

NCG

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130552

Name of lead inspector: Bev Barlow HMI

Last day of inspection: 30 January 2014

Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Rye Hill Campus
Scotswood Road
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tyne & Wear
NE4 7SA

Telephone number: 0191 2004013

Published date	February 2014
Inspection Number	430316

Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

In September 2013 the college started to offer full-time provision for 14 to 16 year olds to enable learners to complete a Key Stage 4 equivalent programme as an alternative to school or home education. This monitoring visit examined the progress made to date against the themes identified in this report and focused solely on the new 14 to 16 full-time provision.

At the time of the visit, 27 learners are enrolled from across five different local authority areas. Many learners are from challenging backgrounds with a wide range of additional support needs. The majority of learners have a history of poor attendance at school or none during their Key Stage 3 education period.

Themes

What progress has the college made in implementing clear admissions and exclusion policies for its 14 to 16 provision? Significant

The college has a clear and comprehensive admissions policy for its 14 to 16 full-time provision. College staff keep parents and potential learners well informed about the admissions process through letters, telephone calls, informative leaflets and web-pages. College leaders and managers have ensured that learners, regardless of their previous experience and attainment, are welcomed and nurtured as learners. Individual learner records show that parents and carers have signed appropriate consent and indemnity forms. The college take appropriate steps to inform local authorities and schools about the recruitment of learners to the 14 to 16 provision. The college recognises that it needs to improve how it works with schools and local authorities to collect data about the previous educational attainment of each learner.

The exclusion policy is clear, and forms part of a wide-ranging disciplinary and learner behaviour policy. The exclusion policy has been used to good effect to ensure that learners understand the college's zero tolerance to any bullying and anti-social behaviour.

What progress has the college made in providing sufficient, appropriately qualified staff to lead and teach the provision and to support the learners? Significant

All teachers have qualified teacher status and have relevant subject or vocational experience and expertise. Teachers use their knowledge and skills to make lessons relevant to the real world and to develop learners' career goals and aspirations. Staffing levels are appropriate and stable with all but one of the teachers appointed being in post since the start of the programme. A new course leader, appointed in January 2014, effectively manages the operational day-to-day delivery of the provision. A core team of three form tutors each has a mixed group of learners from

both the one- and two-year programmes. Learners benefit from a wide range of support staff to help them with their additional learning needs.

Teachers have benefited from a range of bespoke staff development sessions including managing challenging behaviour, dealing with specific medical issues, using information and learning technologies (ILT), positive learning strategies and coaching. Staff informally share concerns and good practice but not all benefit from attending regular team meetings or from coaching to support them in developing their confidence and strategies to manage this group of learners.

What progress has the college made in ensuring that the curriculum is sufficiently broad and covers all statutory subjects? **Reasonable**

Learners follow one of two curriculum pathways. Each pathway ensures that learners are able to study English, mathematics and science, as well as personal, health and social education (PHSE) and vocational subjects. The PHSE curriculum includes sessions on sex and relationship education, and focuses well on equality and diversity. Learners are able to talk with confidence about the impact of equality and diversity on their lives. For example, in an information and communications technology (ICT) and media lesson learners discussed how their work could fully represent the communities of learners in the college. The teaching of religious education requires improvement; relevant topics were covered in PHSE in the autumn term but plans for the rest of the year are not fully developed. Plans are in place to introduce a minimum of one hour of physical education each week from February. Learners will have access to an outward-bound summer school.

Learners explore further vocational and career pathways during review weeks and vocational taster days. Form tutors and support workers guide learners well so that they can identify what they need to achieve in order to continue their studies at the college, begin a vocational training programme, or start work. As learners begin to make decisions about their career aspirations, they will attend, as part of a college-wide progression promise, regular information, advice and guidance sessions where they will meet with course leaders and employers.

What progress has the college made in quality assuring and evaluating all aspects of the provision for continuous improvement? **Significant**

College leaders and managers use established quality assurance processes well to evaluate the quality of this new provision and to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The review at the end of the first term was detailed and accurate. Ongoing reviews, and feedback from parents, learners and teaching staff, have enabled managers to extend the range of subjects taught and to change how learners are supported by introducing the role of form tutor. Senior managers

continually review the provision and identify aspects to improve, with several improvements already made.

Managers and form tutors monitor attendance daily. Where attendance is erratic, the course leader and form tutors ensure that learners get additional support so that their learning continues. Teachers keep accurate records about the grades they award learners for their coursework and tests. Managers use these records at regular intervals to measure learners' progress. Careful analysis of marked work and test results allows managers and the course leader to adjust teaching and support programmes to keep learners on track for their GCSE examinations and coursework. However, because teachers have insufficient data about learners' Key Stage 2 national test results, managers are unable to set consistent, realistic target grades or monitor whether learners' progress is good enough.

Managers know about the progress that learners benefitting from pupil premium make, and have identified that they need to keep more detailed records about how well these learners are doing.

What progress has the college made in providing learners with sufficient student care, guidance and support, including the implementation of a behaviour policy appropriate for learners aged 14 to 16? Reasonable

A team of form tutors, mentors and support workers know individuals very well and are aware of their particular needs and issues outside of college that may affect their learning. Many learners have significant personal and social problems and staff are aware of these issues and effectively support learners to overcome difficulties and potential barriers to learning. Contact with parents is regular and immediate for non-attendance. All learners are offered a free breakfast, many have a free lunch and several have negotiated other financial support including transport subsidies. Attendance is monitored very closely at morning and afternoon registration and throughout the day at each individual lesson.

