

LeSoCo

Follow up re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

LeSoCo was formed in August 2012, following the merger of Lewisham College and Southwark College. The college provides a broad, vocational curriculum with an increasing focus on preparing learners for employment. At the time of the monitoring visit, around 17,000 learners were enrolled.

The college was last inspected in November 2013, when it was judged inadequate overall. This is the third re-inspection monitoring visit to LeSoCo following publication of the inspection report on 9 January 2014.

The purpose of this visit was to establish what progress the college has made to improve provision for learners, following the previous inspection. The themes outlined below summarise four of the main areas for improvement identified by the inspection of November 2013.

Themes

What progress is the college making to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and to increase learners' attendance rates and punctuality?

Attendance, remains below the college's own target and is slightly lower than the same time last year. Teachers and tutors continue to fail to manage poor punctuality in a consistently appropriate and suitably challenging manner. A culture of accepting that learners have challenging lives, and will consequently not always attend regularly, pervades among too many teachers, tutors and managers.

As part of the post-inspection action plan, managers now observe all teachers and grade lessons. Managers have a clear picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and are using staff meetings to effectively share and showcase good practice. Underperforming teachers receive improved coaching and targeted support to improve their practice. The majority of observations of learning have been robust and stringently moderated. However, a few observers fail to comment sufficiently on the progress learners made in lessons, and they do not set teachers good objectives for improvement. Inspectors confirmed the management's own findings that more work is required to ensure all learners received high quality teaching and learning that are at least good.

The last inspection reported that too few apprentices achieve their qualifications and complete their programmes within the expected time. Record keeping and tracking have been poor. Assessment visits were too infrequent. Management has been slow to put in place an effective recovery plan. However, managers have recently completed an extensive review to establish current learners' progress. The significant investment in an electronic recording system now provides managers with accurate and timely information on individual learner progress and assessor performance.

Early indications show a small increase in the numbers of apprentices gaining their qualification, with the majority of those completing within the time intended. However, management has not yet increased the frequency of assessment visits to learners.

Inspectors judged success rates for learners studying at advanced level to be too low. While monitoring of learners' progress has improved, too many current learners are at risk of not completing their studies successfully. Management and teachers have not made good use of assessment of learners' abilities and skills before starting a course to devise well-focused individual learning plans.

Insufficient improvement for learners

What progress is the college making to improve the quality of provision in English and mathematics?

The college continues to make reasonable progress in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in English and mathematics. It is adopting an ambitious strategy to provide learners with a wide range of appropriate staff to support and develop learners' English and mathematics skills. Staff use good quality resources, linked to everyday life, to develop learners' skills. They help learners to understand why high standards of English and mathematics are crucial to their current and future success in the workplace and community.

Learners use the online training materials well to extend their skills and knowledge. They are proud of their learning achievements and speak with confidence when describing the benefits that learning about mathematics is making to their lives. For example, learners were able to use fractions effectively to measure camera aperture, timing and light exposure to improve the quality of their photographs.

Teaching observed at the most recent monitoring visit was lively and motivated learners well. However, not all teachers sufficiently check learners' individual progress and learning activities for the more able learners who speak English as an additional language are too easy. Managers have not yet accurately identified the training needs of all subject teachers to ensure they are better able to support the promotion of English and mathematics in every lesson.

Reasonable improvement for learners

What progress is the college making to strengthen tutorial arrangements?

The previous inspection and monitoring visits highlighted the need to strengthen existing tutorial arrangements and to improve the setting and monitoring of challenging personal and subject targets for learners. Learners now receive regular tutorial sessions and, while late in the academic year, the majority of 16- to 19-year-old learners now have purposeful targets. However, progress to strengthen tutorial

arrangements robustly has been too slow and arrangements for many learners have been insufficient for a large part of the academic year.

The monitoring of learners' progress is more rigorous across much of the curriculum, but does not always result in improving learners' attainment. For example, teachers are not providing targeted support in lessons for learners who lack good study skills. In engineering and construction, personal tutors are not always able to access learner progress reviews with subject teachers; this prevents accurate and meaningful target setting.

Insufficient improvement for learners.

What progress is the college making to strengthen the arrangements for learning support across the college?

The previous inspection reported that the provision of learning support assistants in the classroom was variable. Although examples of good practice were seen, learning support staff were not always able to respond effectively to the very diverse needs of learners, particularly where teachers had not briefed them well.

Learners, who require adjustments to their learning materials to enable them to make good progress, do not always receive timely individual support. Subject teachers do not use the information provided for them by the learning support staff at individual learner reviews to plan learners' subsequent learning and assessment activities.

Leaders expect teaching staff to identify how in-class support staff will work with individual learners to improve their progress. They have revised the arrangements for observing teachers' practice to check the effectiveness of in-class support. However, managers do not enforce the revised arrangements well. Teachers still do not systematically include learning support assistants in their planning and do not provide them with sufficiently focused direction.

Insufficient improvement for learners.

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