

Great Yarmouth College

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Great Yarmouth College is a medium-sized college located in an area of high economic and social deprivation on the east coast of Norfolk. Courses are offered at the main campus close to the town centre. In 2010/11, the college has 5,449 learners of whom 1,836 are aged 16 to 18 and 3,248 are adults. Of all learners about a third study full time. The college offers courses in almost all subjects with the exception of social sciences, although the number of learners in several is relatively small. Around 300 learners are on employment-based courses and 365 pupils from local schools attend the college on a day-release basis.

The college was last inspected in November 2010 and was judged inadequate. Of the four subjects inspected, two were graded as inadequate and two as satisfactory. Since the inspection a new principal has been appointed.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has been made in increasing management capacity, improving self-assessment arrangements and implementing improvement plans?

Reasonable progress

Governors and managers monitor progress against the post inspection action plan in detail through the performance scrutiny and improvement governors' sub-committee. They have nearly completed a management restructure, intended to improve management quality, increase the focus on teaching and learning, improve the quality of learners' experiences and reduce costs by approximately £1million. Several key managers are on temporary contracts. Managers are concerned about the college's financial capacity to survive in two years time. They are developing a strategic plan, considering particularly whether the college should remain independent or collaborate with another provider. Managers have improved systems to increase the accountability of staff through the monitoring of improvement objectives. Staff have received much training to improve the quality of provision. They are more able to access and use accurate data to inform actions.

Self-assessment through course performance reviews is informed effectively by a detailed consideration of learners' progress. Communication between staff at all levels is much improved. Managers and staff have worked hard in the short time since the inspection to improve provision. Performance management of staff, including the setting and monitoring of targets and coaching for improvement has improved but is not yet fully embedded at all levels. Many of the initiatives put in place to bring about improvement are very recent and it is too early to judge their impact on learners' outcomes.

Outcomes for learners

How much progress has been made in improving the outcomes for learners in the current year?

Insufficient progress

The use of data to monitor learners' retention and pass rates has improved notably because of increasingly consistent use of a reliable centrally-held system and careful and thorough checking of individual learners' records by senior managers, middle managers and teachers. Much greater confidence exists in the accuracy and management of data than has been the case for several years. Based on the college's data, at the time of inspection, the retention of current learners is increased compared to the marked decline to a low base over the previous three years. However, based on the current position, the rates overall and for younger learners are still below average although the rate for adults has increased to be just above average. Managers and teachers have monitored each learner's progress towards achieving their qualification carefully and are confident that success rates will be increased in the current year. However, until results are finalised this position cannot be confirmed.

The overall success rate for apprentices and the timeliness within which they achieve their qualifications have increased notably but remain below average. Learners' attendance remains a cause for concern as measures put in place have had a limited effect. The overall attendance rate has increased but is still well below average. As part of strategies to increase learners' development of key and functional skills, learners at risk of not completing their qualifications have been identified and are receiving extra support.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made in improving the effectiveness of provision in construction?

Reasonable progress

Managers have restructured staffing to include a head of school and a section leader. They have taken action to remove underperforming staff and reduce the staffing of the area to increase efficiency. Learners' attendance and retention are low.

Managers have improved recruitment and selection arrangements to determine the most appropriate course for learners through the provision of summer taster courses and four weeks of assessment. They recruit with more integrity than was the case previously. The provision of foundation level courses has been increased. Most teachers have undergone training in 'active learning' strategies, but managers are unsure of the impact of this in lessons. Managers have increased the proportion of learners benefiting from work experience to approximately half. They have not yet instigated an employers' forum, but expect to do so next year. Managers and teachers have improved the monitoring and recording of learners' progress. The implementation and recording of risk assessments is much improved and all risk

assessments are complete. Managers and teachers have received much development work on equality and diversity themes. Managers are, however, unaware of the impact of this in lessons. Learners have benefited from doing projects which include equality and diversity aspects related to their vocational work.

How much progress has been made in improving the effectiveness of provision in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)?

