

St Thomas More – Case Study

OCR Nationals – Meeting the Needs of Students and Employers

OCR Nationals – a new and innovative suite of vocational qualifications were officially launched in September 2004. Having been successfully run in several centres, OCR Nationals have proved extremely popular with teachers, students and industry.

St Thomas More school offers OCR Nationals at Level 2 and Level 3 – to Year 10 (to replace GNVQ Intermediate) and Sixth Form students. Mary Riley, Health and Social Care Co-ordinator, spoke about working with OCR Nationals at St Thomas More School.

“OCR Nationals are fantastic. I was beginning to despair following changes made in 2002 to other qualifications – the practical element had gone and students had lost their enthusiasm.

OCR Nationals are extremely flexible – they are designed so that you can do them the way that you want to and when you want to. You are not tied to exam dates etc. As a school we are able to organise our own time and resources.

OCR Nationals fit nicely with NVQs – there is a lot of overlap. The whole approach is friendly towards NVQ Level 2. Units can be tailored to fit NVQ requirements. The result is that students working on the Level 3 National will have evidence for the NVQ.

The pathways are particularly good – guiding students in specialist areas and providing them with a qualification that proves their competence. The choice of units is very good. All units have a practical element and this really helps students.”

Kimberley Borthwick a St Thomas More student said:

“I am really happy with the course, it is interesting and I learn more because it is ‘hands on’. The community placements make even the written work seem easier.”



Mary Riley added that:

“Students are getting credit for things that they can do and they are broadening their experience. The community placements allow them to apply theory to practice and to see the reasoning behind the theory.

Prior to the introduction of the Nationals I was considering leaving the profession as I was getting no job satisfaction seeing students struggling with theory based courses.

Retention rates have improved enormously - in the past as many as one third of students had dropped out by Christmas.

OCR Nationals were easy to implement. St Thomas More School has a huge bank of resources and vocational contacts, which we have been able to use.

OCR support is second to none – we have named contacts. Everyone at OCR is approachable and if they are not available at the time we contact them, they always get back to us.

I recommend OCR Nationals wholeheartedly – they give students experiential learning that actually prepares them for work rather than feeding them with theory that makes little sense without practical application.”

OCR Nationals are offered in Health and Social Care and Business at St Thomas More School.

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