

# Regent College

## Reinspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130757

**Name of lead inspector:** Paula Heaney HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 29 September 2011

**Type of provider:** Sixth form college

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## REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

Regent is a medium-sized college located close to the centre of Leicester. The college is one of three sixth form colleges in Leicester and it works in partnership with the nearby Wyggeston & Queen Elizabeth I College. Regent offers courses from entry level to advanced level in eight subject areas. The proportion of learners studying vocational courses has increased steadily and in the current academic year, 2011/12, is nearly 60%. Just under a third of learners study A levels.

At the college's inspection in April 2011, overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for students, quality of provision, leadership and management, equality and diversity and the sector subject area of business, administration and law were judged satisfactory. Safeguarding was judged to be good. Science and mathematics provision was judged inadequate. This is the first monitoring visit since the last inspection.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

**What progress has the college made with its self-assessment, post-inspection action plan and quality improvement planning to drive improvements in learners' progress, including the strengthening of reporting and accountability for middle managers?**

**Reasonable progress**

Roles at senior management level have been strengthened to combine curriculum management and cross-college responsibilities and to promote greater consistency and closer links to the curriculum. Senior tutors and senior curriculum leaders now report directly to senior managers. Appropriate improvement plans and targets which are more measurable are in place to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Monitoring is planned through revised course review arrangements, regular meetings with middle and senior managers and through more rigorous quality audits focused on areas of underperformance. A key area of focus is improvement to AS level success rates. Actions to raise entry requirements and to screen all learners' literacy and numeracy levels have already been completed. Observations of lessons will take place early in the autumn term to identify where improvement may be needed more rapidly. It is too early to comment on the effectiveness of the arrangements introduced.

## Outcomes for learners

**What progress has been made in improving learners' outcomes, specifically in closing the achievement gap between males and females, and in the success rates on AS programmes and for adults on foundation and intermediate courses?**

**Reasonable progress**

College data for 2010/11 indicate that success rates have risen at intermediate and advanced level. They are now above the most recent intermediate level sixth form college national average for learners aged 16 to 18 and at advanced level for adults. However, success rates fell significantly at foundation level. For adults, this is due to low success rates on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses in the community, which the college has reduced. Adults receive more comprehensive initial assessment and guidance before enrolling on ESOL courses. For younger learners, the low success rates relate to low achievement on adult literacy and numeracy courses. Younger learners no longer follow these courses.

Success rates on AS level courses improved overall 2010/11, but remain variable. The entry requirements for AS courses in 2011/12 have been raised. The practice of adding additional AS courses onto A-level learners' timetables has now ceased, other than where relevant to learners' progression needs. The curriculum offer at the college has been broadened to ensure a wider range of vocational and A-level routes and to increase progression routes for learners. Outcomes for learners on vocational courses are in line with the most recent national averages. The gap in young male achievement has been narrowed successfully in 2010/11. The college acknowledges that the retention of Black Caribbean learners fell in 2010/11 and work is underway to establish the reasons for this.

Actions to improve outcomes in 2011/12 are at an early stage and their effectiveness will not become apparent until the results of the summer 2012 examinations are available.

## Quality of Provision

**What progress has been made in improving the rigour of lesson observation, so that observers focus on the quality of learning, and in the support provided for teachers to develop more creative and interesting lessons?**

**Reasonable progress**

From September 2011, the arrangements for observing teaching and learning have been revised and strengthened to focus more sharply on the quality of learning. A smaller team of college observers will conduct lesson observations across curriculum areas during a two-week period in October, with plans to review observation grades taking place shortly thereafter, involving external input. Improvement actions identified on lesson observation records will inform staff development activities more routinely and regularly. Managers plan to compile a staff development and support

programme once observations have been completed. While the quality of schemes of work is reviewed by curriculum leaders, managers do not currently review the quality of lesson plans or learning materials. Senior managers will seek to identify good practice and to share this more widely across curriculum areas. Learners' views on teaching and learning are gathered through college questionnaires, the last survey being held in February 2011, and through focus groups in some curriculum areas.

**What progress has been made with the implementation of the Skills for Life strategy and in using information on learners' abilities in functional skills in lesson planning?**

**Reasonable progress**

A cross-college Skills for Life strategy has been introduced in the 2011/12 academic year. Staff have undergone training to prepare them for the change to functional skills. All learners, including those already at the college, have received literacy and numeracy screening to enable appropriate support to be put in place, including on advanced level courses. The college is prioritising literacy support and development in this academic year, through timetabled functional skills workshops staffed by specialist teachers. The expectation is that learners will be supported to develop literacy expertise in their course subjects and that they will receive support to succeed in functional skills at the appropriate level. Few learners took functional skills tests in 2010/11. Functional skills' development within course subjects is at an early stage, although some good practice exists such as on health and care courses. A review of the effectiveness of the new functional skills' workshops will be undertaken in October, to involve both staff and learners. It is too early to comment on the effectiveness of these new arrangements on improving learners' outcomes.

**What progress has been made in the arrangements for tutorials so that they are used productively and provide regular support for students?**

**Reasonable progress**

Managers have improved the arrangements for initial screening and diagnostic assessments in literacy and numeracy for all learners and the results inform learners' individual learning plans (ILPs) effectively. The screening of learners' needs regarding language, information and communication technology (ICT) and learning styles is underdeveloped. Managers have increased the emphasis of tutorials on academic progress, ILPs and target setting, but it is too soon to judge the impact. Learners find parts of tutorials unproductive and they do not make the best use of their time, but they value highly the helpful guidance they receive with their university applications. Managers propose to use five days each year to review learners' progress and reset targets in confidential individual meetings. The quality of target setting and teachers' feedback to the tutor for each learner review is variable. Managers intend to have lesson observations of each tutor in 2011/12, using an observation process more suited to tutorials than that used for general teaching and learning. Tutorials focus on attendance and punctuality and learners at risk. Tutors work in association with mentors and senior tutors to address concerns regarding individual learners. The number of learners arriving late for lessons has decreased significantly during the last three weeks, but too many are not punctual.

## Science and Mathematics

**What progress has been made in addressing the areas for improvement identified in science and mathematics, an area judged to be inadequate at the last inspection?**

**Reasonable progress**

Although many success rates improved in 2010/11, too many are still too low, mainly because of low achievement rates. The proportions of high grades are often very low. Success rates of adults improved significantly in 2010/11.

Teaching and learning are variable. In the best lessons, teachers demand detailed answers to searching questions from each learner. Learners enjoy the very good use of information learning technology (ILT) which aids their learning. Teachers use very good practical demonstrations to check learning, to aid learning and to relate theory with practice. Consequently, learners learn thoroughly and progress rapidly.

In the less effective lessons, teachers dominate. They talk too much and learners are passive and lose interest; learning is adversely affected. Questioning is too general and not all learners are involved in learning. Teachers do not always ensure good health and safety practices. Ideal opportunities to use ILT to aid learning are missed. Lesson plans are often too brief and fail to include learners' activities, strategies to meet the needs of different learners, and equality and diversity.

Lesson observers have focussed on teaching rather than learning and have not noted a correlation between low success rates and observation grades. Managers do not give a sufficient priority to learners' views on the quality of their lessons. Too few teachers share good practice through peer observations. Managers have improved the curriculum offer by providing a full vocational progression route from foundation to advanced levels. They have raised entry requirements and have implemented them more rigorously. Managers have made significant improvements to science accommodation, but mathematics rooms are often cramped and stuffy. Managers have also made significant improvement to ILT resources, but not all teachers are confident in how to use these to best effect in order to aid learning.

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