

Chichester College

Focused monitoring visit report

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Chichester College is a large general further education college in West Sussex. The College has campuses in Chichester and Brinsbury (near Pulborough) and outreach centres in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton. The college offers a wide range of provision to approximately 15,000 learners. The college was last inspected in February 2008, with a follow up focused monitoring visit in December 2010. The inspection judged overall effectiveness, leadership and management, quality of provision and capacity to improve as good. The focused monitoring visit found significant progress for performance management and reasonable progress made against the other themes.

This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit which, solely, looked at the provision acquired by the college from Sussex Training in the autumn of 2010. The Skills Funding Agency now contracts apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes, previously run through Sussex Training, to Chichester College. Sussex Training was last inspected in 2007 and received a monitoring visit in December 2008, and was due for a full inspection in the summer of 2010. At the full inspection, Sussex Training was judged satisfactory for all its provision. At the focused monitoring visit reasonable progress was being made in all themes, except for the promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity which was insufficient.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has the college made in incorporating the ex-Sussex Training work-based learning provision into its self-assessment and quality improvement systems to improve the provision?

Significant progress

The college rapidly, after taking over the Sussex Training provision, developed a very realistic and effective integration plan that has been used particularly well to integrate all aspects of the Sussex Training provision into the college's systems and procedures. Action and progress have been decisive, timely and very well monitored with clear learner impact measures. Improvements have significantly improved experiences for staff, learners and employers. Staff and learners have been particularly well considered with a great deal of attention paid to their well-being and development needs. Feedback from learners and employers has been used effectively to identify areas for improvement and influence change. All improvements are part of the effective college-wide action plan which provides a good record of progress of all activity. Significant refurbishment work has been completed of some of the ex-Sussex Training premises to improve facilities in information technology and hairdressing.

Outcomes for learners

How are student achievement and standards being measured and managed in 2011 and what impact has the acquisition of Sussex Training by the college had on retention and success? Significant progress

When the college took over the provision, success rates were low and dropping. Overall success rates and achievement in the time planned for the apprenticeship programmes were poor at 57% and 44%, with Train to Gain overall success rates at 76% and with achievement in the time planned at 73%. There were 75 apprentices and 104 Train to Gain learners who transferred to the college. Overall success rates have improved in 2011. Success rates for apprentices have improved; overall achievement has increased to 88%, with achievement within the time planned to 67%. Train to Gain success rates have declined slightly to 72%, primarily due to the 28% of learners who were already past their completion dates when they transferred to the college. Learner retention has been particularly good at 99% and all learners remain in employment. Learners achieve well and enjoy their learning experience with the college.

The achievement of key skills and technical certificates has also improved. These awards are completed at the start of the apprenticeship programme to provide the required knowledge and the skills for learners to demonstrate their competence, and to take new skills back to their workplaces. Learners reported that this approach to the development of skills and knowledge has significantly improved their confidence and capability in the workplace.

Quality of provision

What progress has the college made in improving the workplace reviews and assessments and what has been the impact of any improvement on learners' performance? Significant progress

When the college took over the provision, reviews were poorly conducted and assessments were infrequent. Workplace reviews are now very well managed and effectively used to develop learners. Liaison officers review learners in their workplaces every six weeks, with regular assessment visits by assessors. Assessors work very effectively with liaison officers to ensure learners receive the support they need. Monthly attendance, retention and achievement meetings combine effectively with assessor meetings to ensure learner progress is monitored. Employers are kept well informed of the skills and experiences learners need to practise prior to assessments. Effective discussions and agreements with learners enable learners to control the pace of their learning and assessment to meet their work commitments. Targets negotiated at reviews are realistic for learners. Individual learner training or support needs are well managed and discussed with employers to ensure they appreciate why the learner needs extra support. Significantly, since the introduction of these improvements, all learners have stayed on track and many who were making very slow progress have now completed. Several learners have progressed to higher level courses, having enjoyed the support and learning they have experienced.

What progress has been made in ensuring appropriate support and management structures are available for the employer-based learners?

Significant progress

The college identified in its integration plan the need to improve reviews and employer liaison. Much-improved workplace visits and employer monitoring procedures have been established. New posts for college liaison officers were quickly established. These officers work closely with employers and learners to monitor the learning and liaison process. They are particularly important in the early identification of learner under performance.

Learners access support through the same channels as college-based learners. Some support sessions are scheduled to coincide with centre-based training. Out-of-class support is provided for learners at work by their assessor. All learners have access to the learning resource centre and other college-based resources. Student support services provide online support. The Student Union and other support services are available on text and telephone. Learners reported they are aware of the support mechanisms and other activities run by the college; however, they were too busy at work and did not feel the need of them. College staff worked hard to ensure the ex-Sussex Training staff have been very well supported and received good training as part of their integration into the college. Training needs were identified and development events established to retrain and support assessors.

Leadership and management

How well has the college's process for the observation of teaching and learning, and the moderation of judgements arising, been incorporated into the work-based learning environment to include all aspects of delivery including employer-based training?

Significant progress

The college identified early the need to adapt their existing observation of teaching and learning to better reflect the work of assessors and trainers in the workplace. The standard college process for observing and reporting on lessons and staff delivery has been effectively adapted to meet the differences for staff working in more practical assessment and review environments and for teaching on an individual basis. The standard college system operates for staff who deliver training in a classroom. An alternative, but similar, system has been developed to monitor work-based training and reviews for staff operating with individual learners. All observation reports are very well managed and incorporated into a particularly useful termly monitoring report.

Standardisation meetings are held regularly and used effectively across the work-based learning provision to ensure equity in judgements and grading.

What progress has the college made in integrating its quality assurance processes to meet the expectations and needs of employer-focused training? Significant progress

The college identified in the integration plan that there was much work to do to develop the quality assurance and improvement processes of the original programmes. Considerable work has been done to ensure the college systems are appropriate for work-based training and learning. All of the Sussex Training provision is now effectively embedded into the college's quality assurance processes. Many ex-Sussex Training staff are now employed by the college and subject to appraisals and observations of teaching and learning. Staff training has been used effectively to develop the skills of assessors and trainers and to introduce the new quality procedures and working arrangements to better meet the needs of learners.

Learner success data are fully integrated into the college systems. Actions identified in the integration plan are centrally monitored but also included in curriculum area action plans. Course reviews and the new self-assessment process incorporate all aspects of the ex-Sussex Training provision. Employers, through the regular contact with liaison officers and assessors and feedback mechanisms, are much more aware of their influence on improving the provision and feel significant benefits from being part of the college systems.

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