

City College Coventry

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Philippa Francis
Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: General further education college

Address: 50 Swanswell Street
Coventry
CV1 5DG

Telephone number: 02476 223390

RE-INSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

City College Coventry is medium-sized and based on a single site close to the city centre. College-based courses are offered in all subject areas except agriculture, horticulture and animal care. The largest subject areas include: preparation for life and work; arts, media and publishing; and science and mathematics. Workplace learning courses are offered in eight subjects, the largest being engineering. From September 2013, the college has ceased to offer GCE A-level provision.

The college was inspected in March 2013 when its overall effectiveness was judged as inadequate. The three aspects of outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the effectiveness of leadership and management were all judged inadequate as was the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the subject areas of science and mathematics, engineering and business. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has been made in increasing the rigour of self-assessment and the effectiveness of improvement planning?	Reasonable progress
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Senior managers are providing considerable support for middle managers to undertake subject self-assessment including ensuring their full understanding of the process, help with making evaluative judgements and in analysing data. A validation of the subject self-assessment will take place shortly and will include challenge from senior managers. Managers' skills in self-assessment are developing well from a low base. Some subject self-assessment reports do not evaluate learners' starting points and their progress sufficiently.

To ensure accurate self-assessment, senior managers have increased the rigour of the lesson observation scheme significantly including by giving teachers short notice of observations. Following observation, teachers receive detailed plans containing improvement actions which are followed up consistently and with much increased urgency since inspection. The impact of these improvements is evident in the number of teachers who have been supported successfully to improve their practice. Observers have a much clearer focus on evaluating the impact of teaching and assessment on learning because of useful training and support.

Improvement plans include clear success criteria and milestones for measuring impact at all levels. Senior managers and governors review these regularly which ensures that all staff are sharply focused on continuous improvement. Improvement plans contain challenging targets at all levels.

Outcomes for learners

How much progress has been made in increasing learners' success rates and achievements, including apprentices' timely completion of frameworks? What progress has been made in narrowing achievement gaps between groups of learners?

Reasonable progress

In 2012/13, college data indicate that learners' outcomes on substantial courses improved other than retention at intermediate level and achievement at advanced level. These data indicate that adult learners' outcomes are above those of similar colleges. In reviewing performance overall, governors and managers agreed that, from September 2013, A-level courses will no longer be offered, as performance is poor and a number of schools in the surrounding area offer these courses. Data indicate that the focus of staff on improving attendance and on supporting learners at risk of withdrawal had a positive impact on improving learners' outcomes in the summer term. Managers' analysis indicates learners' outcomes improved in the large majority of subjects in 2012/13.

For apprentices, college data indicate that their overall outcomes improved in 2012/13 to around average, but achievement within the agreed timescale remains low. Managers have put in place actions to monitor apprentices' progress rigorously in 2013/14. Intermediate and advanced apprentices' achievement rates are similar, but the rate is low for intermediate-level construction apprentices.

Gaps in achievement between most groups of learners are reducing. Managers are analysing the reasons for differences in groups' achievement within their subject areas using more detailed information than available previously.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

How much progress has been made in supporting teachers to improve their practice including through promoting high expectations, staff development activities and the use of teaching strategies to develop learners' English and mathematical skills?

Reasonable progress

Much stronger leadership of teaching and learning has ensured that teachers are clear about their role and are being held accountable for making sure learners succeed. Teachers benefit from detailed feedback from observations which are more rigorous and accurate than previously. Managers have put in place a considerable amount of staff development over a short timescale since inspection. Many teachers have received good individual support. Teachers have a much clearer view of the scope of their responsibility. For example, their role in promoting equality and diversity is now explicit and has been supported by training for all staff. Teachers also understand the importance of checking on learning frequently during lessons but

this does not happen consistently across all teachers' practice. Teachers do not always set precise learning objectives.

Teachers' skills and qualification status in English and mathematics have been assessed and most of those who need to increase their skills are being supported to do so. Specialist teachers of literacy and numeracy are allocated to subject areas to provide support for vocational teachers. Some guidance for teachers needs strengthening such as that related to correction of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Teachers are starting to develop learners' English and mathematics skills in lessons more consistently but, for some, this is at an early stage.

