

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: St Vincent
 Date of visit: 3 October 2007

Context

The College, in Gosport, was established in 1987 as an open-access sixth form college. The main employment in the area is the armed services, health care, retailing, catering, business administration and education. Generally employment and wage levels are below those of the surrounding area and levels of educational and social 'deprivation' are relatively higher in comparison with much of the rest of Hampshire. Gosport has been designated a 'Test bed' Learning Community by the government.

The college offers courses from pre-entry level to level 3 in 14 of the 15 sector and subject areas including vocational provision. The majority of its provision is level 3 and 22% of the college's full-time equivalent students are aged 19 and over. In 2005/06 there were 2,784 students at the college, 1,269 full time and 1,515 part time.

The college's mission is to be 'an open-access community sixth form college working in local partnerships to drive forward widening participation in education'.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving success rates for learners aged 16-18 on long level 3 courses, particularly for AS levels?	Insufficient Progress
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Overall success rates are still below the national average for sixth form colleges. College data for 2006/07 show an improvement in success rates for students aged 16 to 18 years old and for students aged 19 and above on level 3 courses. Retention on A/S courses has also improved. Data from the Hampshire county project show that progress made by students on vocational courses is just above the average for the area.

The college has taken suitable actions to improve success rates on level 2 courses through a restructure of mainly GCSE courses which are below the national average. However, the impact of the strategy has yet to be seen. Since January progress has been good in improving attendance and punctuality of students.

What progress has been made to help improve outcomes for learners in health and care provision at levels 2 and 3?	Reasonable Progress
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Several appropriate and effective measures have been implemented as a result of the change in curriculum management and review of the area. These include measures such as closer tracking of students, which is showing improvement in students' unit attainments, identifying students at 'risk of not achieving' early in the course, redeploying staff to appropriate roles and making more effective use of extra support and lesson time to help students with their portfolios.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in ensuring that students understand, and are clear about, how their progress on courses is monitored?	Reasonable Progress
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Students interviewed knew their targets and what they mean, and they were clear on how they are assessed. Suitable new measures have been introduced to ensure parents and carers receive regular information about progress and there are good and timely checks on progress of students which the students are clear about.

How successful have college actions been in delivering the Every Child Matters (ECM) themes through the tutorial programme?	Reasonable Progress
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The greater allocation of time towards tutorials and the restructuring of the tutorial and pastoral system have been effective in improving the delivery and content of tutorials. Students interviewed thought that tutorials this year have been more meaningful and helpful, particularly those on budgeting, finance and health, related to the Every Child Matters (ECM) themes. However, monitoring the quality of tutorials is not yet consistent across the college.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in evaluating the impact of additional learning support on retention and achievement?	Insufficient Progress
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While the college can clearly demonstrate effective support and use of additional learning support for students, it recognises that it has not made sufficient progress in evaluating the impact of additional learning support on retention and achievement and has now allocated specific responsibility for making sure this is done promptly.

What actions have been taken to improve weaknesses in off-site activities and cover for vulnerable learners?	Reasonable Progress
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The senior management team have now ensured that there is specific responsibility for these aspects and that procedures are thorough and reflect best current practice. Suitable measures have been put in place to cover for staff absence in the case of vulnerable learners.