

New College Telford

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

New College Telford is a small to medium-sized sixth form college. It is on a single site in Wellington, which is part of the borough of Telford and Wrekin. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and study on advanced level programmes. The college currently has 1,440 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and approximately 180 adults. Around 13% of students are from minority ethnic groups, which is higher than the local population. The college has A- and AS-level provision in over 40 subjects as well as a range of vocational courses at intermediate and advanced levels. Its largest subject areas are science and mathematics and arts, media and publishing.

The college received its last full Ofsted inspection in December 2009. At the inspection, inspectors graded the college satisfactory for overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management. Of the two subject areas inspected, science and mathematics was good and arts, media and publishing was satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during this monitoring visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

<p>What progress has the college made in using its quality monitoring and evaluation procedures to ensure consistent and sustainable improvements across all provision?</p>	<p>Insufficient progress</p>
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The quality assurance procedures and self-assessment processes have not brought about enough rapid or sustainable improvements since the last inspection. The college met very few of its key performance indicators in 2010/11. Unforeseen delays relating to building works and a number of staff resourcing issues were additional distractions that affected progress through 2009/10 and into 2010/11. Nevertheless, actions taken to improve whole college performance were mostly unsuccessful and the college's draft 2010/11 self-assessment report continues to judge most aspects of its work as satisfactory.

The self-assessment report, while honest in its reflection, does not always give precise enough judgments around its strengths and areas for improvement. Under the new management structure, the college has begun to sharpen its quality procedures with an increased focus on students' achievement but it is too early to judge the impact of this.

What progress has the college made in strengthening its organisational structure to ensure all aspects of provision are well managed and the capacity of senior management is increased?

Reasonable progress

The reorganisation of the college's management structure, undertaken through 2010 has ensured clearer lines of reporting at both senior and middle management level. The recent recruitment of a vice principal to lead on the quality of provision including teaching and learning, a position that did not exist at the last inspection, has resulted in a more balanced workload for the senior management team. The realignment of senior roles and responsibilities has begun to provide a much greater focus on students' achievement. Middle managers are gradually becoming more accountable for subject performance but the college recognises this remains too inconsistent. A renewed focus on teaching, learning and assessment is providing greater challenge for students. It is however, too early to demonstrate the full impact of this on students achieving higher grades.

Subject self-assessments are more comprehensive, although still in draft at the monitoring visit. Most reflect an increased focus on teaching and learning but the use of data to review performance and support judgments is variable.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has the college made in improving students' outcomes since the last inspection, particularly for success, retention and attendance rates and in the achievement of high grades?

Insufficient progress

The success rate for those aged 16 to 18 on advanced programmes declined for the third consecutive year to remain below average. As a result, the gap between the college's success rate and the national average has widened. This was mostly due to continued low success rates on GCE AS-level and on vocational programmes. Success rates for those aged 16 to 18 on intermediate level programmes rose by 2 percentage points in 2011 but continue to be low. For the relatively small number of adult learners studying at the college, success rates increased over last three years to remain above the average in 2011.

For learners who complete their programmes of study, pass rates are mostly high. The proportion of learners who stay on to complete their courses however, particularly on intermediate level and advanced level vocational programmes, is low and remains a key priority for improvement. Most students are successful in gaining their GCE A2 qualifications and results are in line with the high national average. Success on GCE AS-level programmes however is much more variable, with a below average proportion of students completing and/or passing their programme successfully.

The achievement of high grades on vocational advanced programmes is largely good. The achievement of high grades on both GCE A2- and AS-level programmes however showed limited improvement in 2011 and remains low.

Students' attendance has not improved from the previous year and remains satisfactory.

What progress has the college made in ensuring students make good progress through their programmes of study?

Reasonable progress

The majority of learners make progress in line with expectations. In a few subjects, such as economics, chemistry and applied business, progress is consistently good or very good. In 2011, college value-added data show overall improvements in students' progress from the previous year. The degree of progress learners make varies between subjects however, and in a small number of subjects, particularly but not exclusively at AS-level, progress has remained stubbornly below expectations.

At the time of the monitoring visit, the college was still analysing destination data was but initial data indicate at least 60% of students moved successfully into higher education at the end of their studies in July 2011.

Quality of provision

What progress has the college made in improving the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment through the teaching observation scheme and targeted staff development?

