

John Leggott College

Focused monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Sue Harrison

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

Address: West Common Lane
Scunthorpe
North Lincolnshire
DN17 1DS

Telephone number: 01724 282998

Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

John Leggott is a large sixth form college. It offers provision for full-time students aged 16 to 18 and a small number aged 19 and over who have progressed within the college. The college offers a wide range of academic courses at A and AS level, and GCSE. It also offers vocational courses at advanced, intermediate and foundation level. Currently 2,200 students are on roll. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is just above that in the local area. The proportion of school students in North Lincolnshire achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is below the national average.

A new principal took up their post in October 2010. The college was last inspected in November 2011. Its quality of provision, safeguarding and equality and diversity were judged satisfactory. However, outcomes for learners, overall effectiveness and capacity to improve were judged inadequate. Of the curriculum areas inspected, arts, media and publishing were judged good and English and modern foreign languages satisfactory. Science and mathematics and humanities/social sciences were both judged inadequate. The monitoring visit focuses on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has the college made in developing a self-critical self-assessment process that raises expectations and levels of accountability?	Significant Progress
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At the last inspection, quality assurance processes and self-assessment did not bring about a clear understanding of the college's strengths and areas for improvement. Given the very low starting point, the college has made considerable progress in developing an approach to self-assessment that is more effective. A culture of high expectation, ambition and determination to improve is now evident across the college. Senior managers have helped refocus priorities and a majority of college staff have recognised the urgent need to improve students' success rates.

Revised curriculum self-assessment reports are now better focused and use a wider variety of evidence, rather than looking mainly at pass rates. The use of data in the college's quality assurance systems is much improved. Data are reliable and middle managers are becoming adept at interrogating and using them to inform self-assessment. The result of this is that staff at all levels feel more accountable and are increasingly empowered to improve the performance of their subjects and curriculum areas. Although much has been achieved in a short space of time, the college is aware that more work is needed to ensure that all aspects of self-assessment are highly evaluative and of a consistent quality.

Outcomes for learners

To what extent has the college identified the reasons for low success rates on some courses, and improved target-setting and monitoring of learners' progress? **Reasonable Progress**

The college has introduced a number of improvements since the inspection to address the issue of low success rates. It has piloted a new 'alert' system, involving more formal interventions by heads of department when students are not meeting standards set for attendance or work completion. This, together with the impact of a new team of progression mentors, has led to improved attendance, although the rate of improvement varies between courses. Retention of learners on courses has improved considerably. On advanced-level courses, retention is currently 7 percentage points above where it stood at the same time last year, and is line with the national average for sixth form colleges. For AS level courses, an area of particular concern at the last inspection, retention has improved by 10 percentage points and is now around the national average. On intermediate level courses, retention is still slightly below average but it has improved by 5 percentage points on GCSE courses and by considerably more than that on vocational courses. The college now has much better systems in place to monitor retention and learners' progress against their targets. It is too early to judge the impact of this on success rates. However, early indicators in terms of results from examinations taken in January 2012 show an increase of 3.3 percentage points on the pass rate for A2 courses and an increase of 2.3 percentage points on AS courses.

Quality of Provision

To what extent has the quality of provision improved in humanities and social sciences since the inspection? **Reasonable Progress**

The quality of teaching and learning has improved in subjects that were judged to be underperforming at the last inspection. Curriculum leaders of different subjects meet together much more regularly and there is increased sharing of good practice amongst staff. Students report that lessons are better structured and that learning objectives are shared with them much more clearly. Observations during the monitoring visit indicate that lesson planning has improved and teachers are more skilled at helping students to develop learning skills appropriate to the level of their course. However, teachers do not challenge learners sufficiently in some lessons and there is too much inconsistency in how well they use techniques to check understanding, such as question and answer. Target-setting, monitoring of learners' progress and support for learners, have all improved since the last inspection. The use of assessment to help learners understand what they need to do to improve further is now more effective. As a result of improvements to the quality of provision, attendance at lessons has increased and more students are retained on their courses.

To what extent has the quality of provision in science and mathematics improved since the inspection?

Reasonable Progress

Inspectors judged science and mathematics as inadequate at the last inspection. Since then, improvements have been made to the quality of provision. Far greater priority is given to ensuring that teachers have a greater focus on students' learning. The quality of lessons in much of the area has improved, although the college is aware that they need to ensure greater consistency across all subjects.

Teachers now have higher expectations of students and set challenging targets and monitor progress against these closely. Students informed inspectors that they are receiving much better information about the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. Improved progress monitoring in all subjects is resulting in speedier identification of those students needing extra help. Subject support sessions that were well-established in a few subjects are now offered systematically across the area and are proving effective in helping students who are under-performing to make better progress. Although many of these developments are relatively recent, there are some signs of impact in a reduction in the proportion of students who leave their course early and in the improving attendance in classes.

What progress has been made to ensure students at risk of not meeting their target grades are provided with sufficient academic support?

Reasonable Progress

Students are much clearer about their target grades, and the level they are currently working at, than they were at the time of the last inspection. Information is more readily available to staff and managers to identify students at risk of under-achieving. Timetabled support sessions are being used more effectively to target students most in need of additional help. All departments now have a clear programme of additional support opportunities that are available to learners. Attendance at these sessions has increased. Students speak highly of the range of support sessions they can attend and how this is helping to improve their work. The college is trialling methods to involve students more fully in the target-setting process but it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative. Newly appointed progression mentors are providing additional help to ensure that students stay on course and achieve. The college is currently reviewing the effectiveness of all its pastoral and academic support systems with a view to greater integration and further targeted work next year.

Leadership and management

To what extent has the college improved the rigour of lesson observations since the inspection? Reasonable Progress

Since the last inspection, managers and staff have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Strategies to improve teaching and learning are having an impact with an increasing proportion of good teaching and learning. The observation process has been strengthened and is now more rigorous. Learning coaches provide good support for teachers whose lessons are judged to be satisfactory or inadequate. Most improve their grades when re-observed. Focused training, staff development and improved arrangements for sharing best practice are increasingly effective in improving classroom practice. For example, teachers are more skilled at using assessment, including peer assessment, to encourage students to develop sound independent learning skills that will serve them well as they move on to the next stage of their education. Teachers also make good use of information learning technology to extend students' studies outside of lessons. However, the college is aware that while much has been achieved, still more needs to be done to ensure that high quality teaching and learning takes place in all areas of the college.

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