

# Portsmouth College

## Focused monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130706

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**Type of provider:** Sixth form college

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## **FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS**

### **Context and focus of visit**

Portsmouth College is a small sixth form college located on the eastern edge of Portsmouth. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and follow advanced programmes, but vocational courses from foundation and entry level to advanced level also recruit well. A growing number of adults take part-time courses. The college offers programmes in eleven of the fifteen subject areas. The college has well-developed partnerships with local schools and was awarded Beacon status in recognition of this.

The college was inspected in May 2010 when its overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory. Inspectors found outcomes for students to be satisfactory, teaching and learning to be good and partnership working and support and guidance to be outstanding. They judged leadership and management, including safeguarding and equality and diversity, to be good. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

### **Themes**

#### **Self-assessment and improvement planning**

<b>What progress has been made in improving self-assessment and action planning particularly at curriculum level?</b>	<b>Reasonable progress</b>
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Since the last inspection, senior leaders have fully revised the self-assessment process and reporting procedures at all levels of the college. They have significantly improved the accuracy and dissemination of management information, which ensures that all staff have appropriate and reliable data to support self-assessment. The college has brought forward the start of the process so that teams can begin acting on quality improvement plans earlier in the college year. Managers monitor the progress of these plans through regular updates and focused review meetings. They use course reviews effectively to support or, where necessary, refocus actions to intervene in subject areas promptly. At curriculum level, senior leaders have implemented a more effective and purposeful template for self-assessment and a more rigorous procedure of monitoring and review. The resulting reports are more focused on areas for improvement and the actions needed to bring about improvements. However, they do not always use available data to report sufficiently on the success of specific groups of students, for example by gender, ethnicity and disability.

## Outcomes for learners

### **What progress did the college make in improving outcomes for students in 2010/11?** **Insufficient progress**

Overall success rates improved slightly in 2010/11, but long course outcomes for students aged 16 to 18 were significantly below national averages for sixth form colleges. Outcomes for adult learners were also below national averages, but not significantly so. The current self-assessment report identifies that retaining students remains a key issue and outlines the strategies in place to bring about improvements. Students' attainment at AS level, on advanced vocational qualifications, GCSE programmes and foundation and entry level courses, which represents a significant proportion of the student body, was in all cases well below national averages in 2010/11. College managers and teachers have put in place a range of strategies to improve outcomes for students, but it is too early to assess the impact of these measures. Added value analyses show that, on average, students make progress at the level predicted by their prior attainment.

### **What progress has the college made in taking effective action to improve retention and attendance?** **Reasonable progress**

Attendance recording and monitoring have improved. A clear, electronic system is now in place and attendance data are available centrally early in each lesson. This allows support staff and managers to follow up absence more promptly and effectively. Staff also record attendance data and actions taken on students' individual learning plans (ILPs), which enables relevant conversations to take place between teachers, tutors and students. Current attendance rates have improved and in some subject areas there has been significant improvement.

Managers have reviewed and improved pre-enrolment advice and guidance in order to help students choose the courses best suited to them. A sharper focus on career progression and meeting more rigorous entry criteria at enrolment have also contributed to matching students to appropriate programmes. Data from autumn term 2011 show that fewer students changed courses when compared with the same period in 2010. Teachers and support staff feel better informed about student progress and make increasing use of the electronic data on the ILPs. Timetable changes to tutorial time now enable teachers and tutors to consult better and to contact students in order to support them, for example with attendance and with completion of work. A centralised student support area has also made it easier for students seeking advice and guidance and support with personal issues.

## Quality of provision

**What progress has been made in analysing the impact of support that students receive in order to achieve their targets?**

**Reasonable progress**

The college has made reasonable progress in analysing the success of the support it provides to students. It has improved significantly the accuracy of, and access to, data across the college. The college has also introduced regular, individual academic meetings between teachers and students. Staff regularly update the new electronic individual learning plans (e-ILPs) and course reviews with timely information about students' progress and attendance. The college uses these very effectively to identify when underperforming students or courses require intervention and support. Managers analyse the reports to determine the effectiveness of interventions and to ensure that improvements are taking place. If recovery is not obvious, they take further action where appropriate. However, the college has not yet analysed the success of the provision of additional learning support on the outcomes of the students who receive it.

**What progress have teachers and managers made in successfully improving the planning and carrying out of assessments for students so that they achieve to their potential?**

**Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection staff training and development have focused more on assessment for learning and using information and learning technology more successfully in assessments. In addition, there is a greater emphasis on assessment in the observations of teaching and learning. Managers have changed the structure of the college teaching year, following consultation, to provide more contact time earlier in the year. Mock examinations are now in place at Easter and this helps students to prepare for summer module exams and enables teachers to provide appropriate support to individual students where necessary.

Curriculum leaders and teachers speak positively about the improved quality of data and information on students. Staff now regularly upload data from electronic mark books to provide students, teachers and managers with useful analyses of progress by subject. These data are presented clearly using a traffic light system. In sport, the extended diploma curriculum has allowed students to take relevant additional qualifications, such as Football Association refereeing and specific coaching qualifications. In addition, teachers and tutors encourage the students to record their progress better, for example by using photographs, video and in field notebooks. Managers are supporting around 20 teachers across the college in completing short action research projects in order to increase the effectiveness and variety of assessment.

## Leadership and management

**What progress has the college made in supplying more accurate and timely data and information in order to enhance performance analysis and promote improvements?**

**Significant progress**

Since the last inspection, the college has made significant progress in providing accurate, accessible and timely data and management information (MI). A new director of information systems was appointed in January 2011. Since then, the college has developed a number of very effective computer-based systems which were implemented for the current academic year. Staff at all levels, and governors, speak highly of the usefulness of the data in enabling them to assess the quality of the college's provision more successfully. Senior leaders are now able to make regular forecasts of the possible outcomes for courses based on accurate data. The college has implemented a new computer-based student register system which provides up-to-date attendance information to staff, and which feeds electronically into the students' and course reviews. These, together with the new e-ILPs, enable teachers, tutors and managers to track the performance of students much more effectively and to provide appropriate intervention and support more quickly. Students appreciate the easy access they now have to the data about their performance and progress, and how staff can identify and act upon any possible risks to their achievement at an early stage.

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