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, the college has recruited a senior manager with responsibility for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning through the college's observation scheme. The college has introduced a number of measures to focus on the needs of individual learners in lessons. Staff training and guidance emphasises the importance of assessment for learning and providing challenge for learners that are more able.

Through increased training and better moderation, the college's lesson observation process is more rigorous. Managers use lesson observation feedback to agree improvement targets with their staff and conduct focused monitoring visits to assess the progress of individual staff and the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies. In addition, teachers link systematically with colleagues from other departments to observe them teach to improve the sharing of good practice.

A review at the end of the last academic year indicates that the college is making progress with the implementation of quality improvement strategies for teaching and learning, but its impact is not widespread. Lesson planning does not always consider

how to extend learning for students' different abilities, particularly the most able, or provide sufficient opportunities for checking the learning of all students.

How much progress has the college made in improving the structure, quality and consistency of tutorial provision? **Reasonable progress**

The focus on students' achievement has increased. In 2011/12, it is to be the primary focus of tutorials for individual students. Subject teachers report on individual student progress electronically every four weeks and personal tutors monitor this in discussion with each student. Students talk positively about the support they receive through their individual discussions with tutors. Most students are clear about their progress and targets.

The college now closely monitors attendance in tutorials through the electronic register system. Students' attendance at tutorials over the last academic year was satisfactory. The monitoring of the quality of tutorials takes place frequently through observations and students' focus groups. The college does not routinely check data on the proportion of students with identified literacy and numeracy needs who attend optional support sessions on the advice of their tutor.

Since the last inspection, the college has restructured group tutorials. For 2011/12, it will no longer run weekly group tutorial sessions. At the time of the monitoring visit it is unclear exactly how the college intends to promote areas such as preparation for leaving college, sexual health and other well-being themes, which group tutorials previously covered.

What progress has the college made in improving the monitoring and students' subsequent attendance and participation on enrichment programmes? **Reasonable progress**

The college offers a range of weekly enrichment events. Students' attendance for these events is high and increased in 2010/11. Sporting events and the Duke of Edinburgh awards run throughout the year, with over 250 students participating regularly. A minority of subjects, such as performing arts, arrange enrichment activities both for their own students and from across the college. Additionally, over 200 students undertake work experience each year.

Significantly, more students attended enrichment tasters through the summer of 2011, than in the previous year. Since the last inspection, the college has monitored the attendance of learners on enrichment activities more systematically. It does not however, report these findings clearly or routinely or monitor the attendance at enrichment by different groups of students.

Leadership and management

How much progress has taken place in improving the overall monitoring and reporting of equality and diversity, and its impact across the college? **Insufficient progress**

Since the last inspection, although some positive actions have taken place, the college has delayed in resolving issues for this area. Much equalities monitoring and reporting lacks cohesion. This results in ineffective measuring of what the college does well or what it needs to improve. The equality and diversity committee, established in 2009/10 to monitor this area, the college disbanded in 2010/11. Plans are in place to re-establish the committee. Monitoring of the implementation of the college's single equality scheme is insufficient. The college is now gradually completing monitoring equality impact assessments with far more rigour. Training to raise governors' awareness of their responsibilities has only very recently taken place.

The promotion of the college's inclusive ethos remains effective, both internally and within the local community. Very recent work is underway to identify better, and disseminate, good practice in the promotion of equality in lessons.

The college analyses the performance of different groups of students. This shows most groups perform broadly in line. However, this analysis and reporting does not contain sufficient detail. For example, it does not show level of qualification or the achievement of high grades.

What progress has the college made in improving the engagement with all groups of students to inform and drive further improvement? **Insufficient progress**

The student council does not have a high enough profile within the college. Many students felt the council in 2010/11 was ineffective in representing their views. Too many students are insufficiently aware of any changes the college is making as a result of their feedback and suggestions.

The college seeks learners' views through questionnaires analysed externally and the results from this help inform self-assessment and course reviews. The college is in the process of revising students' representation arrangements to align more closely to the curriculum, so the collating of students' feedback links directly to course review. The college establishes students' focus groups on an occasional basis to investigate specific quality issues.

While the college collates the views of different groups centrally, it does not use them well enough to plan improvement. For example, some notable discrepancies in students' responses by particular groups in the February 2011 questionnaire, the college has not pursued swiftly enough.

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