

2015-16 ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP OF IMPROVEMENT

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

Whole college project

A COLLEGE TRANSFORMED – FACING CHALLENGES AND BUILDING SUCCESS

The Planning: Purpose and Process

- The initiative came about from a need to transform the college that was graded 'inadequate' by Ofsted in 2012, subject to FE Commissioner intervention following several years of deficit and in receipt of three formal notices to improve. The strategic objectives developed by the Board, along with the college's values and priorities, came to be at the heart of everything that the college does. The strategic objectives were to:
 - increase enrolments
 - improve quality of teaching and learning
 - improve success rates
 - completed organisational redesign and embed effective staff management systems
 - strengthen relationships with key partners
 - achieve financial sustainability.
- The college's aim was to be outstanding, to work closely with partners in order to provide the people of the city and beyond with the skills they need to succeed, and to operate in a financially sustainable manner.

Planning into Practice

- Any provision performing below national average or college targets was moved into 'intensive care', where the progress of students and the performance of teachers were forensically monitored and supported to achieve the necessary improvements.
- Labour market intelligence (LMI) was used well, resulting in students having an engaging, purposeful learning experience that was designed to develop their aspirations, career prospects and life chances. The college was also more responsive to employers as a result.
- The college actively sought the views of students and stakeholders, with student voice activities including an annual Student Conference, Student Council meetings and a comprehensive rep system. Student surveys and forums also took place to enable students to contribute to the improvement of all aspects of college life. The improvements identified were acted upon and fed back to students for further comment.
- An enhanced lesson observation system supported by an extensive programme of staff development, including the establishment of a team of teaching and learning coaches and an eLearning development team, has supported staff to improve.
- The college ensured that students were equipped for the workplace with high levels of vocational skills. English and maths are also promoted and undertaken by all full-time students.

Continuing Development

- Progress against the strategic objectives was tracked carefully, including through the use of a KPI dashboard which was featured as an exemplar on the Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) website and was used in all reporting to the Board by management at all levels, and in six weekly progress briefings by the Principal to all staff.
- The college has a clear strategic direction that is communicated throughout the organisation. Each member of the executive team has a 'target plan' directly aligned to the strategic objectives, and cascaded through line management.

- Communication is open and highly effective. All staff are aware of the college's strategic ambitions and performance goals, and are highly motivated to achieve great things for all students.
- The college continues to have an open door policy to supporting other colleges that face similar problems to the ones it had previously.
- Target setting, monitoring and evaluation to improve the quality of provision have been sharp and effective. The college executive and governors have a clear mission that is shared and understood by all staff and is used as a guide to identify and prioritise activities.
- Governors are now well-informed and place support for students and staff at the centre of their work, offering vigorous and relevant challenges to senior leaders on performance and quality of provision.
- The quality assurance cycle has been fully reviewed to include lesson observations, user surveys, internal verification, termly quality and learning reviews, internal reviews and course and curriculum reviews.
- Changes have been implemented to ensure that there is accountability, but with support, so that it is easier for the college to critically evaluate provision at programme level.

Outcomes/benefits to date

- The college has delivered significant improvement against each of its objectives, whilst recognising that continuous improvements must be sought and implemented in order to provide the students, employers and communities that they serve with the maximum possible boost to their prospects and life chances.
- The college featured in an Economic Modelling Specialists Intl. (EMSI) case study of excellent use of LMI and, furthermore, Ofsted rated the college's response to employers and stakeholders as outstanding.
- Seeking feedback from students and acting upon this led to a rise in student satisfaction from the lowest to the highest quartiles nationally. This is an overall rise in student satisfaction across a two year period to 93% in 2014/15.
- Lesson observations rated good or better have risen from 66% in 2012 to over 90% in 2014/2015, with 11% of staff improving their teaching and learning observation grade to good or outstanding during 2014/15 alone.
- 93% of students progressed into higher education in 2014/15.
- In early 2013, a survey revealed that only 35% of staff felt engaged with the organisation. In 2014, 98% of staff were proud to work at the college, ranking it second out of 49 colleges surveyed nationally and 100% of staff agreed with the college's values, mission, vision, priorities and KPIs.
- The college has used the award money to host visits from other colleges facing similar challenges that have been referred to them.

Relevance and Replication

- Over the course of two years, the excellence of this initiative has helped transform the college from being one of the poorest performers in the sector to one that has been judged to be good with outstanding features and in the top 15% of success rates nationally for 16-18 year olds in 2014/15.

For more information, please contact:

Louise Fall

Email: falll@wolvcoll.ac.uk

Tel: 01922 317741