

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Central Sussex College

Date of visit: 11 December 2007

### Context

Central Sussex College is a large general further education college, formed from the merger in August 2005 of Crawley College and Haywards Heath Sixth Form College (SFC). The college has two main sites, in Crawley and Haywards Heath, and a number of smaller campuses throughout central Sussex. Haywards Heath has retained its identity as a sixth form centre, and caters largely for full-time students aged 16 to 18. At the Crawley site the focus is on vocational education; construction, health and social care, and foundation courses are the largest curriculum areas. There is a substantial number of work-based learners across many curriculum areas. The college does much work with employers, and gained Action for Business College status in June 2006.

Crawley College was last inspected in November 2004. At that inspection, leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory. In curriculum areas, the college was awarded good grades in three curriculum areas, satisfactory in six, and unsatisfactory in three. In work-based learning, the college received one good grade, three satisfactory, and one unsatisfactory. Guidance and support were judged to be satisfactory, and educational and social inclusion were judged to be satisfactory. All the unsatisfactory areas were re-inspected in October 2006, with two being re-graded as good and two as satisfactory.

Haywards Heath College was last inspected in February 2004. At that inspection, leadership and management were judged to be good. In curriculum areas, the college was awarded good grades in four curriculum areas, and satisfactory in three. Guidance and support were judged to be good, and educational and social inclusion were judged to be satisfactory.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving students' outcomes?	Significant progress
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Students' outcomes continue to improve, and there has been a significant increase in success rates over the last three years. In 2006/07, overall success rates were close to the national average for the previous year. Long course success rates, at 75%, were significantly above general further education college national averages for

2005/06. The data show improvement for both age groups at all qualification levels. College managers rightly recognise that further improvement is needed to success rates on level 3 courses for adults. In sector subject areas, there is a consistent picture of improvements in success rates, with the exception of construction, where there was a decline in students' outcomes in 2006/07 as compared with the previous year.

The college has taken effective action to improve success rates on short courses. On courses lasting between 5 and 24 weeks, success rates have improved from 59% to 72% over three years. Although this is still below the 2005/06 national average for this length of course, college data show that when compared with the national averages for the specific courses involved, success rates are close to the average.

The college rightly compares students' results at the sixth form, Haywards Heath with sixth form college averages. Using this comparison, success rates rose rapidly until 2005/06. Although there was a slight fall in success rates in 2006/07, they remain broadly in line with the sixth form college average. Value-added analysis shows that the progress students make in comparison to their prior attainment has improved and is good overall, although in a small number of subjects this is not the case. Although some of the improvements made at the sixth form, Haywards Heath up to 2005/06 were not sustained in 2006/07, it remains the case that there has been significant improvement since the last inspection.

What progress has been made in improving success rates in English as a second or other language (ESOL) provision, including short courses, where success rates have been particularly low?	Significant progress
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Success rates on long courses in ESOL have improved significantly since 2005/06, and in 2006/07 were well above the 2005/06 national average for the same courses. The number of learners following short courses has doubled since 2004/05 and retention rates are very high. Success rates improved from 59% in 2005/06 to 72% in 2006/07, which is well above the 2005/06 national average. Teachers and managers use data well to track learners' progress, monitor achievement and bring about improvements. Areas for improvement have been successfully addressed and there is a clear focus on improving teaching and learning. Peer observation is used well to share good practice and is effective in promoting good team work and a sense of common purpose across the area. ESOL learners in need of additional support are carefully assessed and support is provided in all lessons at level 1 and below. Although the college has recently reduced the overall numbers of students following ESOL courses due to reductions in funding for adult provision, the proportion of learners following entry level provision has increased. Provision is now offered below entry level for ESOL learners who have basic skills needs in their first language. The college is working hard to encourage reluctant employers to provide ESOL opportunities for their workers where it is required.

What progress has been made in improving work-based learning success rates, particularly on advanced apprenticeships and in sub-contracted provision?	Reasonable progress
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The college has taken decisive action to improve areas of work-based learning provision where outcomes were low in 2005/06. Recruitment of advanced apprentices through partner providers has been discontinued in hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism, and in aspects of business and administration. College data show framework success rates for advanced apprentices to have improved from 38.4% in 2005/06 to 57.5% in 2006/07. Staffing difficulties in construction have been resolved. Learners following three or four year programmes recruited by partner providers who have already left the course will continue to have a negative impact on timely success rates for some time. Retained learners enrolled through these providers are receiving additional support to ensure they complete successfully. Framework success rates for apprentices have improved from 57% in 2005/06 to 65% in 2006/07. Recruitment of apprentices through partner providers has been discontinued in leisure, travel and tourism.

