

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Middlesbrough  
 Date of visit: 1 November 2007

### Context

Middlesbrough College was last inspected in November 2003. The college's overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory. Curriculum areas were generally good or satisfactory. The two unsatisfactory areas of construction and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were reinspected in October 2005 and found to be satisfactory. Support for students and the college approach to inclusion were judged good in 2003. The college delivers programmes for approximately 5,000 (FTE) learners. There were 2,394 full-time 16-18 year old students in 2006/07 and over 7,000 part-time adults. The College offers a wide range of academic, vocational and professional programmes, as well as HE courses franchised from the University of Teeside, bespoke provision for employers and opportunities for 14-16 year olds, in partnership with local schools. It also delivers work based learning and Train to Gain programmes. The college is planning to relocate to a new building in 2008.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made to improve success rates in courses that were underperforming?	Reasonable progress
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College data show improvement in success rates in 2006/07 for adult learners at levels one and three. Both rates were considerably below national averages in the previous year but have now risen and are at or slightly above the respective averages when compared with national benchmarking data for 2005/06. Level 2 rates continue to be good for adult learners and have risen to around average for learners aged 16-18. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 on level 3 courses did not show improvement in 2006/07 and are still below the 2005/06 national average. The majority of these learners undertake BTEC National Diplomas and the college has put in place measures to bring about improvement which have not yet had time to impact fully. GCE AS results did show some improvement in 2006/07 and A level results continue to be satisfactory.

Work based learning provision is satisfactory overall. In 2006/07 there was considerable fluctuation in results between subject areas. The overall success rate for framework only was below the national rate, the rate for framework and/or NVQ was slightly above and timely success rates remained above. In construction, engineering and business overall and timely success rates were well above the national rates. Success rates declined significantly in hairdressing in 2006/07. Hairdressing apprentices comprised a significant proportion of the work-based learning cohort in that year. The college identified the reasons for this decline and implemented a detailed and focused action plan, which is already showing positive impact.

To what extent has the college improved target setting for individual learners?	Reasonable progress
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A new system is in place to ensure target setting is used more systematically and effectively across the college. All staff receive training and guidance to help them set targets for learners and review them regularly. The college is working towards putting in place aspirational as well as minimum grade targets. Staff confidence in the use of learner targets has increased, for example in breaking targets down into meaningful steps and using them to motivate learners. It is too early to evaluate the system in terms of improving the value added to learners' previous attainment. Current data indicate value added is satisfactory.

#### Quality of provision

What improvements have been made in the college lesson observation scheme and what impact is this having?	Reasonable progress
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The college has radically altered its lesson observation scheme. The new system involves more observers, which means all teachers will be observed annually and a greater proportion of observations take place earlier in the year. The proportion of teaching graded good or better in 2006/07 was 68% and the college identified that there was too much teaching that was only satisfactory. Where the outcome is satisfactory with room for improvement, mentors work with staff to improve the lessons. Mentoring has been extended to staff teaching at the college but employed by an external agency, as well as staff employed directly by the college.

The observation scheme has been extended to include work place assessment sessions. Staff are benefiting from opportunities to share good practice and from peer observation. There is a clearer understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning across the college. Early indications are that the changes are having a positive impact on lessons observation grades in the 2007 autumn term.

What steps have been taken to improve the delivery of key skills?	Significant progress
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Key skills success rates improved significantly in 2006/07 and are now above the 2005/06 national averages at levels one and two. The college recognises continuing weaknesses in success rates at level three. Better integration of key skills in vocational areas has increased learner motivation to achieve the qualifications. There has been significant staff training in how to deliver key skills and each curriculum area has a key skills co-ordinator. In work based learning additional key skills workshops and revision sessions are provided prior to learners undertaking external tests and this has contributed to improved results in engineering, construction and business.

#### Leadership and management

Has the use of data improved in curriculum areas and work based learning?	Significant progress
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The use of data has improved significantly. Each curriculum area is assigned a data controller to work with staff to ensure data is accurate before course reviews take place. At the reviews data are well used to analyse strengths and areas for improvement. As a result of better understanding of data, course co-ordinators are becoming increasingly skilled at determining specific actions to address weaknesses. Monthly departmental audits of data in work based learning enhance planning and intervention strategies for learners at risk of underperforming. This more systematic approach to the use of data has contributed to improved performance and target setting, for example, in engineering and construction.

What progress has been made in performance management?	Reasonable progress
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There is a more structured approach to performance management. As well as review meetings between heads of department and senior managers, course co-ordinators now have termly reviews against targets. The new teaching and learning policy links outcomes of observations to appraisal and there is an incentive scheme within the pay structure to improve teaching and learning. A number of these features are relatively new in the college and it is too early to evaluate fully their impact.