

Mr Jim Bennett
Principal
Coleg Gwent
The Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1XJ

August 2014

Dear Mr Bennett

Estyn Annual Review of Performance report on Coleg Gwent

Following the Annual Review of Performance visit to your institution on 10 July 2014, this letter forms an annual report based on the outcomes of that visit. The letter is published on the Estyn website.

Rachael Bubalo HMI and Gill Sims HMI evaluated the current performance of the institution and reviewed the progress made against the recommendations arising from earlier inspections. This was a short visit and inspectors will return for another visit in the autumn term 2014.

The inspectors held discussions with the principal and senior managers, 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, Rachael Bubalo HMI and Gill Sims HMI reported their findings to the principal and the vice principal of the institution.

Outcome of the link inspector visit

1 Outcomes and standards

All course success data shows that Coleg Gwent has remained in the top quarter of all colleges in Wales over the last two years. Trends for completion, attainment and success all moved upwards by one or two percentage points between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. Most learners at the college successfully complete their learning programmes. Ninety-five per cent of enrolments at the college attain a qualification and the college was the highest in the sector for this indicator in both 2011-2012 and 2012-2013.

Eighty-nine per cent of the total college enrolments are on long courses. The overall success rate for these has improved by two percentage points from 85% in 2011-2012 to 87% in 2012-2013 and the college has remained in the top quarter of all colleges in Wales. Success rates in performing arts and business, administration and law are consistently high and are five percentage points above the 2012-2013 national comparator. Success rates in information and communication technology are nine percentage points above the national comparator for both 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. Success rates in science and mathematics improved by four percentage points between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 and hair and beauty, hospitality and catering, and leisure travel and tourism all improved by one or two percentage points across the two years and remain above the sector averages. However, success rates in engineering and manufacturing technologies, construction, planning and the built environment dropped by two and five percentage points respectively over the last two years and have fallen further behind the national comparators to be in the lowest quarter of those for all colleges in Wales. Overall, the successful completion of around half of the subject sector areas at Coleg Gwent places it in the top quarter of all colleges in Wales.

Short course completion, attainment and success rates at the college are around the very high national averages. Nearly all learners complete their learning programmes and 96% of enrolments result in the attainment of a qualification.

2 Essential Skills

Data indicates that the number of learners achieving Essential Skills Wales qualifications is increasing and that more learners are achieving the higher levels. The college has a comprehensive skills policy that clearly sets out the expectations and accountability for developing the literacy and numeracy skills of learners. All learners have a diagnostic assessment of their skills at the start of their course and the information is used well by learning support advisers to set specific skills targets that are reviewed on a regular basis.

The college has an effective strategy for supporting learners and this has contributed to the improving learner outcomes. Learner attendance in support programmes is monitored carefully and most learners who are identified for support attend sessions on a regular basis.

The college gathers useful information on the progress learners make in developing their essential skills. This information is used effectively to compare the progress of learners receiving support with those who do not have support and to measure the progress of learners from areas of deprivation.

The college has jointly developed useful literacy and numeracy toolkits in partnership with other colleges and these provide staff and learners with helpful guidance on developing skills.

3 Teaching and assessment

The college has an impressive range of strategies to improve teaching and learning. These include the use of six Teaching and Learning Mentors and a rigorous lesson observation scheme involving around 60 trained observers who have been internally accredited against a set of agreed standards. This is linked to the college performance management scheme and underperformance is tackled head on. In 2013-2014, the college judged 81% of its teaching to be good or better. Where teaching is only adequate, the college puts in place robust actions to improve practice that include intensive review and support.

The college has developed a successful initiative, 'Leading Learning', which encourages all staff to play a role in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The college makes good use of quality improvement funds to support a range of initiatives, including developing a numeracy toolkit and promoting professional learning communities. The college has also produced video clips of excellent teaching that stretches and challenges learners and has made these available to all staff on the college intranet.

A well-established group of learning mentors play a helpful role in modelling good teaching and supporting new and inexperienced teachers. A useful scheme to observe the practice of learning support assistants is at a pilot stage.

The college adopts the 'principles of teaching, learning and assessment' approach and this is bringing about improvements across the college.

4 Summary on progress on the recommendations outlined in the inspection report of Coleg Gwent in April 2012

The college has made good progress in addressing all of the recommendations from Estyn's 2012 report. It has prioritised actions well within its quality improvement arrangements to ensure that these recommendations are met.

5 Other

Learner voice

The college consults well with learners. In 2014, 7,215 learners took part in the Learner Voice Wales survey. This represents around a quarter of all college learners. Eighty per cent of all learners in the survey rated the college as good or very good overall. This is marginally better than the sector average. Ninety per cent said their course was better or as expected, which is also above the sector average.

The college performed well in nearly all aspects of the survey, particularly in response to teaching. Forty-six per cent of learners in the survey rated their teaching and training as very good overall and for all aspects of teaching, the college scored above the sector benchmarks.

The college pays good attention to the views of learners and systems to gather their views are well embedded. These systems include a learner survey administered twice yearly that in 2014 was completed by 97% of full-time learners.

The college takes prompt and effective action in response to learners' feedback and monitors the progress of actions well. There is an effective system of campus learning representatives and around 500 learners complete an Agored unit that helps them to perform their role effectively.

The college makes good use of learner feedback to inform its self-assessment report and learner representatives verify the final report.

In response to learner feedback, the college made amendments to the E-ILP. Learners have good access to the Principal and the 'buzz the boss' system is used effectively to deal with complaints at an early stage. The College Board appropriately has a governor with responsibility for learner voice and learner fora focus strongly on aspects of teaching and learning. In one example, learners' negative perceptions of teaching in one school resulted in significant changes and improvements in quality.

Recommendations

R1 Continue to improve success rates in the SSAs, which have performed below national comparators

Next steps

Your Estyn Link Inspectors will continue to monitor overall progress through their link role with the institution.

Yours sincerely

Lin Howells
Assistant Director