

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Wyke Sixth Form College

Date of visit: 30 November 2007

Context

Wyke Sixth Form College is one of two sixth form colleges in Hull and is situated on the western outskirts of the city. It is part of the West Hull Learning Zone and works in partnership with a number of schools, and other providers, to develop provision. The college offers a wide range of courses with the main provision being at level 3. In 2005/06 there were 1,282 learners on roll, with 897 aged 16-18. Fifty-five percent of learners are female. Attainment for learners aged 16-18 on entry to the college is relatively low for sixth form colleges.

Wyke Sixth Form College was last inspected in October 2003. At that inspection, leadership and management were satisfactory. In nine curriculum areas graded, the college was awarded an outstanding grade for performing arts, media and film. English and humanities was graded good. Provision was satisfactory in social sciences and health and social care, business studies, economics, accountancy and law, in information and communication technology (ICT) and computing and in science overall. A contributory grade for biology was unsatisfactory. Two areas were graded as unsatisfactory; visual arts and mathematics. Guidance and support were judged to be satisfactory, and educational and social inclusion were judged to be good.

In re-inspection in November 2005, visual arts was judged to be satisfactory and mathematics was still judged inadequate.

Achievement and standards

What progress has the college made in improving performance in under-performing areas?	Reasonable progress
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There are a number of strategies across the college to support improvement in all areas; for example the use of mentors to support 'at risk' learners and

highly focussed monitoring and follow up procedures. Data show that attendance and retention have improved overall from 2004/05 to 2006/07 and that the positive trend has continued this year to date. There have also been improvements in value added measures, showing the progress learners make in relation to their starting points.

Specific actions have been put in place for areas which are causes for concern, such as mathematics. Schemes of work have been adapted, the use of IT has been improved, support for learners is more targeted and good practice seen in other institutions has been utilised. In addition, there is a strong focus on using learner views as part of the improvement programme. The impact of these initiatives was seen in significant improvements in AS and GCSE mathematics results for 2006/07. A new head of department has been in post since September 2007 and is building on these strengths. Improvements have also been seen in other areas, but further work is still needed in some subjects where progress has been slow or not sustained.

What progress has the college made in plans to improve the percentage of high grades on AS and A level courses?	Reasonable progress
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At the start of the academic year the percentage of high grades achieved is a focus in results analysis for each curriculum area, linking to action planning for the year. This is part of the overall college strategy for improvement. It links with the support programme for learners and the initiatives to improve teaching and learning.

In addition, there are specific strategies to support progress on this issue. A speaker is coming in to assess practice, there is targeted use of mentors to support high grade achievement, advanced extension awards are used to help stretch learners and Aim Higher events are used to raise aspirations. Good practice is also shared internally by those departments where there are more high grades; for example law.

Quality of provision

What actions has the college taken to ensure the curriculum remains responsive and continues to meet needs at level 3?	Reasonable progress
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The college has sound procedures in place to ensure the curriculum remains responsive and continues to meet needs. The progress judgement in this area is supported by an increase in enrolments in 2006. The curriculum offer is reviewed annually with input from a range of sources, including the views of learners. The college monitors the external environment to see what is changing and where needs may be developing. The wide range of liaison work the college carries out is very helpful for this aspect. Existing courses are reviewed to make sure they are still fit for purpose and if they are not doing well they are replaced with alternatives or discontinued. Internal requests for courses are also followed up. Proposals for a new course follow a set procedure, with detailed documentation to support the case going to the college management team for consideration.

The college is involved in diploma development as part of city-wide initiatives. To date there has been limited development in the city, with one diploma starting in 2008.

How successful have college actions been to meet the needs of learners at level 1, foundation and pre-entry?	Reasonable progress
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The Wyke foundation course, covering entry and pre-entry levels, recruited more learners than ever before in 2007. There are two groups of learners, with different specific needs, who follow a wide ranging programme covering literacy, numeracy and number of 'tasters'. The programme is designed to be highly supportive with linked learning support assistants and mentors. It can be adapted to meet individual needs so that learners can link into qualifications at higher levels where appropriate. Learners achieved very high success rates in literacy and numeracy in 2006/07.

The level 1 course has not run this year, due to very low numbers applying, but is planned for next year to act as progression route for those currently on the foundation programme. Other progression opportunities are also available, for example some learners go directly on to level 2 programmes.

There are plans for further development of the foundation programme to cover ASDAN qualifications.

Leadership and management

What progress has the college made in improving the quality assurance procedures for tutorials?	Reasonable progress
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There are thorough processes for tutorial quality assurance covering staff review of the programme, the observation process, attendance monitoring, learner feedback (focus groups and questionnaires), and staff training. Tutorial provision is also assessed as part of the overall self assessment process.

In summer 2007 a major review was carried out and this has led to the roll out of year specific tutorial programmes from September 2007. These incorporate the needs of particular groups and encourage consistency of approach within a year group, for example first year advanced level. The initiative will be evaluated formally at the end of each term and the year, and is informally evaluated after each session. Early indications are positive.

What progress has the college made in evaluating the impact of Every Child Matters in cross college activities?	Reasonable progress
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There is wide ranging collection of evidence to show links between ECM themes and different aspects of college. This provides lots of information relating to each theme. The impact for themes is clearly seen; for example, healthy eating on refectory provision. The impact on different aspects is also assessed via learner feedback and linked to tutorial provision, where many aspects are covered. However there is no overarching analysis to show overall impact.