

# Sir George Monoux College

## Partial reinspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130458

**Name of lead inspector:** Lynda Cole HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 9 February 2011

**Type of provider:** Sixth form college

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## Introduction

Sir George Monoux College is located in North East London. The college enrolls approximately 2,000 students each year. Almost all are aged 16 to 18 and are studying on a full-time basis. Around 80% are studying advanced level courses. The curriculum includes more than 25 subjects at A and AS level as well as vocational programmes and includes courses to support students in the development of their literacy and numeracy. Reflecting the ethnically and culturally diverse local neighbourhoods, some 80% of the student population are from minority ethnic heritages.

Inspectors at the reinspection monitoring visit in September 2010 judged that in all four themes under consideration, the college had made reasonable progress. These themes were linked to the full inspection in December 2009, when overall effectiveness was satisfactory. Of the four subject areas, two, science and mathematics and business, accountancy and law, were judged to be inadequate.

The outcome of the reinspection is as follows:

<b>Subject area/type of provision</b>	<b>Original grade</b>	<b>Reinspection grade</b>
<b>Science and mathematics</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Business accounting and law</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>

## Science and mathematics

### Context

Currently, around 730 students are taking courses in science. Most are taking GCE A- and AS-level biology, chemistry, physics and psychology. However, a growing number are taking BTEC national science. At intermediate level, a small number of students are studying GCSE psychology and 15 are taking BTEC intermediate science. In mathematics, almost 500 students take GCE AS- and A-level mathematics, further mathematics and mathematics with statistics. Almost 100 are taking intermediate financial mathematics and a similar number GCSE mathematics.

### Key findings

- Success rates in 2009/10 improved slightly and are broadly in line with recent sixth form college national averages. However, success rates for vocational courses in the sciences are high.
- Students' achievements in psychology and advanced mathematics courses are at, or above, national averages. However, attainment at AS level in the sciences and A\* to C grade passes in GCSE mathematics remain low.
- Students enjoy their studies and work well in lessons. Overall, they make expected, or slightly better, progress compared to their prior attainment. Attendance is good and in-year retention has improved. Progress in AS sciences is not as good as other subjects such as AS psychology or advanced

mathematics. However, progression rates of students into higher education are good.

- Teaching and learning have improved and are now good. Most lessons are well planned with activities designed to allow students to be actively involved in their learning. Group activities are effective in allowing students to explore scientific reasoning and to develop their understanding.
- In some lessons, not all students make enough progress because tasks are not planned to take account of the wide range of students' ability levels, particularly for those students with lower levels of literacy. In addition, teachers questioning techniques are not well developed. Students are not given enough time to think and questions are not directed to individual students carefully enough.
- The range of courses in the sciences is good. As well as GCE A- and AS-level sciences, vocational sciences are offered at intermediate and advanced levels. The numbers of students taking BTEC national applied science has increased markedly over the past two years. In mathematics, statistics courses have been added and an appropriate range of functional mathematics and free-standing mathematics qualifications have been added to support students better at intermediate level.
- Teachers are developing the use of information learning technology (ILT) well. Electronic whiteboards are used to good effect for starter activities and, in a few lessons, the students are using the technology to explain their reasoning. The virtual learning environment (VLE) has improved and resources have helped students to complete their homework.
- Students benefit from a good range of enrichment activities. Visits to museums and technology institutions across London help the students put their studies in a wider context. Enthusiastic external speakers successfully inspire students and encourage them to progress to careers in the sciences and mathematics.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Diversity is well celebrated and promoted in lessons and in the attractive displays in the classrooms and laboratories.
- Leadership and management have rectified most of the weaknesses that were identified at the previous inspection. Laboratory practice is now safe and risk assessments have been completed. Although success rates on AS sciences and GCSE mathematics remain low, attendance and retention rates have improved as have outcomes. Team meetings at subject level are now much more focused on careful planning to engage and interest students. Self-assessment is now much improved and team targets are realistic and challenging.

### **What does Sir George Monoux College need to do to improve further?**

- Improve success rates, especially in GCSE mathematics and AS sciences, by making sure that all lessons are planned to include well-judged, differentiated activities that take into account students' levels of literacy and prior attainment.

- Make sure that all students have opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned and deepen their understanding by their inclusion in informal assessments, such as during question and answer sessions.

## **Business accounting and law**

### **Context**

Some 600 students are taking courses in business, accounting and law at intermediate and advanced level. Most are studying at advanced level. Law is located within the social studies and health department.

### **Key findings**

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory overall, although success rates vary across the range of courses in the subject area. In vocational business courses at both intermediate and advanced level, success rates improved on the previous year in most cases and they were at, or above, the most recent sixth form college national averages. On the national certificate, national diploma and first diploma in business students made very good progress compared to their starting points.
- In A-level business and in A-level accounting, pass rates were much better in 2009/10 than in the previous year, and in business were in line with the high sixth form college average. In AS business, pass rates improved on the previous year but remained below average. The numbers of students staying on this course until the end of the course remained below average. Students made broadly average progress in AS- and A-level courses.
- In 2009/10 success rates in law did not improve on those in the previous year and remained low. In both AS- and A-level law, students did not make the progress expected from their prior attainment. However a new course leader is in place and in-year attendance and retention has improved.
- In the lessons observed, students worked purposefully and independently, either in pairs or in groups, on relevant and interesting tasks. They made good progress in their learning and often showed good levels of attainment. Where appropriate, they displayed good information technology skills in using the internet for research, and they make good and frequent use of the college's virtual learning environment to support their learning.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of individual students in lessons and provide appropriate challenges to students. They design frequent and appropriate assessment of students' learning through tasks and verbal questioning. However, the quality of verbal questioning in checking and developing learning was inconsistent and, on a number of occasions, teachers rushed this part of lessons, were too ready to summarise responses or were too easily content with basic answers.
- Teachers make good use of information technology in the form of interactive whiteboards. In the best examples, teachers used video clips and hyperlinks to

news articles on the internet to provide topical, real-life illustration of business theory, and used interactive quizzes to test learning.

