

# Coulsdon Sixth Form College

## Reinspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130433

**Name of lead inspector:** Richard Moore HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 27 April 2012

**Type of provider:** Sixth form college

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## **REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS**

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

Coulsdon sixth form college is in the south of the London Borough of Croydon, on the borders of Surrey. Croydon is large and diverse, with characteristics of the inner city towards the north of the borough and areas of suburban affluence in the south. Most of the college's students travel from the north of the borough and their average prior attainment at GCSE on entry to the college is noticeably lower than is normally seen in sixth form colleges.

The vast majority of the college's students are aged 16 to 18 and are on full-time courses, mostly at advanced level. Students choose from a wide range of vocational or academic courses at both advanced and intermediate level. In the current year, around 1,300 students are enrolled, almost half of whom are studying on vocational programmes at advanced level. A significant proportion of students are from minority ethnic heritages.

The college was inspected in October 2011 and judged to be inadequate. Outcomes for students and leadership and management were inadequate. Capacity to improve, quality of provision, safeguarding and equality and diversity were satisfactory. Both of the two subject areas inspected were inadequate.

### **Themes**

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

<b>To what extent have changes to quality assurance and self-assessment led to managers now having a clearer idea of how to improve the provision?</b>	<b>Reasonable progress</b>
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Quality assurance arrangements and self-assessment are now more rigorous than at the last inspection. Managers have a more realistic view of the quality of the provision and, in particular, teaching and learning. This is enabling the college to make clearer links between standards of teaching and outcomes for students. Key performance targets, including those for retention and attendance, are appropriately challenging and are well understood by staff. Progress against plans is now monitored and interrogated more closely through faculty performance reviews. Arrangements for performance management have been strengthened and the focus on ensuring staff and student compliance with college procedures has been increased. Managers now have raised expectations of their staff and evidence is emerging of the positive impact this is having in creating a more purposeful atmosphere around the college. Staff are clearer about their role in bringing about improvement and the new initiatives to support students to make better progress and achieve higher grades are working well. However, these improvements are not yet consistent across all areas of the provision.

Self-assessment of performance in 2010/11 has been largely based on the outcomes of the inspection in October 2011. This has led to a post-inspection action plan and a series of updates for senior managers and governors which are highly focused on those areas of the college in most need of improvement. College managers are clear and realistic about where their actions have had a positive impact on outcomes and where they have been less successful. The range of approaches to gathering students' views is now much wider, including surveys of different types, meetings with the Principal, attendance at team meetings and more effective liaison with the student council. Staff are more involved in contributing to self-assessment in their curriculum areas.

### **Outcomes for learners**

**What improvements have there been in retention in the current year, particularly at intermediate level? What progress has been made in improving attendance and punctuality?**

**Reasonable  
progress**

The college has made reasonable progress in improving retention rates overall and particularly at intermediate level since the last inspection when they contributed significantly to the low success rates, notably on academic courses. However, progress towards improving attendance and punctuality has been inadequate.

Retention is currently at the same level as it was at the equivalent time last year, but forecasts indicate that the significant drop in retention that occurred in the summer term in 2010/11 is unlikely this year. This is particularly true of intermediate courses where the retention rate on GCSE English is still very low, and worse than last year, but countered by significant improvements in retention on vocational programmes. The college predicts that retention at intermediate level will meet or exceed its target of 90% which is close to the national average. A number of successful initiatives within curriculum areas and across the college more generally have contributed to this improvement in retention.

Attendance has improved only marginally since the inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. It is currently below the college target and has proved particularly difficult to resolve on additional mathematics courses and in some tutorials. Poor punctuality was witnessed during this monitoring visit. Most students and staff are clear about the procedures for attendance and punctuality and lateness for lessons is now challenged more robustly. The recent appointment of attendance trackers for some courses is starting to have a positive impact on attendance. However, whilst some areas of the college are trying to be proactive in encouraging better attendance and punctuality, too many efforts elsewhere are reactive. Excessive absence and lateness for lessons continues to disrupt learning.

## **Quality of provision**

### **What progress has been made in improving outcomes and the quality of work in science and mathematics?**

**Reasonable  
progress**

The college acknowledges the issues it has to resolve to improve its science and mathematics provision and has carried out a comprehensive review of how it might achieve this. Staffing changes have taken place to strengthen the teaching team and management structure. Managers now have a keen appreciation of the need to improve teaching and learning in this curriculum area quickly and have provided support to teachers to improve their performance. Team managers are more accountable for the performance of staff in the subjects they oversee. The appointment of an additional assistant team manager for mathematics is imminent to bring much needed support to this subject area. The college has raised its entry criteria for next year across much of this provision.