The college's behaviour policy was reviewed prior to September 2013 and the introduction of 14 to 16 provision. The policy is clear on the standards of behaviour expected from learners in relation to attendance, attitudes in lessons, and the wearing of identity badges. However, the policy does not clearly define the role of staff in its implementation to ensure total consistency, particularly when learners are working with staff from other areas of the college, for example, during vocational taster days. Learners understand the rewards and sanctions that underpin the behaviour policy and the recently introduced rewards system is having a positive impact on learners' attitudes and behaviour that are generally good.

Learners are supported very well in lessons by a wide range of additional support workers. Class sizes are small and support workers are very good at managing the

challenging behaviour exhibited by some learners and helping to develop personal and social skills. However, support workers are not always used well enough to promote learning in lessons and on occasions provide too much help by answering questions for learners. In a few lessons, because of the number of adults in the classroom, the rate and pace of learning is inhibited and learners are not able to make the progress they are capable of. Learners have settled into the college's learning environment well but teachers now need to ensure learners are consistently challenged to complete their work at a faster pace to ensure they make good progress and achieve well.

Has the college made sufficient arrangements to ensure that all learners are safeguarded and that the college meets its statutory duty for safeguarding? **Yes**

The college complies with its statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and child protection legislation. All staff who have contact with learners have undergone appropriate employment checks, including DBS clearance, and have completed safeguarding training. In vocational lessons, classrooms, laboratories, and in moving about the site, staff continuously reinforce the importance of health and safety and learners adhere to requirements. Appropriate risk assessments are in place for the use of equipment and off-site activities. Most lessons are taught in a secure, dedicated teaching area. Learners are supervised closely as they move across the large campus to specialist science laboratories and vocational areas. Several learners reported that they feel over-supervised and do not have enough freedom outside of lessons.

Learners have their own dedicated common room for relaxation at break and lunchtimes and it is also used for morning and afternoon registration. The area is safe with restricted access and is supervised by staff who are well known to learners from 8am at the breakfast club and throughout the day. The common room also provides a quiet workspace where learners receive individual support and tuition if they are unable to attend a lesson or off-site activity.

The tutorial programme includes a range of topics to develop learners' awareness of personal safety including the safe use of the internet and electronic bullying. The college has a zero tolerance policy on bullying and harassment and it is strictly enforced. Learners feel very safe and are confident that they can go to several different staff if they have any problems or wish to report an incident. They are fully aware of the swift actions that have been taken by college staff to deal with the few incidents that have occurred since September.

Strengths and areas of weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Learners benefit from rigorous initial assessment. Staff use the outcomes of these assessments well to ensure that learners follow an appropriate one- or two-year course.

Learner numbers are low in most lessons and this enables teachers to plan a good range of activities to engage and motivate learners. For example, the use of practical work in science and childcare lessons, and peer-assessment in ICT. However, the activities are not always sufficiently challenging for more able learners; they complete the tasks quickly and become bored. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning is too slow or the purpose of the activity is not sufficiently clear and consequently learners do not always participate fully or make the progress they are capable of.

Teachers have worked very hard to develop learners' confidence and promote positive attitudes to learning. In English, learners contributed well to a group discussion on creative writing techniques and skills. Learners benefit from considerable amounts of one-to-one support in their lessons. In a few lessons, teachers do not always check learning well enough or manage learners' responses through effective questioning; consequently, a few learners dominate the class and shout out responses.

Clear standards and expectations of appropriate behaviour are understood well. In most instances, inappropriate behaviour is dealt with quickly and effectively. When learners are removed from the classroom to discuss their behaviour or their progress, the remaining learners quickly return to their work in a focused and productive way. However, during vocational taster lessons, inconsistencies exist in enforcing the agreed classroom code, for example, learners were allowed to drink fizzy drinks during the lesson where this is not normally permitted. Generally learners are responsive to the firm and supportive approach from college staff and they are developing their personal and social skills well.

In too many written assessments, teachers have not explained what learners need to do to improve the quality of their work. Due to the erratic attendance of many learners, too many have gaps in their knowledge. The approach to dealing with missed and incomplete work, to enable learners to have the best chance of achieving their GCSEs, is not yet consistent.

The use of ILT to support learning is good, including the use of visual stimulus and real world examples to enliven topics. Learners are encouraged to develop independent research skills, for example, in a business lesson they researched an up-to-date customer service policy to inform their responses to an examination case study.

In a few lessons, learners use dictionaries to check spelling and they have recently started to develop a vocabulary list of key words and their meanings. The assessment of learners' written work does not always include the correction of mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar. The presentation of learners' work is not consistently good and too often poor and well below the level that individual learners can achieve. In science, there are regular checks on learning with frequent tests; learners' mathematics skills are being developed well.

Teachers and support staff use plentiful praise and encouragement that learners respond to well and appreciate. However, at times staff praise mediocrity and do not ensure that learners are achieving their academic potential.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013