

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Tyne Metropolitan College
Date of visit: 22 May 2008

Context

Tyne Metropolitan College is the major provider of further education in the borough of North Tyneside. The main campus is located in the Battle Hill estate in North Tyneside with the Sixth Form academy located in North Shields. The college was launched on 1st March 2005 following the amalgamation of North Tyneside College and Tynemouth Sixth Form College. It offers a wide range of full- and part-time provision, for 16-18 year old learners and adults, across all fifteen areas of learning. Provision ranges from entry level to foundation degrees.

The college was last inspected in December 2007. At that inspection the overall effectiveness, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory: grade 3. Capacity to improve was judged to be inadequate: grade 4. Of the six curriculum areas inspected, one was graded outstanding: grade 1, one was good: grade 2, three were satisfactory: grade 3 and one was inadequate: grade 4.

Quality of provision

What is the impact of actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning, too little of which was judged to be good at the last inspection?	Insufficient progress
--	-----------------------

Whilst the college has taken action to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the long term, insufficient priority has been placed on raising standards for current learners. Policies and procedures for observing teaching and learning have been updated recently to place increased focus on moving satisfactory performance to good or better. More work is in progress to produce supporting information for observers. New guidelines, 'Tyne Met Learning Framework', have been produced to help teachers to understand the characteristics of good and better teaching. Staff development on how to implement the framework has taken place for middle managers and training for all teachers is planned to take place before the end of the summer term. Since the inspection the focus has been placed inappropriately on ensuring that staff comply with only very basic standards, such as the need for teachers to have a lesson plan and scheme of work, and for lessons to start and finish on time. Insufficient focus and priority has been placed on the need to share good practice. A pilot to bring together teachers from the high performing subject area and that graded inadequate at the last inspection, is only in the early stages of

implementation. Currently the college has only one advanced skills teacher. The role of subject learning coach has been revised recently with the help of external consultants and plans are in place to appoint ten coaches for the start of the next academic year. Governors were informed recently that there was no evidence of significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

Leadership and management

<p>What action has been taken to improve the quality of the provision in subject sector area 1, health, care and public services, which was judged to be inadequate at the last inspection? What has been the impact for learners?</p>	<p>Insufficient progress</p>
--	------------------------------

Insufficient progress has been made in improving the provision for current learners. A detailed post inspection action plan identifies six key areas for improvement that are broken down into sub-sections. External consultants have provided good support to develop a more detailed quality improvement plan, in setting smarter targets and in making evaluative judgements about the quality of provision. However, there has been insufficient analysis of the underlying causes and areas for improvement in underperforming courses, particularly in childcare. Action plans to improve success rates on level 2 and 3 child care courses are not sufficiently focussed. The college has been slow to improve teaching and learning through the sharing of best practice. A system called 'teaching squares' is under development and in the early stages of piloting in the area.

Monthly quality improvement meetings take place to monitor progress against key indicators including rates of attendance and retention. Clearer lines of management accountability and the roles and functions for course tutors and internal verifiers (IV) have been put in place. The department receives positive reports from external verifiers on the quality of assessment; however, staff place too much reliance on these. The current IV sampling process is insufficiently focused on ensuring high quality assessment of learners' work.

<p>What action has been taken to ensure that the provision of additional learning support for literacy and numeracy is consistent across the college ?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
--	----------------------------

Reasonable progress has been made in implementing actions to ensure the consistency of support for literacy and numeracy. The college is now more able to plan for and allocate support before the start of the academic year as actions are in place to ensure that all learners undergo initial assessment at the interview stage rather than waiting until the first week of their course. Learning mentors are now allocated to each directorate to help to target support more flexibly.

Flow charts, accessible on the intranet, now provide tutors with a clear description of the additional learning support (ALS) system and process. Strategies to fully embed

the development of literacy and numeracy into curriculum delivery are well developed.

What action has been taken to ensure that the college meets its recruitment targets and its weak financial position improves?	Insufficient progress
---	-----------------------

The college's financial position has deteriorated further since the inspection. The college will not hit its learner number targets for 2007/08. Full-time equivalent learner numbers have declined substantially based on the previous year's outcomes and are significantly below targets for both 16-18 year olds and adults. As the college receives funding based upon its plans, its income is significantly higher than the volume of provision it is delivering and it has generated significant operating deficits during 2007/08. Funding for next year will reduce significantly to be more in line with current levels of activity. Effective action has been taken to improve the financial efficiency of courses offered from September 2008 through a programme of revalidation and eradication of underperforming courses and reductions in associated staff costs. Work has taken place to improve arrangements for curriculum planning to help staff to set more realistic targets for learner numbers. However, the college has been slow to produce an overarching plan to ensure that its weak financial position improves. Although much depends upon the college's ability to reverse the decline in enrolments seen in 2007/08 and to hit its learner number targets for 2008/09 planning to address these issues is weak. Insufficient focus and priority has been placed on developing and implementing plans to increase; levels of internal progression of learners and; the numbers of applications from new students. The college has only recently appointed a marketing co-ordinator. In April governors were informed that external applications from potential students for September 2008 are significantly lower than the previous year. The college has been slow to secure assistance from external organisations with experience of successfully addressing similar issues.

What progress has there been in improving the leadership of quality improvement and performance management.	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

A new staff performance management framework has been introduced which places more emphasis on compliance with college procedures and increased monitoring of progress against key targets. All staff have had a recent review in line with the new systems. The new management structure has had time to embed since the inspection and staff report key benefits as improved communications and cross college team working. Staff now have a good understanding of the issues the college faces in relation to finance and the need to improve standards. The new assistant directors of learning have a clear focus on managing and improving the performance of individual staff and feel well-supported by senior managers in addressing non-compliance. Curriculum leaders are focussed on operational delivery and development of the curriculum, and the self-assessment of provision for 2007/08.

However, it is not clear where responsibility for monitoring progress in implementing actions to improve performance at course level lies within the new structure.