

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: New College Telford

Date of visit: 21 January 2008

Context

This sixth form college is based on a single site in Wellington. Students attend the college mainly from the Telford and Wrekin borough. They also travel from Wolverhampton and from the more rural areas of Shropshire and East Staffordshire. Within the borough of Telford and Wrekin there are several areas of significant social and economic disadvantage. In 2006/07, the college recruited 1,266 full-time students aged 16 to 18 years and approximately 250 adults who mainly studied part-time. Most students study at level 3. Three-quarters of adult students are female, as are about half of those aged 16 to 18 years. A little under half of students aged 16 to 18 years receive an Educational Maintenance Allowance. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds at the college is greater than in the locality. The college has significant level 3 GCE A and AS level provision in over 40 subject areas as well as a range of vocational courses at levels 2 and 3. It also offers GCSE courses and level 1 options in adult literacy and numeracy. The college was last inspected in September 2006, when its overall effectiveness and capacity to improve were judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

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| What progress has been made in improving success rates in 2006/07? | Reasonable progress |
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College data for 2006/07 show improvement in most key measures. Overall success rates have improved by 3 percentage points to just below average, with a rate of improvement that is better than that observed nationally in sixth form colleges. For 16 to 18 year olds on long courses, success rates have made good improvement at levels 1 and 3 and are similar to the previous year at level 2. Rates are broadly average at all levels although retention rates are all below average. For adults, success rates on long courses have improved from a below average point at the time of the last visit to a much improved position. At level 2, they are well above average and just above at level 3. Success rates vary between curriculum areas. Most show improvement, however, rates are below average in two areas including well below average rates in computing and information and communication technology (ICT).

In 2006/07 the achievement of high grades declined at GCE A level, national and first diploma compared to the previous year and these rates are below average. The achievement of key skills qualifications is improving with more students taking these qualifications. Pass rates for the level 3 wider key skill of improving own learning and performance are low but progress towards completing this qualification in the current year is much improved. Success rates for 16 to 18 year olds taking short courses, mainly as part of the college's enrichment programme, are well below average because of low pass rates. The gap between success rates for male and female adult students has narrowed in 2006/07 to a similar position to that seen nationally.

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| In 2006/07 and in the current academic year, how successful have actions to improve students' progress and to increase the level of challenge? | Insufficient progress |
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Actions taken in 2006/07 to improve the progress made by students compared to their prior attainment did not bear fruit, as shown by measures of added value. Most overall measures show underachievement compared to expectation, especially at GCE A level and for national diplomas. However, value added at GCE AS level has been satisfactory for the past three years and students achieve at or above expectation. Several individual subject areas show improved and positive value added scores. The college has analysed this position fully. The work done to raise level of challenge in lessons and the emphasis on using individual targets to better effect had limited effect. In 2007/08, clear signs of improvement in the effective and much more consistent use of challenging targets, closer monitoring of progress through regular checks and tighter monitoring by managers, are in place. A strong focus has been placed on ensuring lessons challenge students to achieve their full potential with prompt tackling of underperformance. However, it is too early to measure the impact of these improvements.

Quality of provision

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| What progress has been made in improving the curriculum area of computing and ICT? | Reasonable progress |
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Following underperformance in 2006/07 and an inadequate grade in self-assessment, prompt action has been taken to improve the quality of provision in this area through relocation into existing related curriculum areas with good track records of strong leadership and improving achievement. Computing courses have moved into the science and mathematics curriculum area and ICT courses into business. Actions already taken to ensure improved achievement in the current academic year include weekly meetings between managers and teachers, regular monitoring of students, an increase in regular and rigorous assessment using appropriately challenging targets, as well as considerably increased sharing of good practice between teams.

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| What is the rate of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, especially involving the use of ILT? | Reasonable progress |
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Self-assessment in 2006/07 identified a decline in the amount of good or better lessons, but with none judged unsatisfactory, and a number of key areas for improvement. As a result, the observation process was begun early in the autumn term with a strong focus placed on helping teachers with a satisfactory profile in terms of previous lessons observations to improve. Nearly all teachers in this category have been observed and half have improved a grade to produce a good lesson. The detailed analysis of results to date shows improvement in several key areas of learning including differentiation, questioning and use of formative assessment. No unsatisfactory teaching has been observed. The observation team are now meeting formally on a regular basis to ensure prompt and productive use of the results of observations and to ensure rigor and coherence in the process. The teaching and learning development group has stepped up its work in sharing of good practice and informing staff development activities. Good progress has been made in the use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons, although the virtual learning environment is under used in all but a few curriculum areas.

Leadership and management

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| What further improvements have been made to physical resources? | Reasonable progress |
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Over the summer of 2007 all the work identified to make improvements to physical resources was completed, with good and productive use of space to create a better learning environment for students within the constraints of the existing buildings. However, B block and the pre-fabricated classrooms have limited scope for improvement other than through a major rebuilding project, plans for which are under close consideration. The pressure on physical space in a number of classrooms is high and overcrowding is evident, including in social and refreshment areas. Good use is being made of the high level of investment in ILT by teachers.

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| How has the process of self-assessment and action planning for improvement moved forward in terms of effectiveness, rigour and accuracy? | Reasonable progress |
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The self-assessment report is realistic and comprehensive. Grading is accurate based on the evidence given in support. Quantitative measures are used well to support judgements and a very full analysis of data, including measures of value added is undertaken. Action plans are detailed and are a sound basis for bringing about improvement in key areas identified for improvement. However, the implementation of several key actions identified in the 2006/07 action plan was only partially successful and not all the success criteria identified were met. Strengthening of the

management team, through additional appointments with clear lines of accountability identified, is currently taking place. Middle managers are becoming well established in their role with increasing ownership of their areas of provision and are well placed, along with other managers, to take on the challenge of ensuring that actions for improvement are fully and effectively implemented.