

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Southport College

Date of visit: 9 May 2008

Context

This feedback report contains brief findings from the annual monitoring visit. Southport College was inspected in November 2007. The effectiveness of provision was good overall. The quality of provision was satisfactory or better in all sector subject areas inspected. The provision in health, care and public services was outstanding.

Achievement and standards

How successful have actions been to improve the success rates of learners? What is the impact of leadership and management on success rates?	Reasonable progress
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The college continues to prioritise the improvement in success rates of all learners. Actions taken include an increased focus on improving target setting, attendance and retention. The college monitors underperforming courses closely through the red flag system and the performance enhancement team. Southport College has placed an increased focus on attendance, which includes the recent decision to appoint a conduct and support officer. Increased intervention by pastoral and subject staff and improved information, advice and guidance in some areas have continued with an anticipated improvement in college retention rates. In-year retention in May 2008 is 85%, which shows a slight improvement on the 2006/07 retention rate of 83%. The college has successfully improved success rates on learndirect provision.

Some recent actions have been taken to improve the success rates on short courses including improved advice and guidance for European Computer Driving License courses. It is too early to judge the affect on these actions. However, the college estimates short course success rates to be inline with the 2006/07 success rates.

Quality of provision

What actions has the college taken to improve the use of individual learner targets and how successful have these actions been?	Reasonable progress
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The college has developed a clear strategy to improve the quality and use of individual learner targets. A staff development session on target setting took place in

December for staff nominated by their head of faculty. Plans are in place to offer this programme across the college. The college has been developing an electronic system for the recording and monitoring of learners' progress. From September 2008, the college will use this system fully to record, monitor and report on learners' progress against their individual learning plan. The four new deputy heads of faculty are now in post and have had training in the use of the recording and monitoring system. Their role will involve the monitoring of the quality of individual learning plans and learner targets. In addition, teaching and learning advisors have worked individually with staff to improve target setting. The Skills for Life programme area now has a detailed written strategy for monitoring the quality of all aspects of learning including targets and individual learning plans. Staff receive useful feedback to improve the quality of the processes. Staff development plans are in place to support improvements in individual learning plans and target setting in this sector subject area, in partnership with Quality Improvement Agency. In learndirect, the manager now samples learner files and each learner has a quarterly progress review. However, it is too early to judge the affect on learners of actions to improve target setting.

What actions have been taken to develop the range of enrichment opportunities? How successful have these actions been?	Reasonable progress
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The college now has a clear strategy for the development of the enrichment opportunities up to June 2009. This includes raising awareness of the enrichment programme to learners through focus groups and during induction. The college has been successful in a Further Education Sports Co-ordinator bid and are using the money to establish a sports and enrichment co-ordinator post from May 2008. The focus of the role is to co-ordinate and increase learner participation in sport and other enrichment activities across the college through liaison with managers, tutors and other key staff. In creative industries, from September 2008 performing arts students will integrate into the existing extensive art and design enrichment activities.

How successful has the college been in developing employer links?	Reasonable progress
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Since the inspection, the college has further developed its employer engagement strategy. An audit of employer links has taken place and all contacts are included on the customer relationship management system. The system is still being refined and from September will be available for all curriculum teams to use. The extent and strength of employer engagement varies across sector subject areas. It is particularly strong in health and social care and travel and tourism. The college aims to share this good practice. Regular employer surveys take place, the results are analysed and used to improve performance. A modified course review process, including documentation, is now in place to ensure that teams make an explicit judgement on the quality of employer engagement. Training is planned for course teams prior to the full implementation of these revisions. The college has audited the employer engagement strategy and processes against the new employer standard. An action

plan is in place leading to a submission for part A of the standard in February 2009. Plans are well underway to apply for part B in Skills for Health and Skills for Care. The college will lead on a number of the new diplomas and planning for work placement and employer involvement is well underway.

Leadership and management

How successful has the college been in improving the arrangements for setting and monitoring course targets?	Reasonable progress
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Challenging targets for attendance, retention and success rates are set at course level. Targets are linked to past performance plus a continuous improvement target where necessary. Course teams at the faculty board of studies thoroughly monitor performance against these targets and at the termly performance review, which includes representation from a senior management team. The college thoroughly monitors underperforming courses by the process of red flagging or monitoring by the performance enhancement team. Courses are red flagged based on their performance where success rates are below the national average. These courses have more frequent and thorough monitoring. This team carries out an in depth review of all aspects of the course and devises an action plan. Managers then monitor progress against the action plan. Each faculty monitors performance against target by individual course and by level.

How successful is the post inspection action plan in bringing about improvement?	Reasonable progress
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The college has developed clear strategies and taken a range of actions to promote improvement since the inspection. The senior management team formally monitor the detailed post inspection plan twice a term. Each term a progress report goes to the governing body. The faculty performance review was changed significantly in December 2007 to provide a more specific focus on the post inspection action plan and monitoring of the areas for improvement. Implementation of the revised performance review will be complete in the summer term. The college has produced detailed and evaluative reports on each of the areas for improvement in the inspection report, including the capacity to improve and progress made. A clear and detailed post inspection plan focuses on improving the satisfactory areas as well as the areas for improvement. The actions are well monitored and linked to other key documents such as the quality improvement plan.