

Jacqui Weatherburn
Principal
Coleg Ceredigion
Llanbadarn Fawr
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 3BP

August 2014

Dear Ms Weatherburn

Estyn Annual Review of Performance report on Coleg Ceredigion

Following the Annual Review of Performance visit to your institution on 6 to 8 May 2014, this letter forms an annual report based on the outcomes of that visit. The letter is published on the Estyn website.

Gill Sims HMI and Liam Kealy HMI evaluated the current performance of the institution and reviewed the progress made against the recommendations arising from earlier inspections.

The inspectors held discussions with the principal and senior leaders, tutors, learners and members of the governing body. They scrutinised documentation, including evidence on the progress made against each of the previous inspection recommendations. They also considered the quality of teaching and learning through learning walks and scrutiny of the provider's observation process.

At the end of the visit, the link inspectors reported their findings to the principal of the institution and other members of the senior leadership team.

Outcome of the link inspector visit

Since the inspection of Coleg Ceredigion in February 2013 the college has worked to address the recommendations left by the inspection team. Although it is too early to see significant improvement in outcomes for learners, the impact of this work can be seen throughout the college.

1 Outcomes and standards

Overall, the all-course data across the three measures of completion, attainment and overall success rates have improved over the last three years. For all courses, the college remains in the top half of all colleges in Wales.

Eighty-two per cent of the enrolments at the college are on long courses. The college has achieved an upward trend on these long courses, for all data indicators, over the last four years. In addition, 2012-2013 data shows the college's success rate has remained in the top quarter of those of all colleges in Wales for the last two years. Although around half of the subject sector areas are showing an improvement in the successful completion of courses between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, there is too much variation between the different subject sector areas.

Nearly all learners on short courses successfully complete their learning programmes. In 2012-2013 the college was the highest in the sector for short course success rates.

2 Essential Skills

The college has carried out a thorough review of its marking policy and schemes and of the impact of these on learners' skills development. As a result, the college has prioritised staff development to improve teachers' own skills to help them to understand how literacy and numeracy can be developed for learners working different levels. The college carries out an initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills during pre-course interviews. As a result of the outcomes, the college is running summer courses for learners to improve their skills. All learners offered a place on these courses have accepted the offer. However, plans to improve the setting and achieving of individual literacy and numeracy targets for learners are still being developed.

3 Teaching and assessment

The college has a range of useful initiatives in place to improve teaching and assessment. It has recently restructured staffing responsibilities to create curriculum manager posts and to increase the scrutiny of the quality of teaching and assessment. The college makes good use of peer clusters, involving teachers from different learning areas, to share and promote good practice in teaching and assessment. As a result, teachers are developing innovative ways of teaching, for example using QR codes to allow learners to access 'how to' videos in construction and motor vehicle studies. The college is also beginning to take advantage of opportunities to gain expertise as a result of the merger with University Wales Trinity St.David to enhance continuing professional development for teaching staff.

4 Curriculum

The college uses labour market intelligence well to plan the curriculum and to make sure that learning pathways offer good routes to further education, employment or training. It has good links with employers to establish work-related aspects and work experience opportunities for learners. Many teachers and support staff have good personal links with local industry and businesses and are able to enhance their teaching by using visiting speakers or organising additional learning activities such as workshops. The merger with University of Wales Trinity St. David has also created additional curriculum opportunities as the college makes use of a wider range of contacts and networks within the family. The college works effectively to provide a useful range of training programmes for local industry and businesses.

5 Leadership and management

The principal, senior leaders and governors are effective at setting the strategic direction of the college and working with staff to agree operational and improvement plans. This brings staff on board and helps them to contribute to the direction of the college and to improve the learners' experiences. The leadership team has worked collaboratively to merge the college with University Wales Trinity St. David and to enable staff to see the benefits of working within a wider family group involving both further education and higher education partners.

The leadership team work well to implement the college's mission statement – Fulfilling Potential and Changing Lives. As a result staff have strong commitment to individual learners and many learners exceed their predicted targets. For example: all learners improve their bilingual skills; learners who had previously been home educated learn new life skills and are better able to manage their learning; and learners who have never considered themselves suitable for university move onto higher education programmes.

6 Leadership and management (quality assurance)

The college's quality assurance procedures and processes effectively help managers to understand the strengths and areas for improvement across the college and to put in place robust plans for improvement. The curriculum quality teaching and learning committee rigorously monitors progress against the quality development plan. The college identifies underperformance accurately and has robust procedures in place to secure improvements at course level.

7 Summary on progress on the recommendations outlined in the report of February 2013

The recommendations in the last inspection report were made in February 2013. It is too early to expect substantial progress against the recommendations. However, overall, the impact of the progress the college is making against the recommendations can be seen across its provision.

The college has introduced a more robust performance assessment process for staff that takes greater account of performance across an academic year. There has

been an increased focus on staff development programmes, particularly for skills, for increasing pace and challenge in lessons, and for target setting. The college has developed a commercial strategy in line with that of the University of Wales, Trinity St. David.

8 Other

The college works well with schools in the 14-19 partnership. This enables pupils from schools that are mainly in the south of the county to undertake part of their learning on vocational courses in college. Over the last three years, around 20% of these students have progressed to full-time college courses, particularly to vocational options such as those in construction and motor vehicle studies.

The college prepares learners for living and working in a bilingual community effectively. Learners are able to study in the Welsh language or bilingually as appropriate. Learners benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities to help them improve their Welsh language skills and their understanding of living in a bilingual country. Support through the medium of Welsh is well developed and effective. Learners at the college demonstrate a pride in their achievements in Welsh and gain confidence and fluency in the use of the Welsh language.

The college uses a suitable range of information from the learners to improve their learning experience and to inform planning and the development of provision.

Three hundred and ninety-seven full-time learners in Coleg Ceredigion completed the learner voice survey in 2013. This represents approximately 73% of the total full-time learners. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents rate the college as very good overall. This is in line with the sector average. A further 40% rate the college as good. This is marginally below the sector average of 43%. However, 41% of full time respondents state that their course was better than they expected and this is five percentage points above the sector average. The most positive response in the learner voice survey is for the help and support learners receive at the college with 38% rating this as very good against a sector average of 33%.

The college has made progress in the merger with University of Wales, Trinity St. David. Staff demonstrate a positive view of the merger and most have already seen a benefit to both staff and learners at the college. The merger has improved the expertise that is potentially available to the college; it has raised staff aspirations and expectations and it has improved the resources that are potentially available for teaching and learning. Staff and learners are pleased with the resulting new ICT infrastructure and the improved WiFi connectivity. Learners are able to see improved progression opportunities and welcome the careers and course information Trinity St David brings to the college. The merger has improved collaboration with all constituents, including further education partners. Good collaborative working has already identified new further education courses and better opportunities for learner progression.

Recommendations

There is one recommendation further to those made in the report on the recent inspection of the college:

R1 Continue to develop plans to improve the setting and achieving of individual literacy and numeracy targets for learners

Next steps

Gill Sims HMI and Liam Kealy HMI will continue to monitor overall progress through their link role with the institution.

Yours sincerely

Lin Howells
Assistant Director