Procedures for target setting and tracking learners' progress have been strengthened and progress reviews are conducted more frequently. Learners at risk of not completing successfully are identified early. Monthly progress reviews between work-based learning and curriculum area managers help to ensure that learners are on track. Learners are assessed for additional learning support needs at the start of their course along with other college students. Those identified as needing support and receiving it are more likely to succeed than those not in receipt of support.

#### Quality of provision

What progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning, particularly on the Crawley campus?	Reasonable progress
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A central focus since the inception of the merged college in 2005 has been to improve the quality of teaching and learning. At the last inspection visit in 2006, evidence showed that the quality of teaching at the sixth form, Haywards Heath had improved significantly, but further work needed to be done to increase the proportion of lessons that were good or better at Crawley and other subsidiary campuses. College data for 2006/07 indicate that teaching has improved, with nearly 70% of lessons across the college judged to be good or better, and very few inadequate lessons. At the Crawley campus, around 63% of lessons were good or better.

Following the restructuring of middle management, a teaching and learning manager has been appointed in each faculty. These postholders have been in place for nearly a year, and although their full impact has yet to be seen, they are already playing a crucial role in supporting, mentoring and coaching teachers following lesson observations. Opportunities for staff to attend training designed to enable them to reflect on and improve their teaching are good, and are appropriately linked to teachers' appraisals and the outcomes of internal lesson observations. The recent introduction of peer observations has given further impetus to the desire to place teaching and learning at the heart of the college culture.

Under the formal lesson observation scheme, teachers know well in advance the lesson to be visited. Although senior managers are confident that the judgements being made on the quality of teaching and learning are accurate, they are aware that there is a risk that the formal lesson observation scheme may not capture some features of normal teaching practice.

What progress has been made in improving the quality of tutorial provision, particularly on the Crawley campus?	Reasonable progress
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The college has identified the need to ensure tutorial provision meets the needs of different curriculum areas and levels of provision clearly. Generic schemes of work for group tutorials have been developed with examples of topics that link well to the 'Every Child Matters' priorities. Managers and tutors are enthusiastic about ensuring that learners are well supported through the tutorial process, both in their general personal development and in their chosen programme of learning. Work is in progress to differentiate the delivery of group tutorial topics according to the needs of different students. A lead tutor has been appointed to co-ordinate the development of materials but there is currently insufficient capacity within individual curriculum areas to ensure the work is completed quickly. There are insufficient opportunities for tutors and managers to meet across curriculum areas to share ideas and good practice. However, plans are in hand to train and develop a group of staff to observe tutorials in order to raise the quality of practice. Procedures for one-to-one tutorials have been strengthened in order to identify learners at risk of not completing their programmes early and intervene quickly to try to retain them on their course.

#### Leadership and management

What progress has been made in improving the quality and coherence of self-assessment?	Reasonable progress
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The college's self-assessment process is particularly complex, for several reasons. Following merger, it was agreed that the sixth form, Haywards Heath, would retain a discrete self-assessment report (SAR) to reflect its continued existence as a sixth form centre. At the same time, the college recognised the need to produce a self-

assessment report for the whole college. A further complication is that the college is divided into faculties (Crawley) and curriculum areas (Haywards Heath) that do not coincide with the QCA's sector subject area (SSA) classification. The college takes the view that it needs to self-assess under SSAs to meet the needs of external bodies, for example the LSC and the inspectorate.

In this context, the overall college SAR is well argued and presents a coherent case for the grades awarded, but reflects the tension evident in trying to report provision to meet the needs of different contexts and audiences. Although clearly written, the attempt to interweave the different strands outlined above comes at some cost to the clarity of the report. Although largely evaluative, the impact of some of the developments described is not fully assessed. The report contains a helpful summary of the college's response to the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes, particularly in respect of the pastoral and other support available to students. However, the separate section on student support and guidance is brief and does not provide clear judgements on the effectiveness of tutorial and other support in promoting students' achievements.

Faculty and curriculum area self-assessment reports are clear and evaluative. These reports are underpinned by reviews for each course. Whilst the course reviews are useful, they do not always give a clear indication of the success, or otherwise, of the course being assessed.