

City of Bristol College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Re-inspection Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

City of Bristol College is a large general further education college, spread across eight main campuses which serve Bristol and the wider conurbation. It provides a wide range of academic and vocational education and training to around 30,000 learners, studying on more than 1,000 courses.

The college was last inspected in February 2013 at which time it was judged to be inadequate. Outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment were inadequate. Leadership and management were judged to require improvement. Eleven subject areas were graded at inspection; two were judged to be good, seven required improvement and two were inadequate. This report focuses on a selection of the key cross-college themes explored during the last inspection.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

To what extent have review and action-planning processes led to managers having a clearer idea of how to improve the quality of provision? **Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection the post-inspection action plan has been the central control mechanism through which managers establish and implement priorities for improvement and monitor progress. The plan identifies an extensive range of clear strategies and actions for improvement. Senior managers and governors regularly review progress against the improvement plan. A new senior and middle management team has been put in place since the last inspection. Strategies to develop and strengthen the culture and skills within the management team are beginning to have a positive impact. Managers have a clear focus on bringing about change and improving the quality of provision across the college. With the introduction of a new management information system (MIS) team and new information systems, managers have access to increasingly reliable and timely data. In addition, following the recent appointment and training of a new team of lesson observers, managers are also starting to develop increasingly effective systems for assessing the impact of a portfolio of improvement initiatives on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This portfolio of improvement initiatives is beginning to have a positive impact on improving the quality of the learners' experience.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made to raise success rates on college courses and completion rates on apprenticeship frameworks?

Insufficient progress

Due to the timing of the reinspection monitoring visit, inspectors derived all judgements on outcomes for learners for the academic year 2012/13 from provisional, unvalidated data provided by the college at the time of the visit.

On apprenticeship programmes there have been modest improvements in timely and overall success rates, but they remain significantly below the national average. On college courses, for learners aged 16 to 18, there has been little overall increase in success rates, which remain significantly below the national average. Success rates for adults show early signs of improvement, but they also remain below the national average.

The college has recently implemented a new on-line system for recording and monitoring learners' progress. Managers are confident that this will support staff, improve access to more timely data, and provide a more accurate and reliable way of setting targets, tracking progress and reporting on assessment and outcomes for learners. These new systems have created a firmer foundation on which the college can move forwards.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

What progress has been made to improve the promotion and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment and provide better for the needs of individual learners?

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection there has been a strong and sustained focus from leaders on improving the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment and it is beginning to have a positive impact. All teaching staff undertook extensive training in July, focusing on improving teaching, learning and assessment. The programme covered a broad range of topics identified as areas for improvement at the previous inspection. Staff now feel more confident in their ability to improve their performance. Managers are beginning to empower and enthuse staff, they are being clearer about expectations, and providing better guidance.

A standard scheme of work and lesson plan structure has been introduced, but not all staff are currently using these. The quality of lesson planning still remains too variable, with some excellent identification of learning objectives but some extremely poor. Although some sessions are fun and exciting, with challenging and stimulating tasks, others still remain dull and uninspiring with insufficient engagement or involvement of all the learners. All staff now have access to a wider and improving range of teaching, learning and assessment guidance and resources.

Senior managers have recently appointed a team of teaching, learning and assessment coaches. The team has been selected from the best teaching staff at the college, appointed through a competitive process, and have received training. The coaches have clear roles and responsibilities to provide teaching staff with support and guidance and to improve pedagogical practices. Any member of staff whose teaching is not good enough receives valuable ongoing individual support from a coach. Teaching staff are also able to call on the assistance of a qualified team of developers and trainers to help them create and use information and communication technology better in their sessions.

Senior managers have recently reviewed and updated the internal lesson observation process. They have identified, appointed and trained a new team of observers, following the realisation that previous procedures were insufficiently robust and lacked accuracy. Curriculum managers and senior staff now also carry out walk-through lesson observations so that they can clearly identify aspects of teaching that require improvement. At the time of the monitoring visit the college was beginning a process to assess the impact of July's training, as well as the introduction of the other improvement initiatives aimed at raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, through the use of its own observers working with the support of external consultants.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made to increase attendance rates at the college? **Reasonable progress**

In the sessions observed during the monitoring visit, attendance rates were satisfactory. Since the beginning of the current academic year, managers have been working hard to implement a new attendance monitoring package. There are still some teething problems with the system and managers do not yet have full access to timely attendance information. Staff are, however, beginning to use the system with increasing effect to identify and follow up absent learners. Senior managers are extending a pilot project of 'progress coaches' in construction and engineering. These coaches follow up absent learners and work with them, where appropriate, to provide support and to improve their attendance. The college has also improved the quality of support for learners who are considering withdrawing from programmes. Learners now receive guidance to rectify any problems that might be preventing them from continuing with their study, or alternatively advice on other courses that might be more suitable to their abilities and interests.

What progress has been made to improve the promotion and quality of English, mathematics and functional skills in sessions? **Reasonable progress**

College data for 2012/13 indicate improving success rates for functional skills since the last inspection. Managers have introduced a more consistent approach to the delivery of functional skills by creating dedicated time for these subjects within the

curriculum. The college has improved its processes to ensure that learners are placed on the correct level for functional skills. All learners who have GCSE grade D in English or mathematics on enrolment now receive appropriate support to enable them to re-sit their examinations within a year. Those with lower grades undertake functional skills qualifications. During the recent cross-college staff training, all staff received training to enable them to embed English and mathematics more effectively in their sessions. English and mathematics are now an integral part of the more robust curriculum planning and, although newly-introduced and not yet consistently applied, it is a college requirement for teaching staff to identify where this is evident in their schemes of work and lesson planning. The very recent appointment of a cross-college leader for English has yet to have impact and the person appointed as cross-college leader for mathematics is soon to take up post.

What progress has been made to improve the quality and impact of assessment and feedback to learners?

Reasonable progress

The college has purchased assessment tracking and monitoring software and staff are now able to check the progress of learners better. Staff utilise learners' initial assessment results more effectively and work has begun on producing clear group profiles to ensure all staff can readily identify learners who are more able or those who are in need of support. More robust marking of written work is now a key priority across the college. The regular use of in-class assessment is one of the college's 'non-negotiable' aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. These initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of assessment and feedback to learners.

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