

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College  
Date of visit: 5 March 2009

### Context

Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College is located in the metropolitan borough of Stockport. The college operates on two main campuses, one in Cheadle and the other in Marple. The college was established in 1995 following a merger of two sixth form colleges and was known as Ridge Danyers College until 2004.

The college offers a broad range of courses in 14 of the 15 subject areas. Approximately 85% of the provision is at level 3. In the current year, the college has 2,600 full-time learners aged 16 to 18 and 1,900 adult learners, of whom 200 are full-time. Around 87% of learners aged 16 to 18 and 91% of adult learners are white. Approximately 17% of learners aged 16 to 18 and 10% of adult learners have a learning difficulty and/or disability. The college offers vocational provision for learners aged 14 to 16, work-based learning, adult literacy and numeracy and is the lead partner in a Centre for Vocational Excellence specialising in care of the elderly.

Less than 5% of the local population are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although the borough is relatively prosperous, pockets of social and economic disadvantage exist. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C is slightly below the national average.

The college experienced significant changes in staffing structures in 2006/07, especially at senior and middle management level. The current senior management team is smaller than it was at the previous inspection, and three of its members are new to the college. Support staffing has also been significantly restructured.

Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College was last inspected in January 2007. At that inspection all aspects were satisfactory. Of the six curriculum areas inspected, three were good and three satisfactory. A monitoring visit took place in May 2008.

## Achievement and standards

What progress has been made on improving retention for learners aged 16 to 18?	Reasonable progress
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Through the revised tutorial programme, the college has developed a clear focus on identifying and supporting learners at risk of leaving. At level 1, retention for learners aged 16 to 18 is above the national rate. Retention for learners aged 16 to 18 at level 2 and 3 provision is in line with the national rate.

Has learners' progress relative to their prior attainment improved overall, especially in GCE AS level mathematics, biology and chemistry?	Reasonable progress
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The college has clear strategies in place to identify underperforming courses and to monitor progress through the enhanced quality review process. The overall success rate at level 1 has improved 3% since 2006/07 and is above the national average for similar colleges. The college has identified accurately that the success rates for GCSE maths and level 2 vocational information communication technology (ICT) are low and has actions in place to improve these. The success rate for the rest of the vocational level 2 provision is in line with national rates. At level 3, A-level success rates are at the national average for similar colleges and AS-levels have improved to just below the national rate. The college accurately identifies in the self-assessment report that AS-level maths, biology and ICT are areas for improvement. The AS-level maths success rates improved by 9% between 2006/07 and 2007/08 and ICT improved by 3% in the same period. Recent statistics indicate that the college's overall A-level value-added score improved from grade 6 in 2005 to grade 4 in 2008.

## Quality of provision

What progress has been made in taking action to improve the quality of teaching and learning? How effective have these actions been?	Reasonable progress
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Strategies for improving teaching and learning have a high priority within the college. Systems for the observation of teaching and learning were revised and implemented from September 2008. The revised process now includes unannounced observation visits; staff are given three weeks notice and are observed within one of four sessions. The number of trained observers has been reduced from more than forty to the ten most experienced. The college's aim is to improve consistency in observation judgements. Comprehensive training has been provided for observers including a session on how to assess and report on student learning and progress.

Teachers who receive grade 3 in their observation are offered a programme of support to develop their classroom skills. Sharing of best practice is widespread and is an agenda item at all curriculum team meetings. Teachers are encouraged to share good practice highlighted in their observations. A good practice register is

being developed and maintained by the head of professional development. The well established peer coaching and development system has been revised and it is now a requirement that all teachers take part.

A calendar of meetings has been established between the head of quality and heads of subject at both sites with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning and raising value-added. Staff training and development has a clear emphasis on improving teaching and learning. The college is in the process of appointing four advanced skills teachers to support the professional development within teaching, learning and assessment.

However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these changes on the overall quality of teaching and learning.

What progress has been made in taking action to improve the quality of tutorials? How effective have these actions been?	Significant progress
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Significant improvements have been made to the tutorial system since September 2008. A process to observe tutorials was implemented during 2007/08. As part of this process, focus groups were held with learners to gain their views. This led to a review and restructure of the tutorial system for 2008/09. A key development has been the splitting of the weekly tutorial time into a group tutorial session and a session for individual learner tutorials. Learners emphasise the benefits of the revised system and value the individual tutorials highly.

The group tutorial programme has been reviewed and developed to increase its relevance to learners through the involvement of specialist external speakers. A range of new materials has been developed to support this process. An electronic bulletin is circulated weekly to tutors to ensure that they have up-to-date information about events and activities. Learners report significant improvement in the quality of the tutorial provision and particularly highlight the good communication between personal and subject tutors.

#### Leadership and management

What progress has been made to the way that key issues are resolved? What impact has the restructure in 2007/08 had on this issue?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress in the way in which key issues are resolved. The new college structure is now well established with several new management posts in place. A director of finance and resources has been in post since April 2008 and has implemented a strategy to improve ILT resources since summer 2008. More than £300,000 has been spent on increasing projectors and interactive boards in classrooms and providing staff with laptop computers. This is an ongoing strategy. The appointment of a human resources (HR) manager is seen by

managers as central to ensuring that key issues are resolved in a timely manner and to the improvement of staff morale. The link between the continuing professional development (CPD) and HR managers is supporting the development of an online professional review and appraisal system. The online system brings together individual performance objectives, and the outcomes of observation of teaching and learning with CPD records.

The governing body has been strengthened further by the addition of several governors with financial expertise as well as those with a strong background in education and quality. Governors have reviewed the format of reports submitted to meetings and have identified their requirements to ensure clarity and focus.

The process of annual quality performance review by the principal, deputy principal and head of quality has been improved since September 2008. This now takes place up to three times each year as part of the focus on identifying key issues in a timely manner. Following the publication of summer results, the senior review team meet with heads of subject in areas where there is evidence of significant underperformance, as well as areas of high performance to identify best practice. In November, heads of faculty attend a quality review of their faculty self-assessment report and action plans. Further quality performance reviews with heads of subject are scheduled in March to consider the January results in those areas which are a cause for concern. Targets as at the last monitoring visit are challenging and actions to resolve underperformance are effective.

What progress has been made to improve the financial stability of the college?	Reasonable progress
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The college was graded category C for financial health in 2007/08. The aim is for this to improve to category B by the end of 2008/09 and the college's mid-year financial forecast indicates that the college is on target to achieve this. Improvements in staffing efficiency are evidenced by a 5% reduction in the cost of staffing as a percentage of income.