Evidence of the success of these changes on students' experiences is mixed. Their views are gathered more effectively and used to make decisions about improving the provision. The monitoring of students' progress and coursework is now more rigorous. The focus on standards of work is improving through the implementation of a number of initiatives. Some improvements in retention on GCE AS and A-level courses are evident, but elsewhere poor retention remains a stubborn problem. Attendance rates are yet to improve. Academic and vocational mathematics courses are a key area of concern for the college, particularly as both involve significant numbers of students. Despite this, effective links to the national bodies created to support improvements in science and mathematics provision are under developed.

### **What progress has been made in improving outcomes and the quality of provision in visual and performing arts and media?**

**Reasonable  
progress**

Faculty performance reviews have had a very positive impact in raising expectations and managers and staff have a much improved knowledge of data and current performance. Initiatives are in place to try to resolve those issues that have affected retention most significantly, particularly involving improved information, advice and guidance for new students. The retention of current students, however, remains a concern, particularly in performing arts, as does attendance which is still below the college target. Early predictions indicate that students are making demonstrable progress across the subject area with the likelihood of a greater proportion of them achieving high grades. Improvements have been made to curriculum enrichment and to partnership working with a particular emphasis on community-related activities. The sharing of good teaching and learning practice has increased both within the faculty and with other areas of the college. The lesson observation grade profile for the last two terms shows that teaching and learning are satisfactory, with a slight fall in the amount of good or better teaching this term. College managers, while not complacent about this situation, are reassured that this profile of teaching and

learning grades is realistic and that it represents a more credible explanation of students' outcomes to date.

**To what extent have teachers been supported and trained to improve standards of teaching and assessment? In particular, how has the college gone about raising expectations amongst both staff and students?** **Reasonable progress**

Since the inspection, the college has invested heavily in targeted staff training and other initiatives to share good practice and to focus on the key areas for improvement. Staff feel that training is now of a better quality and more relevant to their needs and that the college listens more closely to what they want. The college's lesson observation process is more accurate and, together with stringent moderation, this has resulted in managers having a much more realistic view of teaching and learning. It has also raised expectations regarding what constitutes good and outstanding classroom practice. Teachers receive better feedback from lesson observations about how to improve and observers feel they receive more support to carry out the process. Managers have started to identify the main issues arising from lesson observations each term and have been successful in resolving a number of these areas for improvement through prescribed training. The college's own lesson observation grade profiles for the last two terms show that teaching and learning are currently satisfactory. Significant concerns remain, however, about the standards of teaching in the faculties of science and mathematics and business and information technology. Moreover, students from across the college identify that there is still too much variable practice in teaching and learning, a fact also recognised by college managers. The college is encouraging students to take a more active part in raising their own, and teachers', expectations through learning survey evaluations which focus specifically on the quality of teaching and assessment in each lesson. The college envisages that a planned restructuring of its management teams will allow managers to monitor the performance of their staff more closely and to fully instigate the college's responses to the inspection outcomes.

**To what extent have the arrangements for academic support improved to ensure students are now making better progress and achieving higher grades, particularly on GCSE and GCE AS and A-level courses?** **Reasonable progress**

The college has strengthened its focus on target-setting and monitoring for students since the last inspection. This has been supported through appropriate revisions to the assessment policy and further training for staff on the use of aspirational targets for students. This focus is starting to lead to a more consistent approach by teachers to providing challenge for students which is encouraging them to fulfil their potential. A new tracking system enables managers to monitor group and individual performance more closely. Students who underperformed in their module

examinations in January 2012 receive additional teaching and are required to attend extra workshop sessions. The focus on gifted and talented students is now stronger. They are offered a good range of activities to help raise their aspirations. Plans are well advanced for a new management structure to improve and monitor more closely the provision of academic support for students in 2012/13. Each faculty is in the process of appointing a lead tutor to ensure a more consistent approach to student support. However, whilst there are encouraging signs that students are making better progress and are predicted to achieve higher grades, it is too early to assess fully the impact of these new initiatives.

### **Leadership and management**

**How much progress has the college made in improving the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons and the wider curriculum?** **Reasonable progress**

The college has made reasonable progress in improving the promotion of equality and diversity in the wider curriculum, but the impact of actions to do likewise in lessons is less clear. Managers have initiated useful training on carrying out equality impact assessments for all policies and procedures accompanied by helpful instructions. Assessments have now been carried out of the college's most important policies, such as those for child protection and admissions, which have identified some useful recommendations for revision. Students demonstrate good behaviour and respect for each other and staff around the college, engendering an inclusive atmosphere. The college continues to be proactive in taking steps to integrate its students more fully with local residents and businesses in order to change perceptions on behalf of both communities.

Staff are not always clear about the impact on their teaching and learning of the useful training they have received on equality and diversity since the last inspection. Examples of how this training has been used to improve students' awareness of equality and diversity issues in lessons are not immediately obvious and those staff interviewed during this visit were unable to explain how students' knowledge of equality and diversity is assessed and improved at induction.



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