

# Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College

## 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

Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College operates on two main campuses approximately nine miles apart, one in Cheadle Hulme and the other in Marple. The college offers a broad range of courses covering most subject areas, with the majority of students aged 16 to 18 studying full-time courses at advanced level. The vast majority of adults attending the college follow part-time courses. The college also offers apprenticeship and Train to Gain provision.

The college was last inspected in October 2009, when it was judged to be satisfactory overall, with good capacity to improve. Outcomes for learners, quality of provision, and leadership and management were judged satisfactory, with contributory grades of good for safeguarding and satisfactory for equality and diversity. Of the four subject areas inspected, health and social care; leisure, travel and tourism; and languages, literature and culture were judged good, with science and mathematics judged satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored by inspectors during the monitoring visit.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

**What progress has been made in self-assessment and quality improvement planning so that underperforming areas are being effectively addressed?** **Reasonable progress**

Self-assessment continues to be central to the college's drive to raise standards and eliminate areas of underperformance. A more rigorous approach, along with much better use of data, has contributed to the continuing improvements in success rates in most areas, as has more frequent and robust monitoring of curriculum action plans. The process involves all staff and a wide range of evidence is used to scrutinise performance. The learner voice is being used increasingly more effectively to help in the self-assessment process and the college is working to develop this area further. The grades and judgements made through moderation are subjected to close scrutiny.

Since the final report for 2009/10, outcomes for students aged 16 to 18, the vast majority of the college's learners, have continued to improve at advanced level. Improvements at intermediate level in 2010/11 are less evident. However, based on the outcomes in 2009/10, the college's assessment that outcomes for learners were satisfactory appears to be accurate, as do other grades awarded in the 2009/10 self-assessment report. Evaluation of the college's performance in 2010/11 is well under way and discussions with a range of staff during the visit indicate that the college

has a keen awareness of what it does well and where it still needs to improve further.

### **Outcomes for learners**

#### **What progress has been made in improving success rates for students, specifically those for underperforming groups and areas? Reasonable progress**

Success rates for students at advanced level, which cover the vast majority of students, increased in 2010/11. In a number of areas where there was weaker performance, effective action plans have been put in place and there are now clear improving trends, such as those in information and communication technology and media studies. There have also been significant improvements in success rates for specific underperforming groups, such as students from some minority ethnic backgrounds.

However, the success rate at intermediate level for students aged 16 to 18 has not improved over the last three years and remains an area for improvement for the college. Staff have analysed the courses at intermediate level and are aware of the problem areas. A number of strategies were put in place previously, with a positive impact in some areas. Additional strategies have been put in place for this year.

A key feature in improvements across the college has been the use of the new college system for monitoring performance, which has supported targeted interventions. In addition, individual subject areas have put strategies in place to address specific issues, such as changing the order of teaching units, visiting other colleges to view good practice and targeted training.

#### **What progress has the college made in improving the progress that students make and improving progression rates, particularly the progression rate of students from the first to the second year of advanced level courses? Reasonable progress**

There is clear evidence of improvement in the progress students make at advanced level, compared with their qualifications on entry. On AS, A level and BTEC courses the number of students making better than expected progress has increased over the last three years. Progress is particularly strong on BTEC courses, and consistently so across all subjects. On AS and A level courses there are greater differences between subjects, but the numbers of students making less than expected progress has decreased markedly.

Over the last three years there have been increasing levels of progression for students on foundation and intermediate courses. The majority of students progress to a course within the college, but they also move on to other educational institutions and into employment. There is a strong focus in college on ensuring that students

are given advice and guidance from the very start of their course to support a smooth transition to their next step.

The progression rate of students from the first year to the second year of advanced level studies increased in 2010/11. There are a number of subjects where the progression rate is high, particularly on vocational courses. However, there are also courses where the progression rate is less strong.

**Quality of provision**

**How much progress has been made in strengthening the process for observing teaching and learning and in the sharing of good practice?**

**Reasonable progress**

The college continues to give a high priority to teaching and learning. The system for the observation of teaching and learning continues to improve and is well understood by all staff. Staff are observed against clear criteria that focus on students' learning. Those receiving a satisfactory or inadequate grade are given support by one of the college's advanced skills teachers and are then re-observed.

Lesson observation records are mostly detailed and comprehensive, although scrutiny of these records indicates variability in the quality of some written records and, in a few cases, grades that are not supported by written evidence. In a few other examples, grades appear over-generous when compared with students' progress data. However, records generally identify the strengths and areas for development accurately and these are analysed carefully to inform staff development which is increasingly well targeted to meet individual, curriculum and whole college needs. The college is creating a culture where teachers are keen to improve and enjoy sharing good practice through, for example, effective use of peer observation. Staff report that they have benefited from the wide choice of staff development activities, and that this has encouraged them to reflect on their own practice. However, the college is aware that more needs to be done to sharpen the monitoring and evaluation of teachers' individual action plans to ensure greater consistency and to eradicate any remaining underperformance.

**What progress has the college made in improving the tracking and monitoring of learners' progress?**

**Significant progress**

Since the last inspection, the college has introduced, very successfully, an electronic system for the monitoring of students' progress. Data available on the system provide a 'live' and complete picture of how well individual students are performing against their academic and personal targets. Teachers and students can gain access to the system easily, as can parents if their sons or daughters grant them permission rights.

The college has invested much training in the electronic system which is proving to be highly effective in enabling staff to identify swiftly those students who are at risk of underperforming and to put remedial actions in place. In addition to the formal progress reviews carried out bi-annually, managers, progress tutors and subject tutors monitor trends closely and identify any areas of concern. Evidence obtained during the visit indicates that students find the system helpful in keeping them motivated and on track to achieve success.

### **Leadership and management**

#### **What progress has been made in the analysis and use of data across the college?      Significant progress**

A very successful initiative has been carried out in this area. In a short space of time, college staff have carried out an analysis of need, investigated systems available and introduced a new monitoring system across the college. This has been integrated into all areas rapidly and highly effectively. Staff are able to use the system to retrieve a wide range of helpful data and reports, which successfully support monitoring across all aspects of performance. The system is very accessible and reliable. The wealth of data supports staff in identifying any instances of underperformance by students and in implementing appropriate interventions quickly.

Managers are making very good use of the reports produced by the system to track class and subject performance against targets. This information is used as the basis for team and staff discussions, to develop action plans and to monitor the effectiveness of actions. Staff have had tailored training on how to use the system to best effect for their role and can give examples of the benefits that this has brought about. Staff feel that they have a strong input into future developments and new reports are being produced regularly in response to staff requests.

#### **How much progress has been made in developing and embedding the learner engagement strategy?      Reasonable progress**

A strong feature of the learner engagement strategy is the learner conference. An annual conference has been held for the last two years and another is planned for later this year. All tutor groups have class representatives who attend the conference and feedback is provided to all the students via the tutor groups' representatives, a magazine and a range of other methods. An active student union meets regularly and students can give a number of examples of changes that have taken place in response to their input.

Surveys are carried out to obtain students' views across the college. Within subject areas, focus groups take place at the end of the course, or the end of the first year for two year courses, for student input to future developments. Within some subjects, input to course development is more frequent. Further developments are

ongoing in this area and staff are investigating a number of options, such as more frequent focus groups and the use of student emails to gather views and provide feedback. Students know that their views feed into course reviews and are clear that their views are listened to and make a difference.

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