

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: New College Telford

Date of visit: 16 October 2008

### Context

New College is a sixth form college based in Wellington. Students attend the college mainly from the Telford and Wrekin borough. They also travel from Wolverhampton and from the more rural areas of Shropshire and East Staffordshire. Within the borough of Telford and Wrekin there are several areas of significant social and economic disadvantage. In 2007/08, the college recruited 1,315 students aged 16 to 18 of whom 90 studied part-time, and 35 full-time students aged over 19. Most students study at Level 3. Three-quarters of adult students are female, as are about half of those aged 16 to 18. A little under half of the students aged 16 to 18 receive an Educational Maintenance Allowance. The proportion of students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds at the college is greater than the proportion of people from such backgrounds in the locality. The college has significant Level 3 GCE A and AS level provision in over 40 subjects as well as a range of vocational courses at Levels 2 and 3. It also offers GCSE courses and Level 1 courses in adult literacy and numeracy. The college was last inspected in September 2006, when its overall effectiveness and capacity to improve were judged to be satisfactory.

### Achievement and standards

How much progress has been made by the college in raising success rates and increasing value-added scores?	Significant progress
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Overall, college data show improved success rates in 2007/08, closing further the gap between the college's rate and the national rate. The rate rise continues the trend of improvement at a better rate than nationally since 2004/05. Improvement is evident in long course success rates at all levels, except for the very small number of younger students studying at Level 1. At Levels 2 and 3, rates are broadly in line or just below the national average for these students with impressive improvement at Level 2. Rates are above average for adults at these levels. Attainment of high grades improved on all qualification types, with the exception of national award courses. The percentage of students on first and national diploma courses who gained high grades is impressive and well above average. Students aged 16 to 18 taking short courses show a much improved success rate, to above the national rate.

The college makes a detailed analysis of the success of different groups of students. Most students from black and minority ethnic groups have success rates above the college average. Rates for Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean students are below average. The success rate of male students aged 16 to 18 has improved

considerably since 2004/05, however, the gap between male and female performance remains slightly greater than the national average.

The college makes a very thorough analysis of value-added measures of students' progress and uses this productively to inform quality improvement actions. Its work on the use of target grades, along with regular and very effective progress reviews, to improve value-added scores has resulted in considerable improvement in both ALIS and ALPs scores in 2007/08, showing that most students are meeting or exceeding expectations. Attendance has improved to 89%. Punctuality is generally good. Provisional destination data indicate that the percentage of students on Level 3 courses moving into higher education is increasing to around two thirds of leavers. The college recognises the need to analyse internal progression rates more fully as part of self-assessment.

#### Quality of provision

How has the quality of teaching and learning improved as a result of actions in 2007/08 and how has the lesson observation programme contributed to this?	Significant progress
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The well established lesson observation process is valued by teachers and is helpful in support of improvement in their practice. Observers have a clear focus on evaluating learning and the college is confident of the rigour of the scheme in this respect. The analysis of the results of observations is very thorough and useful. It includes clear identification of areas for improvement. The addition of other developmental work including peer observation, with support and training to undertake this, is well received and promotes further the sharing of good practice. An analysis of grades from observations in 2007/08 shows considerable improvement in the amount of good or better teaching and no lessons were judged inadequate.

What is the impact of the college's work in further increasing the use of ICT in learning, especially in relation to the use of a VLE?	Significant progress
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The college has invested in further information and learning technology (ILT) resources; including ensuring that all teaching areas are well equipped with appropriate technology. Full consideration is being given to finalising the best long term approach for further developing an effective and student-friendly virtual learning environment, taking into account the need to ensure compatibility with collaborative partners in 14–19 curriculum work. Evidence available during the visit indicates that teachers are making good use of ILT, using a wide range of software packages, including interactive elements, to implement teaching and learning approaches. The college website has been renewed attractively and the college's intranet is being used effectively by both staff and students.

## Leadership and management

How have quality assurance and quality improvement procedures improved and in relation to the progress with the self-assessment report for 2007/08?	Reasonable progress
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A review of the college's approach to quality improvement has been undertaken. A quality improvement group is in place as one of a range of steering groups allowing a flexible and responsive approach within the management structure to the complexities of the college's work, especially in keeping pace with the 14-19 developments both internally and externally. This small group is supporting the work of the quality manager effectively and focusing on important issues that are emerging through the quality improvement calendar. Recent matters considered include work to sharpen the focus of the key strengths and areas for improvement identified through self-assessment, to review the approach to course level target setting to link it more effectively into the self-assessment process and to improve ownership of targets by curriculum area leaders. The 2007/08 quality improvement plan has been thoroughly reviewed and most targets are met. The governors have put in place a range of performance indicators with which they can evaluate their work. The level of scrutiny and challenge of the college's work by governors is judged by senior managers to be high. The recording of the questions and debate that occur in meetings is now fuller and more representative of this feature of governors' work.

What progress has been made with the learner involvement strategy and the learner voice?	Reasonable progress
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Openness and friendliness are strong features of the college's culture and encourage the students to express themselves and use their voice. Students volunteer to help and are used in a range of ways including mentoring, providing peer support and also in subject-based help. They contribute to college activities such as taster events and induction, including by taking a leading role, and in their role as college ambassadors. Students are involved with the staff appointment process. They also give feedback following lesson observations. Rational changes to the student council election process to make it more meaningful to college life are at an early stage, but awareness of the council's work is low amongst second year students. Opportunities are being identified for students to take a more influential role in the college's work. A learner involvement strategy is in draft form but has not yet been reviewed by students, although plans for this are in hand. The college recognises the need to improve communication with students: a student bulletin is considered helpful and informative, but it is not widely appreciated.