- Students comment favourably on the quality of feedback on their written work in helping them improve their performance, but inspectors found the standard of this feedback to be inconsistent in the work sampled. In most cases, teachers provided full and helpful feedback but in a significant minority of cases this was cursory and of little help in guiding improvement.
- Frequent assessment supports precise monitoring of students' progress and learning. Arrangements to identify and rectify potential underachievement at an early stage are sound and are contributing to a higher proportion of students staying on their courses than in previous years. Support for students with literacy needs is well organised and effective.
- Links with employers have improved since the last inspection. They provide extensive opportunities for students in business and law to acquire relevant knowledge and skills, including visiting speakers, assignment work around real business scenarios and internships for those students who gain a place in the academy of finance.
- Leadership and management are good. The new management team has made good progress in improving the quality of provision since the last inspection, although the improvements in students' outcomes were more evident on business courses in 2009/10 than in law, where pass rates remained low. Their work in improving the quality of teaching and learning is evident from students' views on the improvements made to lessons.
- The self-assessment report is accurate and appropriately self-critical. It has been central to driving improvements in the provision, and in following through the recommendations from the last inspection. However, the analysis of performance data pays too much attention to the progress made in improving success rates, rather than in the evaluation of the levels of success rates achieved compared to other similar colleges.

### **What does Sir George Monoux College need to do to improve further?**

- Place a greater emphasis on self-assessment in the analysis of students' success rates, compared to other similar colleges, in order to improve students' outcomes further.
- Share good practice in the quality of teachers' feedback on students' written work, to ensure that it is consistently of the standard of the best seen by inspectors.
- Ensure that verbal questioning is consistently challenging to enable students to develop their learning and to demonstrate higher level skills such as analysis and evaluation.

## Additional Themes

Inspectors explored the following themes as part of this reinspection.

**What progress has the college made with its self-assessment, post-inspection action plan and quality improvement planning to drive improvements in students' progress?**

**Significant progress**

Since the last inspection, the college has significantly improved the accuracy and the use of management information. Senior managers have ensured data are widely understood. Course leaders and teachers now use up-to-date data to monitor the effectiveness of their provision. Course leaders have improved significantly the way they present overall information to colleagues at regular periods throughout the year. Managers scrutinise provision closely, assiduously monitoring courses that are causing concern. Senior managers have taken firm, swift action, with some of the least-improved courses having been closed. The self-assessment report identified clearly what actions need to be taken following accurate identification of strengths and areas for development. Managers intervene effectively when issues are identified through a more rigorous observation of teaching. Good training is provided to teachers through varied and useful sessions on themed topics identified through monitoring processes. Retention and attendance, which are high, have improved this year. Data show that the rate of improvement to success rates is significant on many courses. However, the analysis of performance in the self-assessment report focuses too positively on the rate of improvement, rather than placing a more circumspect emphasis on how the success rates compare to other similar colleges.

**What progress has the college made in raising success rates overall and in particular for students on A- and AS-level provision?**

**Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, the college has continued to improve an upward trend in overall success rates. Overall, long and short course success rates have improved but remain slightly below national rates.

Vocational provision, which constitutes half of all provision, improved significantly in 2009/10 from the previous year, with success rates above the national average. Success rates in 2009/10 at level 2 are significantly above the national average. Although much improved, level 3 is only slightly above the national rate. GCE success rates have also continued to improve since the last inspection. However, the college recognises it still has much to do to ensure AS levels are at the national average. In 2009/10, AS-level success rates improved but remain around seven percentage points below the national rate. A-level success rates are around the national rate, but high grades fell slightly and are well below the national rates. Value-added data show that the college has halted the declining trend in overall qualifications, and progress in 2010 is generally at predicted levels. Students on vocational provision make much better than expected progress.

GCSE success rates have improved overall but, in 2009/10, high-grade pass rates remain well below the national average.

**What progress has been made in developing good practice in teaching and learning in order to secure consistently good teaching and learning in all areas of the college? Reasonable progress**

Senior managers have significantly improved procedures to observe teaching and learning, developing a range of strategies to open up and increase the scrutiny of teaching and learning. Outcomes from the observations are linked clearly to appraisal. Observations are now carried out with less notice, providing a clear picture of the quality of teaching across the college. Managers, advanced practitioners and advanced skills teachers carry out unannounced 'learning walks' that are helping to reduce resistance to scrutiny. These observations, which include tutorials, have provided teachers with useful, specific and detailed information to improve their practice. Staff, whose teaching has been identified as particularly good, regularly share their practice with others through a range of appropriate methods. Feedback from students about the quality of teaching forms an integral part of monitoring procedures. Teachers now routinely use information learning technologies in lessons, and students find the virtual learning environment particularly useful. Information about students' predicted estimated grades is not always used effectively by teachers to guide the kind of questions they ask their students and to check learning effectively. Records of observations show an increased rigour and consistency in judgements. However, records also show that observers do not always focus well enough on the impact of teaching on learning, and some aspects, described as strengths, are no more than normal practice. Observers are insufficiently judgmental in many aspects with too much description and, where written evaluative judgments are made, these do not always match the grade awarded.

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