

Henley College, Coventry

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Henley College is one of two colleges in Coventry. The college recruits a high proportion of students from the most disadvantaged areas in Coventry. Unemployment and the proportion of the population who have no qualifications are above the national averages. The number of Year 11 pupils living locally who achieve five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is significantly lower than the national average.

The college offers provision in most subject areas, with the exception of construction and social sciences. The college is based on one main campus and provides courses in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in the community.

The college's most recent inspection was in December 2010. The college's overall effectiveness, its capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management were satisfactory. Of the four subject areas inspected, one was good, two were satisfactory and engineering was inadequate.

This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit all of which were areas for improvement at the last inspection.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has the college made in improving the accuracy of judgements within self-assessment

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, the college has made self-assessment more rigorous to improve the accuracy of judgements. More readily available information, both quantitative and qualitative supports self-assessment. The newly established Audit and Standards Unit has centralised data gathering and provides managers with good quality information. The Development Unit provides more robust teaching and learning information from lesson observations and recently introduced thematic learning walks. All courses from each subject area have greater scrutiny. A wider and trained team, applying a stronger focus on learners' outcomes, moderates grading.

To increase their scrutiny and challenge of academic performance the governing body has established a new standards committee, which reports to the full corporation each term. Additionally all governors are now linked to a subject area to develop a greater understanding of curriculum issues. The new committee focuses appropriately on teaching, learning, and the quality of the curriculum. Governors interrogate reports from college managers on these aspects, requesting regular feedback on progress. The committee closely monitors learners' outcomes,

scrutinising in-year reports. However, the monitoring of targets is insufficiently challenging. Targets for achieving outcomes use current national rates.

What progress has the college made in improving the effectiveness of quality improvement action planning

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, the college has introduced termly progress reviews in each subject area to monitor progress in improving learners' outcomes and implementing action plans. Senior managers lead these reviews, use sound in-year data and involve all managers from the subject area. Early intervention has followed from these reviews with some measurable improvement in outcomes, particularly essential skills and in public services.

At the last inspection, the college was experiencing some management staffing issues, which were affecting the quality of provision. A restructure, new appointments or change of personnel have fully resolved some of these issues. Managers have used termly progress reviews to investigate other issues and they have put in place improvement plans. However, the remedying of some staffing issues has been slow, due in part to capability issues and the recruitment of new staff.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has the college made in improving the outcomes for learners, especially learners aged 16 to 19?

Reasonable progress

In 2010/11, the success rates of learners aged 16 to 18 on long courses at advanced level increased to national rates, and were close to national rates on foundation and intermediate level courses. The success rates of learners aged 19 and over increased to above national rate with the greatest rise at foundation level. The improvement was mostly due to increases in students' pass rates. Success rates of male students of all ages increased substantially, but those for female students aged 16 to 18 fell slightly and they remained the same for adults. Outcomes have improved in most subject areas, but declined in art and design and leisure, travel and tourism.

Quality of Provision

What progress has the college made in improving the integration of literacy and numeracy support within vocational lessons?

Reasonable progress

The college implemented functional skills in all subject areas in 2010/11. Success rates were high at entry-level in all three functional skills, but low on level 1 and level 2. At entry-level, the college fully integrated the teaching of functional skills. Both a vocational specialist and a functional skills specialist teach the subject. The teaching of functional skills to learners at level 1 and level 2 is by vocational staff

from their own area that have been trained by specialist staff. This training continues to take place and ensures that materials used in each vocational area are relevant.

Managers conducted learning walks in 2010/11 to assess the practice within functional skills. They put improvement plans in place immediately. In the current year, staff provide additional support for both entry level and foundation level learners. The teaching of learners undertaking functional skills at level 2 takes place in discreet groups within their vocational area. Initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills takes place very early in the academic year so that the college can arrange timely and appropriate provision of teaching and support. The investment in training, related new technology and in vocationally relevant learning materials has been considerable.

What progress has the college made in improving the quality of teaching and learning? **Reasonable progress**

Prior to the last inspection, the college had refocused its teaching and learning strategy to emphasise assessment for learning, although this was at an early stage in development. This emphasis has continued and been reinforced through significant training of staff, production and distribution of guidance materials, the support of a dedicated team of advanced practitioners, lesson observations, learning walks and more developmental peer observations. While an early assessment indicates a greater focus on students' learning in many lessons, the college recognises the need to plan for further improvement so that the needs of all learners are met and assessed formatively and that this takes place more fully for each lesson.

The college has identified any staff needing support through the lesson observation process and provided them with support. Additionally the college has developed pilots to share formally good practice in teaching and learning and intends to extend this further so that the importance of teaching and learning is further emphasised.

What progress has the college made in improving the accuracy of assessment of teaching and learning? **Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, inspectors found that the college had judged the quality of teaching and learning too generously in previous years. In 2010/11, because of the greater focus on assessment for learning and the implementation of a more rigorous lesson observation system, the college judges the quality of teaching and learning more realistically. The college has worked effectively to align the grade profile for teaching and learning to learners' outcomes. The team for teaching quality improvement has received thorough training and team members moderate all grades prior to discussion with staff. They all undertake joint observations to improve consistency. The reporting of lesson observations has improved. Each subject area now receives a report on teaching and learning promptly to plan improvements in a timely manner. In addition, learning walks are providing rapid feedback on strengths and areas for improvement.

What progress has the college made in improving provision in engineering?**Reasonable progress**

The overall engineering success rate increased substantially in 2010/11. Success rates were good at foundation level and satisfactory at intermediate level. The college has discontinued the two advanced courses with low success rates in 2010/11. The introduction of an intermediate certificate in engineering improves learners' progression to advanced level resulting in a more coherent curriculum.

Teaching is improving. Lessons include a variety of activities to stimulate interest and teachers make better use questioning to check learners' understanding. Teachers plan most lessons well sharing clear objectives with learners. Joint planning and teaching of functional skills by engineering and specialist support staff is effective. However, a wide variance in the quality of teaching remains with a minority including weak planning, uninspiring teaching and inconsistent checking of learners' understanding.

Arrangements to support learners with additional needs have improved. The identification of additional learning needs and support plans are in place quickly. Learners value individual tutorials and understand their targets. The college has advanced plans to introduce a new computer system for monitoring and tracking progress. Over recent months, the acting programme manager, supported by the head of department, has managed the area well.

What progress has the college made in providing work experience and improving links with schools and industry in engineering?**Significant progress**

College staff have a particularly clear understanding of the needs of local industry. The department specialises in mechanical engineering and manufacturing, aligning well to these needs. Since the last inspection, all full-time intermediate level students and some advanced level students have undertaken work experience, sometimes leading to full-time employment. An innovative simulated work experience programme has taken place for introductory level learners. The department has effective links with many local employers who value the work of the college. They praise the good communications with the college and the rapid and flexible response to meeting their needs. Many contact the college directly when they are looking for new staff. A college governor with an engineering background has linked with the department. The department has begun planning an employer forum but has not implemented this proposal. Links with schools are effective. The college is part of consortium with other colleges and schools providing the engineering Diploma for school pupils. It also provides an NVQ at introductory level in engineering to pupils from local schools. Progression agreements are in place with two local universities. The college is working closely with one university and anticipates joint activities and shared teaching.

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