

Sir George Monoux College

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Sir George Monoux is a sixth form college in Waltham Forest, North East London. The college enrolls around 2,000 students each year. The vast majority of the students are aged 16 to 18 and study full time. Around 85% of the students take advanced courses such as GCE A and AS level and BTEC programmes. The curriculum includes around 30 subjects at GCE A and AS level, some GCSE subjects and an increasing number of vocational subjects at intermediate and advanced level.

A high proportion of the students come from London boroughs of significant social and economic deprivation. Reflecting these ethnically and culturally diverse areas, most of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college's mission is to ensure that the learning experience of all students 'is of the highest quality enabling them to achieve and progress to their full potential'. Accordingly, the college puts emphasis on the support for students in order to develop their literacy, numeracy and study skills.

At the previous inspection the college was found to be satisfactory overall with a satisfactory capacity to improve. Outcomes for students were found to be satisfactory, as were leadership and management. The provision in science and mathematics and business, administration and law were found to be inadequate.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

<p>What progress has been made in using quality assurance systems more effectively, so that managers can identify weaknesses at an early stage and take swift action to tackle them?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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Management information has improved and is now accurate. Course teams and managers have access to up-to-date data that help to inform the day-to-day running of curriculum teams and informs self-assessment. Course reviews are more focused on improvements and heads of subject are now more accountable for progress on improvements through the review processes and course presentations. Courses causing concern have been monitored closely and supported in their plans for improvements. A small number of the least improved courses have been discontinued.

Lesson observations and learning walks now focus closely on how well students are learning. More emphasis is given to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Considerable work and effort have gone into consulting students both at curriculum and whole-college level. Focus groups, subject explorers and SALT consultations have provided teachers and managers with valuable insights from students into the way the college runs, the way students feel and barriers to progress. In addition,

these initiatives provide the college with a valuable means by which young people can take advantage of wider social and work-related skills as well as being a way in which the college can celebrate success.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving learners' outcomes since the last inspection, especially in science and mathematics and business, administration and law? **Reasonable progress**

GCE A level success rates were good in 2009/10, at or above recent national averages. In the same year, AS level success rates improved by three percentage points; the first substantial rise in three years. However, this success rate is still below the most recent national average. Vocational courses, at intermediate level and advanced level, showed improved success and achievement rates and were above national averages. GCSE high grade pass rates, although improved, are still well below national averages, especially in mathematics.

Success rates on most GCE A and AS mathematics and psychology courses are good. However, despite some improvements in achievements at GCE A level, the AS laboratory sciences success rates remain below national averages. Vocational science success rates are good, in line with other vocational areas in the college. Value-added data show that progress in mathematics and psychology is generally at or above predicted levels. Progress in GCE A level sciences is at expected levels, but at AS progress is lower than expected.

Success rates in business and accounting improved in 2009/10. Law courses, however, did show slight improvements. Success rates for vocational courses in this area are generally at or above the most recent national averages. Value-added data show that students on BTEC courses make progress above that expected from their prior attainment. Data for GCE A and AS business, law and accounting courses show that students' progress is at or below expected levels.

Students' work, in a sample of their assignments, mock tests and homework, was of a good standard. The assessments were sound and many items were marked clearly with useful comments on how students can improve. Teachers report that they are well supported and directed by college managers. This is reported in mathematics and especially noteworthy in business where there has been an acting head of department. Staff are clear about what is needed to bring about improvements and supporting data are now accurate and timely. They have been involved closely in the analysis of their practice and feel that they now have a better shared overview of the quality of teaching and learning across their disciplines. Detailed and appropriate action plans, based closely on the outcomes of the last inspection, are being implemented.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in ensuring that the quality of additional support is sufficiently high so that students can succeed on their main course of study and not be held back by low level literacy skills? **Reasonable progress**

Additional support for students who have lower levels of literacy has improved. It is now more systematic in its approach and more consistently taken up by students. Since the inspection, schemes of work across the college have been analysed and opportunities for improving students' literacy have been identified. Subject teachers have successfully completed training in how to support students to improve their literacy. In the current academic year, initial assessments have been undertaken at enrolment and the results are being used to allocate appropriate support to those identified as needing it via the Study Plus Unit staff. Students are required to study and attain specified literacy qualifications before they can progress, for example to the second year of study on an advanced programme. Literacy lessons are now timetabled into the college day at the start of the year and students are allocated to these lessons so that they form a seamless part of their main programme of study.

The college has put into place systems to monitor closely the performance of students against their predicted grades. This is linked to the introduction of five assessment periods through the year. Students who are underperforming are required to attend subject-specific workshops where they receive extra tuition in small groups on topics with which they are experiencing difficulties. The college has some evidence to show that students who received support from the Study Plus Centre have made better progress than those who did not.

Quality of provision and leadership and management

What progress has been made in supporting staff to develop stimulating and challenging lessons and to ensure that teaching has a demonstrable impact on students' progress? **Reasonable progress**

A good range of strategies and support, designed to provide practical support for teachers to help them to improve their work, are now in place. These have ensured that teachers across the college focus more closely on learning and how to improve it. The support provided is based on the outcomes of teaching and learning observations and the new learning walks system. These observations provide a detailed analysis of what teachers need to do in each of the subject areas to improve learning and how they can improve their assessment practice. The outcomes range from discussions on how to use questions in lessons to practical issues such as cover for staff absence and inconsistencies in marking and returning work to students. College analysis of observation grades shows that there remains a significant amount of satisfactory teaching in some areas of the college.

The college has now identified advanced practitioners as well as good practice and is using them to support other teachers. The advanced practitioners run training

sessions for staff and provide more individual support as required. Teaching and learning 'surgeries' are now held weekly, where staff can share their ideas and discuss teaching approaches with colleagues from other curriculum areas. Teachers have good access to, and take full advantage of, staff development opportunities.

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