Reasonable progress

Since the inspection, new managers are in post, albeit relatively recently. New policies are in place, subject to endorsement by governors, which cover the college's approach to functional skills and employability skills. Management responsibilities are now clearly defined and an action plan has been prioritised to ensure that current learners are supported to achieve. A functional skills coordinator is in post, a key action following inspection, and a range of strategies including a new monitoring system and intervention for learners at risk of underperformance are in place. Close attention to ensuring that learners achieve their qualifications is proving successful with a number of early achievements already recorded. Based on the college's lesson observation data, the quality of lessons in functional skills has improved. Vocational teachers have had specific staff development activities to help them to integrate development of functional skills into their lessons. Plans are in hand to increase the level of both initial assessment and subsequent diagnostic assessment at the start of the coming academic year. The curriculum for learners on discrete literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses has been reviewed and work to increase community provision is underway based on strengthening links with a range of stakeholders.

How much progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning?

Reasonable progress

The lesson observation procedure has undergone a number of useful revisions. Managers have a more accurate view of the quality of lessons than previously. Observers' training focuses on helping them to evaluate learning more accurately. In the current year, more teachers have been observed than previously. Individual action plans following observation are now routinely used. Teachers, managers and teaching and learning coaches implement these effectively, although progress is not always monitored closely enough. The number of lessons judged by observers to be inadequate has decreased notably, although a few remain. Observers' experience and confidence in making accurate evaluations varies and there remains a tendency to place emphasis on teaching rather than learning. Moderation of lesson observation records takes place but is not confined to experienced observers and sometimes takes too long.

Teachers receive a range of good quality staff development activities. Specific activities to support the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons have taken place but it is too early to assess the impact on teachers' practice and learners' awareness. Profiles of individual learners, including prior attainment data, are used increasingly effectively by most teachers. Lesson planning shows a better match of

activities to learners' needs. The use of information and learning technology has increased.

To what extent have improvements been made to advice and guidance for learners to ensure that learners are placed on appropriate courses relative to their level of ability, needs and interests? How much progress has been made in improving tutorial support for learners? **Reasonable progress**

Managers have made considerable progress to improve advice and guidance systems to ensure that learners are enrolled onto the most appropriate courses for their abilities and potential. They have completely restructured the recruitment and selection processes to be much more considerate of learners' needs by: improved personalised communication; meet and greet arrangements for applicants; provision of information packs; summer taster courses; and clarity on the demands of each course. Links between vocational and learning support staff have improved. The integrity of recruitment has improved since decisions on course and level are deferred until GCSE results, and taster sessions for learners to experience the vocational area are available. Learners provide mostly positive feedback on their recruitment experiences. The provision of entry and foundation level courses has increased.

The tutorial system requires tutors to use individual learning plans although the quality of completion is very variable. In the best cases, learners have clear and personalised functional skills and vocational area targets, which are closely monitored. In the less effective cases, targets are too general and are not completed. Most individual plans contain information on functional skills, but automatic links to initial screening outcomes are not expected until September 2011. The focus in tutorials on learning and achievement, rather than just on pastoral matters, has increased as has the emphasis on progression and careers.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in increasing the promotion of equality and diversity? How well are data about different groups of learners analysed to support improving achievement? How have teachers been supported to increase promotion in lessons? **Reasonable progress**

Because of much better use of data, managers can identify the performance of different groups of learners far more accurately than previously. Senior managers undertake useful analysis and this expertise is developing in middle managers. All staff consider individual learner's profiles carefully and do all they can to overcome barriers to achievement. The college's in-year retention data show that the gap between male and female learners' retention is closing, although it is still marked between adult men and women. Based on college data, the large group of younger learners who receive additional learning support have a higher in-year retention rate

than their peers. Course reviews require the evaluation of the promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum but do not prompt analysis of the performance data for different groups sufficiently.

The response rate to questionnaires about learners' satisfaction has increased allowing managers to analyse the levels of satisfaction by a range of different groups. Teachers have received mandatory staff development to raise their awareness of equality and diversity. While teachers are beginning to include a much greater focus on equality themes in preparing their lessons, the college's lesson observation records indicate that there is still more to do increase promotion. Observers are prompted to evaluate the extent to which promotion takes place, however, analysis of the results is not yet well developed.

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