

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Scarborough Sixth Form College

Date of visit: 18 September 2008

Context

The college offers some 30 GCE A-level courses, 32 GCE AS courses, 5 BTEC national diplomas (four of which were introduced in September 2008), 9 GCSEs including vocational double award courses, a few discrete courses at levels 1 and 2 and a growing range of courses for adults. The college was last inspected in January 2006. The college's overall effectiveness was good, as were educational and social inclusion, achievement and standards, teaching and learning and guidance and support for learners. Leadership and management and capacity to improve were satisfactory. No sector subject areas were inspected. The core business of the college is the provision of full-time general education courses. Currently 954 students aged 16-18 are enrolled, of whom 85% are on level 3 programmes and 441 adult learners are on a range of courses including lifelong learning programmes.

Achievement and standards

Have success rates continued to improve? In particular has the college further improved GCSE AS levels and GCSE courses? Has value added improved?	Reasonable progress
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Success rates on long courses for learners aged 16-18 at level 3 are improving but at a slower pace than those nationally. At 79% in 2006/07 they were below the national average for similar colleges. Success rates at level 2 have improved. They are satisfactory and slightly above average at 85%. Retention rates at level 1 are low at 66%. College data for 2007/08 shows that level 3 success rates slightly dipped at 77%, whilst levels 1 and 2 have improved at 77% and 86% respectively. For learners aged 19 and over, success rates at level 1 in 2006/07 are very high at 96%. Success rates at level 2 have improved and at level 3 they have been maintained but both are below average. College data for 2007/08 shows that both have improved, level 2 to 64% and level 3 to 74%.

Success rates for GCE A levels have improved and in 2006/07 they are high at 92%, in line with the national average. College data for 2007/08 shows that the high success rates have been maintained. Overall value added for GCE A levels has slightly improved and data shows that learners' attainment is broadly in line with their level on entry. Success rates for GCE AS are not improving and in 2006/07 they are low at 72%, some eight percentage points below the national average. College data for 2007/08 show that success rates have improved slightly to 74% well below

the previous year's national rate. This success rate improves by over three percentage points when general studies is removed. Overall value added for GCE AS has not improved and data shows that learners' attainment is slightly below that anticipated on entry. Success rates for GCSEs have improved in 2006/07 and at 81% they are satisfactory and in line with the national average. College data for 2007/08 shows that these success rates have maintained.

The overall key skills success rate improved significantly in 2008 from the low level of the previous year. Most learners achieve key skills at level 2. No learners have achieved at level 3 for the last two years.

What progress has been made on improving under-performing courses?	Insufficient progress
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Low pass rates and value added in a minority of GCE AS and A level subjects were identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Over the past three years most success, pass and retention rates for GCE A level subjects are at or above national averages. However, at GCE AS a few subjects continue to under-perform and a few experience dips in performance. Good improvements have been made in computing and art and design. In computing success rates had progressively declined and were very low at 46% in 2006/07 and value added was weak. College data for 2007/08 shows that there has been a very good improvement, value added is now good and success rates are high at 83%, well above the previous year's national average. In art and design success rates while improving were low at 69% in 2006/07. College data for 2007/08 shows that they have significantly improved, at 87% they are above the previous year's national average and value added is good.

In a group of AS level subjects success rates have improved or been maintained but they remain well below national averages and on most value added is weak. In music a three year decline resulted in success rates being very low at only 44% in 2006/07. Although good improvements have been made in 2007/08 according to college data, success rates are still low at 55%, over 30 percentage points below the previous year's national average. In law following a three year decline, success rates were low at 59% in 2006/07. According to college data in 2007/08 a small improvement has been made to 62% but this is still 13 percentage points below the previous year's national average. In sociology success rates were low at 67% in 2006/07, and in 2007/08 according to college data they have dipped slightly at 66% some 14 percentage points below the previous year's national average. In physics following a three year decline success rates have not improved and are 10 percentage points below the previous year's national average.

In AS level design technology success rates have declined and are low at 57%. In German they have declined and are very low at 37% according to college data for 2007/08. Low performance in music and computing is identified in the self-assessment report.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in ensuring that the college is responsive to the needs of employers?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection inspectors identified the need to engage more with local employers. A radical review of the college curriculum has resulted in a significant increase in vocational courses which are more responsive to the needs of local employers. Building on the success of the BTEC national diploma in business four new national diplomas have been introduced from September 2008. These include health and social care, travel and tourism, media and sport. The development of these courses has been closely linked to local labour market needs. The new course in health and social care has already made good progress linking effectively to 24 nurseries and 40 care homes. Work placements for the 100 hours work experience for learners has already been secured. The travel and tourism course has made good links with local hoteliers and events management companies. Tourism is a key sector for local employment. The sports course has made good links with sports centres, clubs and gyms and work experience is to be incorporated into the course. The media course fits well with local developments in digital media and local higher education (HE) opportunities. The established business course has good and developing links with the new business park at Eastfield. These courses are to replace under-performing AVCE courses and provide good progression opportunities for level 2 students on vocational courses.

The college actively encourages part-time employment and volunteering, and views this as an important part of learner's personal development. This information is collected early and recorded effectively. The college is proactive in following up issues, particularly where learners are working in excess of 10 hours per week. A good number of 'learner-friendly employers' has been established. Learners who are likely to be seeking employment are identified early in the lower sixth form. As part of the tutorial process these learners attend workshops to support them with CV writing, job seeking, interview and presentational skills. They have employer visits and attend careers and apprenticeship conventions. A good range of courses incorporate employer visits into their programmes.

Employer representation on the college corporation has been increased. A good range of senior representatives from local businesses and public services are in place as governors of the college.

Leadership and management

How effective are senior managers in monitoring and evaluating the work of the college?	Reasonable progress
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An area for improvement at the previous inspection was insufficient monitoring of some areas of the college's work. Senior and middle managers are now effectively

involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the college. In November 2007 the college introduced a process of departmental audits. Over the year all departments are audited. The audits take place over one week and have a clear focus on improving the learners' experience at the college. The audit process has four well considered elements, these include: lesson observations, assessment of schemes of work, learner focus groups and a review of the teaching and learning environment available to learners. Learner performance is not included as this is already incorporated into weekly monitoring by departmental heads and half termly monitoring by senior managers. The first cycle of audits is now complete and this has been evaluated; a second cycle is now beginning. Each audit results in an appropriate summary audit report identifying strengths, areas for improvement and key points from each audit element. The head of department and course teams produce an action plan on how they will respond to the audit's findings.

Observations within the audits confirm that teaching and learning is improving and much is good or better. In specialist areas like languages external consultants have been used to ensure good subject content in the observations. Good use is also made of peer observations and there is evidence of good practice being shared both within teams and across the college. Schemes of work have improved and are more consistent. Differentiation, cross referencing to resources and teaching and learning styles are now more effectively identified. However, lesson plans are not routinely included in the audit. The departmental audits have provided a very effective mechanism for listening to the learner's voice. The college can provide a substantial number of examples to illustrate how they have responded to learner comments. These include; improved marking, learning resources, timetables, classrooms and noise interruptions. While some teams routinely feedback the improvements they have made to learners, this is not consistent across the college.