

# South Worcestershire College

## Reinspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130709

**Name of lead inspector:** Russell Jordan HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 29 September 2010

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

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## REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

South Worcestershire College is a small general further education college serving the south of the county of Worcestershire. The two campuses are located close to their respective town centres; the main site in Evesham and a second campus, which is predominately an adult education centre, in Malvern. The six secondary schools in the Evesham and Malvern area all have sixth forms. Five further education colleges operate within a 16-mile radius of the college. The college provides mainly vocational courses in 12 subject areas from entry level to advanced level with the majority of learners following courses at foundation level and intermediate level.

The college was last inspected in January 2010. Inspectors judged that the overall effectiveness of the provision was satisfactory, with outcomes for learners; quality of provision; capacity to improve and leadership and management also satisfactory. Of the three subject areas inspected in depth, one was judged to be good, one satisfactory, and one, literacy and numeracy, inadequate.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

<b>What progress has been made in revising self-assessment procedures to provide a rigorous and accurate statement of the college's strengths and areas for improvement?</b>	<b>Reasonable progress</b>
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Changes to the self-assessment process had begun prior to the last inspection but were only partially reflected in the report available to inspectors at that time. The current self-assessment report is a work in progress, and it is therefore too soon to provide an evaluation of its accuracy and rigour. However, the college's written response to the pre-inspection briefing demonstrates a self-critical, systematic and evidence-based approach to self-assessment. The college makes good use of a range of data to evaluate its performance, including those on learners' attendance and retention. Arrangements to validate self-assessment are well-conceived.

The post-inspection action plan (PIAP) contains appropriate and measurable actions to implement all the recommendations from the last inspection. The monitoring of progress towards achieving outcomes is managed tightly. Plans show the participation of the senior management team and governors in both setting objectives and monitoring progress towards achieving them.

## Outcomes for learners

**How much progress has South Worcestershire College made in raising success rates in learner responsive provision by measuring and monitoring learners' progress more effectively?** **Reasonable progress**

At the point of the monitoring visit, success rate data for 2009/10 were incomplete, as not all achievement data were recorded fully. Where college data were closest to completion, they show an improvement in success rates on the previous year. For learners aged 16 to 18 at both foundation and advanced level there has been a significant improvement in success rates that brings them to the national average. For adults at foundation level the success rate has improved significantly to above the national average for the previous year.

Arrangements to set and monitor students' progress towards challenging targets are well-considered and assisted by electronic systems, however, they are at an early stage of implementation. The college ensures that students are aware of 'next steps' in progression to further study or employment, to encourage them to fulfil their potential on their current course.

**To what extent has South Worcestershire College been able to raise attendance during the 2009/10 academic year and to reduce the wide variation in attendance between subject areas?** **Reasonable progress**

Learners' attendance was low at the last inspection. College attendance improved by the end of the 2009/10 year to 85%. However, there remained significant variations in attendance between subject areas. Targets for attendance in the current academic year, 2010/11, are appropriately challenging. Arrangements to improve attendance are focused well on frequent monitoring and reporting; ensuring that students are aware of the importance of attendance at all lessons and ensuring appropriate interventions where learners are identified as 'at risk'. However, it is too soon to assess the full impact of these arrangements on students' attendance in the current academic year.

## Quality of provision

**What progress has South Worcestershire College made in improving provision in literacy and numeracy and in rectifying the precise areas for improvement identified at the last inspection?** **Reasonable progress**

A detailed and well-devised whole-college 'Skills for Life' Strategy and long-term implementation plan have been put into place since the last inspection, including the

introduction of functional skills. Functional skills are being taught on all full-time programmes. Diagnostic assessment of literacy and numeracy has been introduced for all learners, and all staff have received training to support their current role, with further training planned. The 'Skills for Life' team leader is expected to play a key role in the quality improvement action planning for literacy and numeracy across the college arising from the current self-assessment process. Success rates on one-year certificate in adult literacy and numeracy programmes have improved to above national averages. As a result of changes in teaching and closer monitoring of progress in 2009/10, success rates in key skills have risen significantly, especially at level 1, and were above the national average.

The inspection identified that too few staff had subject qualifications in literacy and numeracy. The college has since specified clearly the required qualification level and has agreed a training plan for those staff continuing to teach 'Skills for Life'. Newly appointed staff are appropriately qualified. Staff who teach on literacy and numeracy programmes have benefitted from staff development to improve teaching and learning and opportunities to share good practice. Lesson observation now provides staff with more detailed feedback on how to improve. However, it is too early to judge fully the impact of this on their professional practice.

### **Leadership and management**

**What progress has been made in improving the accuracy of lesson observations and in sharing good practice in teaching and learning more effectively?**

**Reasonable progress**

In the lessons observed during the monitoring visit, inspectors were in full agreement with college observers in the judgements made regarding the strengths and areas for improvement. The college has worked to good effect in improving the accuracy of lesson observation by providing additional training for observers, putting in place quality assurance arrangements such as joint observations, and in refining documentation that is now simple to use. Links between lesson observations and teachers' appraisals are systematic and timely. Arrangements to improve the professional practice of teachers whose lessons were either satisfactory or inadequate are sound, as are those for sharing good practice. However, it is as yet too early to assess the impact of improved lesson observation processes and arrangements to share good practice on the quality of teaching and learning in the college as a whole.

**What progress has been made in ensuring that development plans identify challenging targets and focus sharply on how to achieve the college's strategic aims?**

**Significant progress**

The last inspection report showed a new strategic plan that mainly provided a sound framework for subsequent planning, but implementation plans that did not always identify precisely the actions and targets required. Current milestones in the college's

three-year development plan are in draft pending the completion of the self-assessment report. They link well to the objectives set for achieving the strategic aims, and show suitable and progressive challenge. These milestones link equally well to the implementation plans for each academy. Arrangements to monitor progress and to report through to the governors' Standards Committee, and subsequently to the Board, are sound and systematic, ensuring that governors are well-informed and able to hold senior managers to account for the outcomes the college achieves for its learners.

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