

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Sir George Monoux College

Date of visit: 18 June 2009

Context

Sir George Monoux is a sixth form college operating on a single site in the London borough of Waltham Forest. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and study full-time.

The college serves a wide catchment area, with only 40% of its students resident in Waltham Forest. Many students are recruited from areas of high social and economic deprivation. The local unemployment rate is higher than average. The percentage of school pupils in the borough who gain five GCSEs at grades A* to C is lower than average. The number of young people not in education, employment or training and the number of adults with no qualifications is higher than average. The proportion of the local community belonging to minority ethnic groups is 42%. A much higher proportion attend the college, particularly Black African (23%), Black Caribbean (13%), Pakistani (18%), Indian (7%), and Bangladeshi (5%). In 2008/09, 1,937 students were full-time, with most studying at level 3.

Achievement and standards

How much progress has been made with improving success rates since the previous monitoring visit?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

After a significant increase in the success rate in 2006/07, the rate in 2007/08 increased by a further 1% to 80%. This represents a rate of improvement similar to the national rate for the year and average standards overall. For students aged 16 to 18 at level 1 the improvement has been good but at level 2 the success rate declined to slightly below the national figure at 80%. Improvement has been satisfactory on courses at level 3 and success rates are close to the national average.

The A-level success rate of 93% is similar to last year and is satisfactory. The AS-level success rate is low, largely owing to low pass rates in too many subjects, and the proportion of high grades is also low. However, value-added data indicate that students are making at least the progress expected of them, and often better. The college recognises that the AS success rate and progression between AS and A level are lower than they would wish and have introduced a variety of improvements. It is too early to assess the impact of these measures. Success rates on national diploma courses are very good at 83%. The proportion of high grades and the value-added scores for these courses are also very high.

The proportion of students who achieved a grade A* to C at GCSE improved in 2007/08 but was still low at 51%. This overall figure conceals an improvement in English but a decline in mathematics. Success rates for the small number of older students are good at all levels.

Key skills results are poor. The college has introduced a range of alternative courses in literacy, numeracy and IT in place of key skills and success rates on these courses are satisfactory. College data indicate that there are no significant differences in the achievement of different heritage groups and that the difference in performance between male and female students has narrowed considerably, and is not significant. There is currently insufficient information held centrally about the performance of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Progression to higher education is good at 79%.

Quality of provision

How successful have the college's initiatives to improve the proportion of good or better teaching been?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The college has consolidated the improvements identified at the last monitoring visit and reports a substantial increase in the proportion of lessons graded as good or better to 70%. The work of the advanced practitioners is now well established; they facilitate the sharing of good practice effectively and are also encouraging teachers to be more creative and 'take risks' in their lesson planning. This has fostered a greater focus on the development of learning, and college data indicate that, as a result, individual teachers are improving their skills. The lesson observation scheme is well established; all teachers have been observed this year and there has been appropriate coverage of tutorial provision within these observations. The commentary to lesson observations matches the grades awarded, but some aspects of lessons, for example the promotion of equality and

diversity and the effectiveness of additional learning support, receive insufficient coverage.

How much progress has been made in developing the quality and effectiveness of target-setting and individual learning plans?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The college has consolidated the significant progress made last year in the quality of its tutorials and students say how much more effective they are. The setting and recording of targets is much improved; students know the grades they are expected to achieve and in most cases know what they need to do to achieve them. The quality of individual action plans has also improved. These plans have been customised to meet the needs of students according to the courses they are following and provide sufficient detail to monitor their progress effectively. The next stage in the development of individual action plans depends on planned improvements to the college's management information system. The college is confident that the improvements will be in place for the start of the next academic year.

Leadership and management

How is the college incorporating the learner voice into quality assurance procedures?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

The college's strategy for the development of the learner voice is well considered and comprehensive. Student Ambassadors take their responsibilities very seriously and make a good contribution to college life. The student council represents the views of learners well and recent improvements, including to the learning resource centre and the formation of the 'chill-out' zone, have been made as direct responses to students' views. The college communicates its responses to students' views effectively. Students are involved in a wide range of quality assurance activities, although their formal contribution to course reviews is underdeveloped. The college has yet to evaluate fully the impact of its learner voice strategy.