the most recent year) would support the overall judgement more securely. The teaching grade profiles in both areas support the judgements on the quality of teaching. In order to more convincingly support outstanding provision in the HBT SAR more should be said about what was outstanding in teaching and learning.

The SAR includes the views of students to support judgements. The visit explored how these are collected, and how the collection of views is being improved.

- The college gives a strong emphasis to students' views. These are collected through questionnaires. The views are supplemented and tested through a range of scheduled focus groups and with groups brought together as the need arises to discuss pertinent issues. The college is continually seeking to improve its collection procedures. Where a view is critical, it is considered carefully against other evidence before action is taken. The students met during the visit said their views are listened to and action is taken where needed.

The visit explored the strengths stated in the SAR relating to strategic direction, the monitoring of curriculum performance and the provision of management information.

- The curriculum managers met during the visit are well informed about the college's strategic direction and how their areas contribute to it. They confirmed that communications are good within the college. Curriculum performance is monitored closely by senior managers. Examples of good practice include a thorough analysis of the reasons why engineering apprenticeship success rates were low, and a thorough analysis of how the college can improve the progress made by students studying GCE A-level subjects. In both cases significant changes have been made. Selby College's management information is accessible and accurate and is used

well by curriculum managers to monitor performance and to inform the SAR judgements.

- The performance management system included, in the summer term 2006, an analysis of each teacher's performance on the basis of lesson observation grades, student attendance, retention, achievement and value added data.

The structure of the current SAR has changed substantially. The visit explored how this has been effected and what the moderation arrangements are, and tested some of the whole college judgements.

- The SAR process starts with course quality reviews which build up into curriculum area SARs and then into the whole college SAR. Staff are closely involved. The report is comprehensive and clear, judgements are well supported by evidence and the analysis of data is rigorous. For example, overall success data are compared against projected national averages for 2005/06 calculated through a trend analysis, and comparison is made against the performance of colleges in the top decile for each measure. Particularly notable are the improvements made in the SAR structure and in the evidence marshalled and the clarity of the judgements reached in the section dealing with the college as a whole.
- Moderation arrangements are strong. They involve external consultants who are experienced inspectors and the views of other college managers. Curriculum managers present and defend their SARs against a panel which includes the Chair of Governors, senior managers and a senior manager from a partner college who is a part-time inspector
- A good feature is the attractive and comprehensive publication which summarises the SAR and is available to the public.
- The evidence collected during the visit supported, overall, the key judgements in the SAR. Students' success rates in 2005/06 are outstanding. Sustained high performance (i.e. over two years) and evidence of outstanding progress against prior attainment would further strengthen the case for the grades awarded in the SAR.

The visit discussed the college's overall financial position and trends in recruitment.

- The college made a financial surplus in 2005/6 and is projecting one for 2006/07. Staffing and other operating costs have been reduced. The college is in financial category B due to use of reserves and the borrowing

needed to finance the new buildings built during phases 1 and 2 of the accommodation strategy.

- Full-time equivalent 16-18 student numbers have steadily increased from 775 in 2003/04 to 917 in 2006/07. Adult student numbers and enrolments have decreased markedly in this period due the college's realignment of its provision to meet LSC priorities.

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

None

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

None