

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Sparsholt College – Andover College campus

Date of visit: 13 November 2007

Context

Cricklade College was merged with Sparsholt College Hampshire on 1 August 2007. The new college, known as Sparsholt College, has a campus in Andover known as Andover College. A sixth form academy and a professional academy were launched at Andover College in autumn term 2007 in order to bring a clearer focus to the opportunities for learners in North West Hampshire.

Andover College has approximately 3800 learners on a range of recently rationalised further education programmes. Over half the learners aged 16 to 18 are studying GCE AS, A level and BTEC National programmes. The provision of courses at levels 1 and 2 are increasing and most adult learners take level 1 or level 2 courses. The college has a small but growing work-based learning provision and an E2E contract.

At the last inspection, in March 2007, the then Cricklade College was judged to be satisfactory overall. Leadership and management, quality of provision, achievement and standards and capacity to improve were all judged to be satisfactory. Curriculum provision in care and early years, visual and performing arts and media and preparation for life and work were also judged to be satisfactory. However, science and mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) were graded as inadequate.

Achievement and standards

Have pass rates and progression in the sciences and success rates at level 2 and level 3 in ICT improved?	Insufficient progress
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Success rates in science and mathematics did not improve in 2006-07. However, success rates in ICT did improve. In level 2 and level 3 science and mathematics programmes retention has generally been at or above national average for 3 years. GCSE high grade achievements were satisfactory for 16 to 18 year olds in 2006-07 and were above national average for adult

learners. However, at GCE AS and A level, achievements were poor and were around 15% below national average in 2006-07. Progression from AS to A level courses varied but was noticeably poor in psychology. In ICT retention was also generally satisfactory at levels 1 and 3 but was below national average for level 2 programmes in 2006-07. Learners' achievements at level 1 were poor in 2006-07. However, at both level 2 and level 3 achievements improved in 2006-07 and were above the national average.

Quality of provision

<p>What actions have been taken to improve the sharing of good practice and to eliminate unchallenging teaching? What had been done to address the insufficiently challenging teaching in the sciences and to better meet the needs of 16 to 18 year old learners?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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The lesson observation system is comprehensive and is now linked to the fully embedded lesson observation arrangements of Sparsholt College. External consultants are used in addition to college managers and moderation is carefully organised. 231 observations have been completed this year and the tutorial programme will be observed in 2008. An improving profile has emerged with more lessons graded good or better and fewer judged to be unsatisfactory.

A number of other changes have been put in place to improve the progress of learners. These include a new assessment policy and procedures and a new management team in the sciences. In addition the science laboratories have been refurbished, hardware and software have been upgraded in ICT and interactive technologies installed in mathematics classrooms. There are new teachers in the sciences along with a re-developed mentoring system and support for curriculum managers in collaboration with Cirencester College. The entry qualifications for level 3 courses have been reviewed and more BTEC National programmes added to the provision. However, it is too soon to make judgements about the impact of these changes.

What changes have been made to improve the Key Skills provision? Have success rates improved?	Reasonable progress
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There has been reasonable progress in improving the key skills provision. Based on data supplied by the college, overall success rates at Andover have improved from 31% in 2005/06 to 56% in 06/07. Whilst retention rates have remained high and stable at some 94% over the two years, achievement has improved significantly from 34% in 2005/06 to 60% in 2006/07.

Key skills are now more effectively embedded in construction, catering and beauty therapy programmes for 2007/08. The support for, and monitoring of, staff has appropriately increased. Staff at both sites attended training events during the summer and weekly key skills meetings have recently been introduced to monitor progress and share good practice. The monitoring of staff in recording student's progress has been improved.

Has employer engagement increased? What impact is this having on curriculum areas and on outcomes/opportunities for learners?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made in improving employer engagement. The capacity to manage links with industry and partners has been increased at the Andover campus. A director of commercial services has been appointed and a clear strategy put in place to unify the interaction and services to industry across both sites. The college is introducing electronic management of external links and is appropriately reviewing its contacts database. Employers are now being more effectively engaged. In hair and beauty a group of 10 employers now attend twice yearly forums to offer advice on industry developments and standards. The college is soon to host 'The Best of Andover' business and community development group meetings on a monthly basis. Increasingly effective links are being formed with Test Valley Council to identify and promote learning to new employers, for example developments by ASDA and TESCO in the area.

Outcomes of better engagement include a significant increase in Train to Gain learners in 2007/08. In 2006/07 there were 25 work based learners taking apprenticeships. This has increased to 72 in the first 3 months of 2007/08. Short ICT courses for employers have been introduced.

The college recognizes that whilst there has been an improvement in employer engagement, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of some actions taken and that further work needs to be done.

Leadership and management

<p>What actions have been taken to address the inconsistent quality of curriculum and programme management? What CPD has taken place/sharing of good practice to train and develop middle managers?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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There has been good progress in developing leadership and management capacity across the new college. A clear strategic direction has been established. Robust action has been taken to improve the competency of staff at all levels and reasonable progress is being made in unifying the systems and procedures across the two sites. It is, however, too early to judge the full effect of some actions taken.

Ineffective action planning was identified as a weakness at the last inspection. There has been significant progress in resolving this area for improvement. Post inspection action plans are well conceived, detailed in analysis of actions to improve and are appropriately monitored.

At the last inspection there was insufficient team working and sharing of good practice. Reasonable progress has been made. The QIA has been employed to provide useful analysis and team building. Staff welcome the improved communication and support from the new expanded college and curriculum management teams. More resources have been allocated to staff development and training and curriculum leaders are supported in order to develop capacity. Appropriate action has been taken to support tutors. Outcomes have included more structured assessment practice, improved internal verification drawing on good practice and a greater focus on improving learning resources. The college is working towards an integrated virtual learning environment across both sites.

How has the promotion of equality and diversity been developed? What are the outcomes of monitoring activities?	Reasonable progress
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The college keeps detailed records and analyses of the achievements and progress of different groups of learners as it is required to do. Posters celebrating multicultural Britain and the Andover learners part in it now decorate the college. More emphasis has been put on preparing learners to live and work in a multicultural/multifaith country. Staff training on equality and diversity was completed in summer 2007 at a staff conference. Of special note were the theatre groups that helped to raise awareness of staff on a range of equality and disability issues. Training also took place for all personal tutors and equality and diversity materials are now in place to use in tutorial programmes. A consultative group of staff, learners and local people is being used to capitalize on all the links the college has in order to listen to views and to plan for the next celebration of diversity at the Andover campus. The college has an equality and diversity forum which now meets twice a term.