

Building Crafts College

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Voluntary organisation

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Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

The Building Crafts College was founded by the Worshipful Company of Carpenters in 1893 and is located in the London Borough of Newham, an area with high levels of deprivation and social disadvantage.

The college offers a range of construction courses from level 1 to level 7, including highly specialised courses such as historic building conservation studies. In 2010/11 the college had 1,100 enrolments and delivered courses to 867 learners. The scope of the monitoring visit included provision for just over 200 learners. Of these, 167 took foundation courses in construction with a small number training at advanced level. Train to Gain and apprenticeships accounted for 46 learners. The college employs 60 full- and part-time staff.

At the previous inspection in 2009 the overall effectiveness of the college was judged to be good, along with achievements and standards, the quality of provision, leadership and management, and equality of opportunity. The capacity to improve was also good, as was the subject area of construction crafts.

This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit, which includes the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in developing quality improvement procedures and the self-assessment process since the last inspection?

Reasonable progress

The most recent self-assessment report is sufficiently self-critical and identifies key areas for improvement, including the need to improve variations in retention rates across some programmes. Senior tutors and staff are involved well in identifying the strengths and areas of development of their curriculum areas. A range of effective mechanisms involves learners and promotes improvement, including regular meetings with course representatives and the use of learner surveys.

Quality improvement procedures have led to a number of positive developments since the last inspection, including increasing learner numbers, improved outcomes overall and effective monitoring of learners' progress. Observations of teaching and learning are routinely undertaken and are targeted well, although records of observations are not always sufficiently evaluative.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving learners' outcomes since the previous inspection?

Reasonable progress

The introduction of a range of effective actions has supported the continued improvement in outcomes for learners. College data for 2010/11 show improved success rates across all programmes. Variations in success rates across programmes have reduced since the last inspection. Whilst outcomes in work-based learning have improved well, the college has rightly identified that further improvements to provision are required to ensure that they reach at least the national average. Learners continue to produce work to a good standard and during the inspection employers noted the good development of learners' skills and the positive attitudes learners bring to the workplace. Learners spoken to by inspectors say they enjoy their courses, college life and the purposeful learning environment.

Improvements in outcomes are supported well by arrangements to monitor the progress of learners by tutors, assessors and senior staff, who respond quickly to support those who need additional help.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in developing additional learning support for all those who need it?

Significant progress

The previous inspection reported that arrangements to meet learners' additional learning needs were insufficient. The college had been slow in providing support for some learners identified as needing help. Additional resources have since been made available and have increased the college's capacity to provide additional learning support. The individual needs of learners are identified well and in a timely way. Initial assessment is undertaken of all learners and diagnostic assessment is in place where appropriate. Learners with dyslexia receive good specialist one-to-one support. Counselling is available through a qualified counsellor.

The vast majority of learners who receive additional support make good progress. Learners value very highly the help that they receive. They accrue a range of practical benefits, including improvements in English and mathematics. This assists them in completing their courses, and helps them in the workplace and in their personal lives. Good information is held on learners who receive additional support and their progress is closely monitored.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in using management information to manage and develop provision?

Reasonable progress

At the last inspection management information was not used well by the college in managing and developing provision. The college has invested in a new management information system that has enabled it to effectively manage contracts with funding

bodies. New arrangements are in place to monitor learners' attendance and punctuality, and this information is used well to identify underperformance. Assessors, tutors and managers now have access to, and effectively use, accurate information to monitor progress across all programmes. Assessment outcomes are carefully scrutinised by managers to challenge tutors and ensure that learners are on target to complete work within agreed timescales. Success and retention rates have improved significantly in many areas and currently, a minority of learners partially achieve their qualification.

Information from the observation of teaching and learning, and from assessment monitoring, is now carefully analysed and used well to support staff training and organisational development. The college is aware of the need to develop better ways of using benchmarking data for learner outcomes that align to national data published by funding bodies.

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