Managers have collected information about the qualification status of teachers since inspection which shows that most are qualified and a high percentage of others are working towards qualifications.

What progress has been made in improving the quality of training and assessment in workplace learning and, in particular, improving the provision for engineering apprentices graded as inadequate?

Reasonable progress

A fundamental review of the effectiveness of training and assessment for apprentices has resulted in a number of significant changes including in monitoring apprentices' progress. These changes include ensuring employers are aware of their responsibilities and that apprentices' start and end dates more closely match their abilities and targets. Apprentices' progress is monitored frequently by assessors and managers to ensure apprentices are on track to achieve. Employers are involved closely in off-the-job training and assessment. A new assessor co-ordinator in engineering oversees apprentices' progress, meets with assessors monthly, quality assures the assessors' work and links with managers closely to ensure action can be taken more swiftly than previously. It is too early to judge the full impact of these changes.

Managers acknowledge that systems for recording individual apprentice's progress across subject areas are not yet used consistently. A new post of head of business development is to be appointed to in the autumn term: this post-holder will lead on quality improvement and growth in apprenticeship provision.

For the subject areas of science and mathematics, and business graded as inadequate, how much progress has been made in improving the quality of provision?

Reasonable progress

Subject managers have received a considerable amount of helpful support to improve subject provision and progress with implementing action points is monitored weekly. The curriculum in each subject has been reviewed, for example, A-level provision has been withdrawn in science and mathematics. Learners' suitability for courses is considered carefully. Managers are promoting sharing of good practice across teaching teams and encouraging use of a wider range of teaching strategies.

Learners' outcomes in business have improved and there are improvements in success rates on the vocational science course.

The issue of low levels of attendance has been tackled in these subject areas robustly and with some impact, particularly in business. The timetable for the large cohort of GCSE mathematics learners has been amended to provide two shorter sessions each week which has increased learners' attendance and motivation. In business, following inspection, staff took prompt action to identify learners at risk of underperformance and provided strong support for them as is shown by their much increased success rates.

Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in strengthening governance?

Reasonable progress

Governance has been strengthened with the appointment of a new and highly experienced chair and vice chair of the corporation in July 2013. Governors appointed an interim principal in July, with specific objectives to improve quality and performance, while reviewing the future strategy for the college in the context of provision for learners in Coventry and the surrounding area. A new strategic plan has been agreed, with a simplified vision focused on local skills and needs, including growth in apprenticeships. Governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and are increasingly challenging senior managers as evident in the minutes of recent governors' meetings. The decline in learners' outcomes has been halted in most areas. A 'data dashboard' ensures that governors receive updates on key performance indicators in a consistent format to enable them to review progress with post-inspection actions monthly. Governors have undergone training to develop their knowledge of equality and diversity matters and further training is planned. They receive and consider data on performance by different groups of learners.

The number of senior post-holders has reduced. Interim managers appointed to drive improvement in teaching and learning, quality and performance and the curriculum are having a positive impact on improving quality and performance. An assistant principal, curriculum and management information manager will join the management team shortly, both permanent posts. Governors will review the appointment of a permanent principal early in the New Year and work closely with the interim principal to ensure sustained capacity and skill within the senior leadership team.

How much progress has been made in improving performance management, including through the use of lesson observations?**Reasonable progress**

Since inspection, new arrangements for managing the performance of staff have been fully implemented. Middle managers have received helpful training in undertaking appraisals. Compared to the small proportion of staff who had received an appraisal at the time of the inspection, at the time of the visit almost all staff have had a review of their performance and been set clear objectives linked to strategic aims and improving learners' performance. These include mostly challenging quantitative targets related to learners' retention and attendance. Mid-year reviews have been instigated which will take place shortly to assess progress against these objectives. Managers use the results of lesson observations to inform appraisals appropriately. A revised procedure for tackling capability issues is in place and managers have used this constructively. A few aspects of the approach to re-observation of lessons require strengthening, for example, teachers are told in advance which lesson will be observed which reduces the rigour of the procedure.

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