

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Woking College

Date of visit: 3 June 2008

### Context

Woking College is a small sixth form college serving the Borough of Woking and surrounding areas of Surrey. In addition to its main site the college has a community-based information technology centre, an art studio in the Lightbox gallery and a football academy. Woking College is the only college in the borough although two other sixth form colleges, two school sixth forms and two general further education colleges are located within 15 miles. For Surrey overall, 62% of pupils gained five GCSEs at grades A\*-C in 2007. The proportion for Woking schools in the same year ranged from 72% to 35%. The college attracts 25% of its students from the lower performing schools and some 50% of 16-19 year olds travel from neighbouring parts of Surrey.

Provision is offered in 14 of the 15 sector subject areas although numbers in some of these areas are very small. In 2006/07, 724 students aged 16-19 enrolled at the college most of whom were following full-time programmes at level 3. Adult students numbered 645, the equivalent of 85 full-time students. Unemployment in Surrey is less than 1% although Woking includes an area of relative deprivation from which the college draws a significant proportion of students. The minority ethnic population of the college is 23% compared with 9% in the borough.

The college was inspected in October/November 2007. Two of the four curriculum areas inspected were judged good and two satisfactory. Effectiveness of provision and achievements and standards were found to be satisfactory and quality of provision, leadership and management and capacity to improve were judged good.

### Achievement and standards

What progress is the college making in improving achievement and standards?	Significant progress
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Despite the relatively modest starting point of many students, value added data for 2006/07 for individual A-level subjects indicate most students make satisfactory or good progress. On the basis of all subjects taken by individual students, most students achieve their predicted outcomes and 61% make good progress. College

procedures for setting value added target grades for A-level subjects are contributing well to driving up standards.

Procedures introduced in 2006/07 for identifying students at risk of under achieving, for monitoring their progress and for providing appropriate support are effective in keeping students on track. In-year retention rates for students following long courses have improved in comparison with last year at all levels and by 5 and 7 % age points respectively for AS and A2 subjects to 92% and 99% respectively. Attendance rates continue to be good with college data showing rates of 94% and 95% for AS and A2 subjects this year.

Pass rate for GCSE science re-sit examinations this year were 90% compared with 50% last year. The results of January AS and A2 examinations were generally positive with students re-sitting examinations showing marked improvement. Students sitting A-level module examinations early achieved their predicted grades or better.

#### Quality of provision

What progress is being made in improving the thoroughness of lesson observations and the quality of teaching and learning?	Significant progress
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The college has made good progress in implementing an integrated approach to improving teaching and learning based on the needs of individual students. College-wide training has been provided on identifying the personal learning needs of students and on accommodating the needs of students of all abilities through lesson planning procedures. College departments are piloting different aspects of personalised learning, based on the needs of different subject areas, for implementation across the college in September 2008. Lesson planning is now conducted electronically and focuses well on the needs of individual students. Greater emphasis is placed on assessing students' progress during lessons and on using assessment outcomes to inform lesson planning.

Procedures for early identification of learning support needs and for setting long-term targets for individual students are well established. Procedures for short-term target-setting have been strengthened through systematic diagnostic assessment of set work and are proving effective in helping students learn. Staff clearly focus on identifying those students not making appropriate progress or at risk of not successfully completing their programme. Electronic individual learning plans have been developed for implementation in September 2008. Individual learning plans will be accessible to both students and parents and the college is committed to involving parents in their children's learning.

Lesson observation procedures have been reviewed. More emphasis is now placed on ensuring consistency by determining the impact of teaching on learning and additional training. Themes for improvement are now clearly identified. Moderation procedures have been strengthened and clear grading criteria are being developed for implementation in September 2008 to facilitate consistency of approach across the college. Peer observation has been expanded to help promote debate about teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice.

#### Leadership and management

Has the college taken appropriate action to improve retention rates?	Significant progress
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The college is committed to achieving high success rates. It has developed a comprehensive retention and progression policy to ensure factors affecting retention are tackled very effectively. Retention rates for 2007/08 for long courses, compared with the previous year, have improved from 85% to 91% at level 1, 88% to 91% at level 2, 87% to 92% for GCE AS-level courses and 92% to 99% for GCE A-level courses, with an overall improvement of 7 % age points at level 3.

Pre-enrolment and induction activities are clearly structured to ensure students are fully aware of the demands of different programmes and the requirements for success. Procedures for identifying additional learning needs are implemented well. The college's newly developed approach to systematic diagnostic assessment of the personal learning needs of individual students is effective in ensuring they receive appropriate attention from teachers and tutors. This, together with a more thorough approach to review and target-setting for individual students, is effective in keeping students motivated. Attendance is monitored carefully and absence is followed up promptly.