

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: South Nottingham College

Date of visit: 13 May 2008

Context

South Nottingham College is a general further education college. It provides further education courses in Clifton and Rushcliffe and also offers courses across the Nottingham conurbation. Achievement rates at age 16 in the local area are below the national average. The college mission is 'success through learning'.

The college provides courses in 13 of the 15 sector subject areas although learner numbers in some areas are very low. In 2006/07 the college enrolled a total of 8,263 learners accounting for 12,659 course enrolments. Of the total number of learners, 1,498 were aged 16-18 and 6,765 were adults. The majority of learners aged 16-18 were full-time and the majority of adult learners were part-time. Learner numbers are significant on courses in the preparation for life and work, health, public services and care, leisure, travel and tourism and the arts, media and publishing sector subject areas. The majority of learners are female and approximately 85% are white.

The college was last inspected in April 2004. At that inspection leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory, education and social inclusion and guidance and support were judged to be good. Ten curriculum areas were inspected and seven were judged to be satisfactory, two were good and one was outstanding. A contributory grade of unsatisfactory was awarded for work-based learning provision in hairdressing which was subsequently judged to be satisfactory on re-inspection

Achievement and standards

What improvements have been made to headline success rates in 2006/07? How do success rates compare with colleges of a similar type?	Significant Progress
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Overall headline success rates are high and continue to improve. In 2006/07 the college made significant progress in improving success rates in almost all areas of its work. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 improved at all levels, with significant improvements of 7% and 11% at levels 2 and 3 respectively. Adult success rates also improved significantly at levels 2 and 3, however, adult success rates declined slightly at level 1. In 2006/07 the overall headline success rate and long course success rates at all levels for both learners aged 16-18 and for adults were well above the latest available national averages of similar colleges.

Overall success rates improved in 10 sector subject areas and significantly so in seven of those areas. In the three sector subject areas where overall long course

success rates declined learner numbers are small. Long course success rates are above or significantly above corresponding national averages in 10 of the sector subject areas where the college offers provision. Short course success rates continue to improve and are similar to national average levels. However, in some sector subject areas short course success rates are low and fall below the LSC minimum level of performance threshold. The college is well aware of the issues impacting on the performance of these courses and is taking appropriate action to improve performance.

What improvements have been made to framework completion rates on work-based learning programmes?	Significant Progress
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Framework completion rates on work-based learning programmes continue to rise. Both overall and timely completion rates for apprentices have improved considerably since the last inspection. In 2006/07 both overall and timely completion rates for apprentices improved significantly and were above national average levels. Completion rates for the much smaller number of advanced apprentices also continue to improve. However, for advanced apprentices, despite continued improvement, both overall and timely completion rates remain below national average levels.

In the two largest work-based learning programmes, hairdressing and sport, completion rates in 2006/07 were above sector averages. Learners on these programmes are making at least satisfactory progress and are on course to complete their programme of study within the timescales set.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in strengthening and standardising the lesson observation process?	Significant Progress
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Significant progress has been made in improving and standardising the lesson observation process. The recording and monitoring of lesson observation data has substantially improved. Observation records are centrally collated and thorough analysis is completed to identify and inform development needs. Internal observers receive training and an increasing proportion of judgements are moderated either internally or externally through peer review. The observation cycle is well-planned and enables a detailed overview of the quality of teaching and learning by lesson type, by level, by age and by teacher type within each curriculum area. Records indicate that the proportion of lessons where teaching and learning are judged to be good or better is similar to the profile for the previous year when 70% of observed lessons were graded good or better.

What actions have been taken to improve the arrangements for providing guidance and support to learners?	Significant Progress
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The college has made significant progress in improving its arrangements for providing guidance and support for learners. A team of guidance and support tutors provide assistance to learners at risk of leaving the programme early. Subject teachers and personal tutors refer learners causing concern to a guidance and support tutor who then develops a detailed action plan to help the learner make the required improvements. Learners are extremely complementary about the support provided and feedback from learners is overwhelmingly positive. Retention and success rate data indicate that guidance and support tutors are having a beneficial impact on learner achievement.

Leadership and management

What actions have been taken to develop the promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum and throughout the college?	Significant Progress
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The college has made significant progress in promoting equality and diversity both within the college and within the curriculum. A detailed equality and diversity action plan clearly identifies how integration and promotion within the curriculum and throughout the college is to be achieved. Appropriate equalities schemes for gender, race and disability are in place. The college is actively preparing a scheme to cover age discrimination. An innovative range of special initiatives has supported learners to develop individual, social and community skills through collaborative work with youth groups in South Africa and the Gambia. The college's approach to promoting community cohesion is sound. Recruitment, retention and success rates are carefully monitored according to learners' gender, ethnicity and disability. Action plans to target areas for further improvement are well considered.

What improvements have been made to the staff appraisal process? Are staff set appropriate development targets which aid continuous improvement?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in improving the staff appraisal process. A common appraisal system is in operation throughout the college and an increasing proportion of staff are appraised each year. However, not all staff are appraised and the quality of completed appraisal documentation does vary. Where appraisals are completed and used effectively as a management tool to monitor and improve performance the process is valued by staff and is beneficial to the college. For example, through the appraisal process a management development programme was established tailored to the needs of the organisation. Appraisal is not the only management tool used to monitor and improve staff performance and the college use other arrangements effectively.

The college are aware of the need to further refine the appraisal process and plans are in place to do so and to include all staff in the process.