

Cadbury Sixth Form College

Focused monitoring visit report

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Cadbury Sixth Form College is a medium-sized sixth form college in Kings Norton, Birmingham. This year the college has enrolled 1,160 students, the vast majority are aged 16 to 18 and studying AS- and A-levels. Nearly two-thirds of students are from minority ethnic groups, which is higher than the figure for these groups in Birmingham. The college serves an area in which unemployment is above the national average and which contains areas of significant deprivation.

Ofsted published the most recent inspection report in January 2010. Inspectors judged the college satisfactory in overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management. Of the four subject areas inspected, two were good and two were satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has the college made in using quality assurance systems more effectively? **Insufficient progress**

The college has correctly identified that quality assurance systems require significant further development. The calendar of quality assurance activities lacks detail and is an insufficient framework for the timing of quality assurance events. More time is now allocated to meetings and termly reviews of action plans, but rigorous checks on progress towards achieving improvement have not happened frequently enough and, in 2010/11, were too slow to identify the decline in students' achievement. The lesson observation process, using a considerably larger team of observers than previously, has been strengthened by the introduction of joint observations. However, the quality of lesson observations varies considerably and many observers need further training in their observation skills.

Managers know that self-assessment requires improvement. College-level self-assessment reports for the last two years have been unnecessarily descriptive and the link between self-assessment and the identification of action points in the improvement plan is insufficiently precise. Departmental self-assessment reports are more evaluative, but vary in quality. In most cases, strengths and areas for improvement are identified clearly; however, provisional grades are often over-generous. Senior managers are rigorous in their moderation of proposed subject grades. In the current self-assessment report, four subject areas (two of which are substantial in terms of enrolments) have been graded as unsatisfactory. Action plans at course level are generally more specific and the monitoring of these has improved.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has the college made in improving learners' outcomes since the last inspection? **Insufficient progress**

Success rates have declined during the last three years. At A-level, success rates are slightly below average. The AS-level and GCSE success rates have declined markedly and are low. The proportion of students who achieve the highest grades has not changed and remains low. The decline in success rates results from falls in both retention and achievement rates, although there is no consistent pattern between subjects. Many students join the college with relatively low grades at GCSE. Using information available from value-added analyses, current success rates represent broadly satisfactory progress in relation to students' starting points. There are no significant differences between the success rates of students grouped according to their ethnic heritage. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

How much progress has the college made in sharing good practice in teaching and learning effectively? **Reasonable progress**

Curriculum directors manage mixed teams comprising subject leaders from different subject sector areas to encourage the sharing of good practice. The college has introduced fortnightly meetings for teachers, which have the explicit aim of sharing good practice, and there are good examples, including links between law and history, and within visual arts, where the new arrangements are effective. The sharing of good practice in relation to the use of information learning technology is a particularly strong feature. However, there are some clear subject associations, such as between sciences and mathematics, where the college has identified differences in the quality of provision but teachers have insufficient opportunities to work together. Where possible subject specialists are included as observers in joint observations, but their comments do not always identify good practice in sufficient detail to help other teachers.

What progress has the college made in helping to ensure that provision meets the requirements of students with additional learning needs? **Insufficient progress**

Procedures for identifying students who require additional learning support are good. Students the college identifies as requiring support, and are currently receiving it, speak highly of the help they get. However, despite the increase in staff in the learning support team this year, the college still has a long gap between diagnosis and the provision of support for some students and more than one-third ultimately decline the support they need. These students do not achieve as well as those who receive support. Although there are aspects of students' performance, which clearly benefit from support, for example in the improved retention of students in a minority of AS-level subjects, the overall impact of additional learning support is insufficient.

In 2010/11, half the A-level students and nearly two-thirds of the AS-level students who received support did not achieve their target grades. Teachers adjust their teaching in order to accommodate the needs of students who require additional help, but the effectiveness of their efforts varies between subjects.

The college currently has no policy or consistent practice covering the development of students' language and mathematical skills, for example in the marking of work for spelling and grammatical errors. Teachers in the majority of subjects provide workshops, which provide the potential for developing the skills students require in order to be successful. However, student participation in workshops has declined due to timetabling constraints.

What progress has the college made in the use of targets to support individual learners' progress and achievement? **Reasonable progress**

The implementation and use of electronic monitoring in 2010/11 was not consistent so that intended improvements in students' progress were not achieved. Success rates, attendance and achievement of target grades declined in 2010/11. However, personal tutors and teachers now take more responsibility for the performance of students and monitor carefully their attendance and progress across the range of subjects they are studying. For example, tutors have begun individual tutorials earlier in the year and are using a standard electronic format for recording information about students' progress and targets, which is easily accessible to subject teachers, managers and the students. Managers are therefore much better placed to make early interventions if any concerns arise. Students receive an overall target grade and are encouraged to evaluate their performance and set their own targets to help achieve it. In addition, tutors set short-term performance targets, which they review with students termly. Staff speak positively about the better systems in place in the current year; students are clear about their current rates of progress and know that their attendance is being monitored closely.

Leadership and management

What progress has the college made in improving the arrangements for child protection and risk assessment? **Reasonable progress**

Safeguarding has received more scrutiny since the previous inspection. The college has successfully completed a new programme of safeguarding training for all staff, including academic, support and ancillary staff. Arrangements for new staff to complete training as part of their induction are in place. Senior managers who hold overall responsibility for safeguarding have undertaken appropriate training. The governing body now review safeguarding annually and ensure that relevant policies are updated when necessary. Governors have received appropriate training, although this has only just been completed for all governors, despite being an urgent recommendation from the previous inspection. The use of risk assessment is appropriate in the case of building contractors working on the college site. The single

central record meets government requirements but it does not meet the college's own policy requirements. Students now carry photo-identity badges, which staff check regularly. This allows staff and students to keep a close check on who is present on site.

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