

The Maltings College

First re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to The Maltings College following publication of the inspection report on 25 February 2015 which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

The college has sought to join a multi-academy trust and plans for this are now at an advanced stage.

Themes

Improvement in outcomes for students

Since the inspection leaders have placed a stronger focus on attendance and punctuality with rapid follow up of absence. Telephone calls home are made early. As a result, attendance is improving. Retention, which was a factor limiting achievement in 2014, has improved compared with last year. Additional support has been put in place for underachievers/poor attenders where this is associated with specific difficulties. For example, the college have made bursary funds available where travel costs are a factor.

Priorities for improvement

- Implement a system for monitoring the progress of students in provision delivered by sub-contractors.

Improvement in English and mathematics provision

Leaders have moved quickly to rectify the weaknesses identified at inspection. For example, leaders have appointed two suitably qualified teachers. They have also changed timetables to ensure that groups include students working at similar levels rather than a wide range of abilities. Groups are small, allowing increased individual support from the teacher. Typically students from similar vocational areas are placed in the same group which helps teachers use subject specific examples, and ensures that students can see the relevance of the work to their chosen careers. The college has changed classroom arrangements so that all English and mathematics classes take place in a well-defined area close to senior leaders' offices. This is helping to make it easier for senior staff to monitor the provision. The culture among vocational staff is changing as they recognise the significance of the English and mathematics components of students' full study programmes. Attendance monitoring is thorough and attendance at English and mathematics lessons has improved since the inspection. Vocational teachers now more actively encourage attendance at English and mathematics classes. Individual vocational teachers are checking attendance and

follow up quickly, on occasion escorting students found elsewhere in the college to class.

Managers are investigating ways to develop vocational teachers' own English and mathematics skills to enhance their confidence in integrating these into their own lessons. Vocational teachers are encouraged to seek advice from English and mathematics specialists and are beginning to do so more readily. English and mathematics are on the agenda of all staff meetings, where their importance is stressed and reinforced.

Priorities for improvement

- Monitor the quality of English and mathematics teaching through observations and learning walks, work scrutiny, and student feedback to ensure student needs are met, good progress is made and students achieve relevant qualifications.
- Develop the integration of English and mathematics in vocational lessons through training, sharing good practice and individual advice from specialists. Review and evaluate this through analysis of schemes of work and students' work, lesson observations and learning walks, and student feedback.

Improvement in teaching, learning, and assessment

Since the inspection senior leaders have started using formal lesson observations to increase their focus on areas of weaker practice. Specific professional development is planned for individuals where particular aspects of teaching are identified as needing improvement. This includes mentoring, either by a manager or peer mentoring. Examples were cited where this had proved effective in the past, using teachers from different vocational areas. Whole-college professional development activities are organised on a half-termly basis. Specific topics covered historically have included equality and diversity, English and mathematics, question and answer, and student engagement. New staff have not received all of this training and managers intend to repeat relevant sessions. Further training in classroom management skills is also planned for a future event, in response to requests from teachers. Leaders are developing more ways to share good practice including a shared area on the intranet. In addition to formal observations, learning walks are increasingly being used to monitor the quality of teaching and identify areas of good practice and areas of improvement, which will inform future training plans. As yet, senior leaders have not implemented a performance management system for teachers, although a procedure is in place for dealing with capability.

Priorities for improvement

- Where observations indicate that teaching and learning are not yet good ensure that specific individual action plans are put in place to support rapid improvement, and monitor these carefully.
- Make arrangements for recently appointed teachers to have the benefit of all available training sessions.

- Develop more wide-ranging strategies to share the good practice that exists in teaching and learning to help raise the quality of lessons across the college.
- Establish clear links between issues identified from assessment data, student feedback, and observations and learning walks and the new formal teacher performance management system.

Improvement in governance, leadership and the quality assurance arrangements

College leaders have made a rapid and positive response to the inspection report. The post-inspection action plan is fit for purpose. It addresses areas for improvement, specifies actions and includes review points. Governors recognise the scale of their responsibilities following the inspection and have worked to reverse key weaknesses, including those in leadership and management and English and mathematics, through the appointment of new staff. They have appointed a senior leader with post-16 experience with responsibility for operational and quality management who takes up the post in April 2015. Subsequent monitoring visits will review the impact of this post on securing more rigorous quality assurance. Leaders and managers have recognised the need to develop the management skills of course leaders, particularly as the senior leadership team is small. Specific management actions taken since the inspection that are beginning to have an impact include the more rigorous approach to attendance monitoring. The newly-established student council provides a forum for students to share their views with college staff. Managers are looking at ways to ensure that feedback on actions taken in response to issues raised is communicated effectively.

Priorities for improvement

- Finalise arrangements for the transition from the existing part-time vice-principal to the new full-time operations and quality manager so the handover is smooth and no time lost in pursuing the action plan.
- As a matter of urgency implement a system to monitor the performance of sub-contractors.
- Ensure that governors receive regular timely information on key performance indicators, such as attendance, retention, achievement, and on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including sub-contracted provision.
- Implement a performance management system for teachers as soon as possible to ensure teachers are clear about their responsibilities, have personal measurable targets and have appropriate arrangements for any staff development needs identified. Use the system to review teachers' performance, including outcomes for their students.
- Ensure that quality assurance arrangements cover the full range of teaching and learning across the college, including that delivered by sub-contractors.

Improvement in the tutorial programme and careers education and guidance

Managers are working to refine entry criteria for September 2015 to ensure that students are enrolled on suitable courses where they have the aptitude and ability to succeed. The on-line prospectus does not make specific entry requirements clear for all courses, for example in terms of prior attainment at GCSE. Initial advice and guidance are given through open evenings and interviews. Teachers are giving advice to school students on 14 to 16 courses at the college who wish to progress to full-time post-16 provision. Managers have arranged for careers advisers from the local careers service to spend more time in college so that they are able to offer impartial advice both to individuals and to groups about future options. Teachers and managers identify students who are most in need of careers advice and refer them for individual sessions.

Vocational tutors deliver the tutorial programme that covers a range of topics to support personal development and employability skills. As yet, managers have not formally evaluated the programme. Managers are considering how best to adapt existing individual learning plans (ILPs) to ensure they are fit for purpose and support students' progress effectively. Existing ILPs include some generic targets and there is little evidence that these are reviewed regularly.

Priorities for improvement

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the tutorial programmes and provide training for vocational teachers where necessary, or make use of specific internal or external expertise to ensure that all aspects are covered effectively for all students.
- Establish clear and appropriate entry criteria to ensure students have a good chance of success on their courses, and prospective students understand what they need to achieve at school to gain a place.
- Ensure that tutors make the link between attendance and punctuality and the importance of employability skills are clear to students.
- Ensure that careers guidance for those seeking employment after their course is appropriate within the context of local vacancies, so that students have a realistic prospect of finding suitable positions.
- Refine individual learning plans so that students have specific short-term measurable targets that help students make good progress. Ensure that students receive frequent and rigorous reviews of their ILPs.

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