

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Cadbury Sixth Form College

Date of visit: April 2009

Context

Cadbury Sixth Form College (the college) is located in the South West of Birmingham. The student catchment area includes over 100 feeder schools across the Birmingham conurbation and schools outside this but mostly within a 15 to 20 mile radius of the college. A small number of students travel in from north Worcestershire, Sandwell and Solihull. Over half of the students have a minority ethnic background and the student population broadly mirrors the under-25 population profile of the city. The college recruits more students with relatively low GCSE point scores than is typical for a sixth form college. Just over a half of the students qualify for an educational maintenance allowance.

The college was inspected in October 2005. The college's overall effectiveness was judged to be good. All the key cross-college judgements were also judged to be good apart from achievement and standards which were judged to be satisfactory. There are nearly 1400 full-time equivalent students at the college, of which 97% are age 16-18. Fifty-five per cent of students at the college are female. All of the college's learners are taking level 3 courses, particularly advanced subsidiary levels (AS levels) and general certificate of education advanced levels (A level).

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual monitoring visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made to improve success rates for different groups of students?	Reasonable progress
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AS and A level success rates did not improve in 2006/07. For students on AS level courses in 2007/08, the college success has improved but remains five percentage points below the last published national rate of 75%. In 2007/08 the college introduced a number of strategies which resulted in a considerable improvement in A level success rates. The college success rate is now two percentage points above the national rate of 92%.

The progress that students make relative to their qualifications at enrolment also improved for students taking both AS and A level courses. In 2007/08, AS level students generally achieved in line with expectations and A level students achieve at least in line with expectations and some achieve much better. GCSE success rates

declined further in 2007/08 and are well below average. Key skills success rates have improved but remain low. Both GCSEs and key skills constitute only a minor portion of the college's provision. Students receiving additional learning support achieve as well and often better than those not in receipt of support. In 2008/09 the college continues to focus on maintaining improvements at A level and improving AS success rates, with a particular emphasis on supporting students at risk of not completing their programme of learning. Early indicators of improvements, linked to the AS and A level module pass rates in January 2009, show significant improvements in several of the weaker curriculum areas.

In 2007/08, long course success rates for adult learners at level 1 and 2 are low. Following a review of the curriculum offer to adult learners, this provision is no longer on offer.

Quality of provision

What progress has the college made to ensure students are enrolled on the most appropriate provision?	Significant progress
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The college continues to develop its good working relations with partner schools through an effective schools liaison programme. In collaboration with Bournville College, taster days are provided for local year 10 students. Year 11 students complete an admission interview and attend an introductory day to evaluate their subject choices from the wide range of options available. College admissions staff provide students with good advice and guidance on which to make informed decisions.

In 2008/09, the college has introduced more robust entry criteria to ensure students wishing to attend the college have the skills to complete their programme of study successfully. Screening and diagnostic assessment of students with additional learning needs are good. The college's arrangements for the early identification of students at risk of not completing their course are effective in ensuring that these students are provided with prompt and targeted support.

The recently devised college enrolment database is particularly useful. It provides staff with a wide range of relevant information to enable well trained information, advice and guidance staff to work effectively with students through enrolment and onto both AS and A level courses.

What progress has been made to ensure that students' progress is monitored effectively and that timely and effective support is provided for students at risk of not completing their course?	Significant progress
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All students attend subject progress reviews and tutorials with their personal tutor at which progress is evaluated against target grades. The tutorial system is

strengthened by the introduction of specialist tutors, each of whom has four tutor groups.

A new support scheme called the 'Passport for Success' was introduced in September 2008 to improve the support for students at risk of not completing their course. This has proved instrumental in improving the quality of support for students. Students make good use of the college's learning mentors who provide wide ranging support and guidance. In 2007/08, the college introduced robust standards linked to assignment deadlines. This has had a very beneficial impact. Other new support arrangements include the provision of additional workshops during A level students' revision time.

Retention rates continue to improve and, in 2008/09, the in-year retention rate for A level students is at 98% and for AS level students is at 92%. Retention rates on enrichment activities have also improved and are at 95% for A level students and 91% for AS level students. Attendance rates continue to show year on year improvements.

Leadership and management

<p>What progress have quality arrangements, including internal quality reviews and observations of teaching and learning, made to improve standards and improve consistency of performance?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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The college's curriculum areas which were subject to internal quality reviews in 2006/07 and 2007/08 show mostly sustained improvements in performance. Where improvements remain less evident, departments continue to receive ongoing support by a senior manager. The weaker curriculum area performance is reflected in the grades in the self-assessment report. Internal quality reviews findings include an assessment of student work, teaching and learning, student views and a review of key departmental documentation. Against each of these there are a number of recommendations. The key recommendations are included in departmental development plans. Internal quality reviews are a thorough and a two way process. Reviews are used well to identify and share good practice within departments and to improve the confidence of managers in the assessment of their team's work. Sharing of good practice across the college is less effective. The internal quality reviews programme of paired observations of teaching and learning are graded. Managers make good use of their involvement in these observations for standard setting for when they undertake their departmental observations. For quality improvement, the cycle of internal quality reviews is too long.

The main internal programme of observation of teaching and learning is not graded and there is insufficient monitoring to ensure that all observers work to the same standards. Lesson observations provide insufficient focus on learners' progress and their attainments.

The self-assessment process is well organised and rigorous. Departmental self-assessment reports are moderated by the senior management team. The whole college report is subject to external peer moderation and review by the governing body. Development plans are included in the internal moderation process. These plans are reviewed mid year and are a regular agenda item at team meetings. A thorough end-of-year review of each department's development plan is an integral part of the self-assessment process.