

# Yeovil College

## Focused monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130805

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**Type of provider:** General Further Education College

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## FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

Yeovil College is a medium-sized further education college that was established as a tertiary college in 1974. It offers a wide range of vocational and GCE A and AS programmes for young people and adults. It was inspected in November 2008 when all the cross-college aspects, including capacity to improve, were judged to be satisfactory. Science and mathematics and preparation for life and work were judged to be good, whilst arts, engineering and business were judged to be satisfactory.

The inspection team judged that a more comprehensive, consistent and self-critical approach to self-assessment was needed.

The inspection identified variations in success rates across the college and judged retention rates for younger learners as an area for improvement. Other areas for improvement included: standards of teaching and learning, supported by sharper lesson observations and better sharing of good practice across the college; the promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum; a number of aspects of work-based learning, including a need to improve the management of this work; and, for more effective assessment practice. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

**What progress has been made in implementing the arrangements to review and evaluate the quality of provision?**

**Significant progress**

Quality assurance processes are now implemented much more consistently across the college. Data regarding students' performance are better understood and used by managers and teachers. Senior managers regularly monitor a wide range of key performance indicators through the weekly 'dashboard' reports. The quality and standard of work-based learning is now fully incorporated into the self-assessment process and reports. The college now subscribes fully to a commercial system for value added and is beginning to use these data well to assess students' progress and to provide a further measure of how well students are taught. Self-assessment reports and action plans produced by individual faculties are now more evaluative, although there is still a need to improve the clarity of some of the targets set and the deadlines that need to be met.

## Outcomes for learners

### What progress has been made in improving learners' outcomes?

**Reasonable progress**

Several specific areas, identified as needing improvement at the last inspection, have been tackled successfully. Work-based learning success rates have improved and now generally meet, or slightly exceed, national averages for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. Overall Train to Gain success rates have improved, although timely success rates remain below national averages. Retention rates for younger students at foundation level have improved by eight percentage points. At intermediate level there is little sign of improvement. Success rates on national diploma provision have improved and are now above the national average. Success rates for younger students on long courses remain slightly above national averages and show some improvement over the last three years. Success rates for adults are slightly below national averages and have yet to show signs of improvement. This overall picture of success rates is underpinned by improved performance in several vocational areas, counterbalanced by some weaker performance in 2010 in a few AS-level courses where enrolments were high and previous performance had been good. Students' progress, measured by a nationally recognised value-added system, shows that students are making the progress expected of them given their qualifications at the start of their courses.

## Quality of provision

### What progress has been made in increasing the proportion of good or better teaching?

**Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, the college has focused more sharply on developing and broadening its team of observers and on improving action planning for teachers as a result of observation. A teaching and learning handbook now supports new and experienced teachers to develop their practice. An advanced practitioner is assigned to all new teachers. Learning coaches and advanced practitioners also support more experienced teachers and faculties to develop areas of practice identified as needing improvement. Moderation of observation reports is now more rigorous. According to the college, teaching and learning grades have improved, but overall teaching and learning are still satisfactory. However, there is now a better body of knowledge about good teaching and learning which is being shared more effectively across the college. Observation reports for the previous academic year have sometimes given insufficient attention to the impact of teaching on learning and to the link between action planning and identified areas for improvement. The new system for recording reports of lesson observations has improved and focused the action planning for teachers more sharply. However, it is too early in its implementation to have been able to evaluate its impact on teaching and learning across the college.

**What progress has been made in improving the promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum? Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, the promotion of equality and diversity was satisfactory. However, it was poor in work-based learning. The college has taken action to improve and has made reasonable progress. It now makes better use of data to identify areas for concern. Marketing materials have been improved. The prospectus is now more accessible to a wider range of potential students and includes positive images to encourage participation in non-traditional courses. An equality and diversity section has been introduced on the college website. This is supplemented by equality and diversity newsletters and bulletins for students. The college has focused attention more sharply on the promotion of equality and diversity to students on work-based learning programmes. All students receive an equality and diversity presentation at induction and an induction pack. Training coordinators focus more clearly on equality and diversity matters in reviews of student progress and reinforce students' understanding by the inclusion of equality and diversity related case studies in group tutorials. Across the college, a calendar of themed events is now better promoted to all students. Some of these developments are recent and their impact on learners' outcomes has yet to be proven.

**Leadership and management**

**What progress has been made in improving the effective monitoring of quality and standards in work-based learning, including improving the arrangements for assessment in this area? Significant progress**

At the last inspection, there were insufficient opportunities for assessment in the workplace and those that took place were not internally verified. The college has since made significant progress. It now monitors its data on student progress and success much more effectively through monthly performance review and senior management meetings. Success rates within planned end dates have improved significantly and are now just above national averages. Clear assessment plans have been developed and implemented, linking closely with assessment opportunities in the workplace. The new employer engagement team has defined clearly the roles of the assessor and the training coordinator. The college has improved its liaison with employers. They are now better informed about schemes of work and the organisation of opportunities for assessment. Training coordinators now inform employers about planned assessments to make them better prepared for, and more involved in, the process. Many work-based learning students are effectively involved in planning, tracking and logging their own assessments with their assessor. Assessor caseloads are now better managed, allowing a greater range of assessment opportunities to suit workplace needs. Procedures for internal verification are now established and practice is monitored rigorously.

**What progress has been made in improving the effectiveness of actions leading to improvement? Reasonable progress**

Inspectors found evidence of improvement across all the themes inspected at this monitoring visit. A major management restructure, following the last full inspection, has strengthened the focus on teaching and learning and students' performance. There has been a wide-ranging management training programme for managers, many of whom are new to their roles. Managers have a good understanding of the issues that they need to tackle and have generally good action plans to address these. Quality improvement planning has improved, but there is still some variation in the clarity and timelines in these plans. There are some good examples of specific intervention actions that provide practical support targeted on improvement. The college has correctly identified that, in some areas, teaching needs to lead to greater challenge and stretch for students. It is working to improve this. Students' views, collected during the inspection, matched closely the college's views on the standard of teaching and learning, but students were less positive about how well the college helped them to prepare for their next steps into further or higher education and employment.

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