

Tower Hamlets College

Monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is a monitoring visit to evaluate the progress of the new full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds in the college in the first year of the provision.

This college has had full-time provision in place for 14- to 16-year-olds since September 2014. It has 25 students in this age group. All students have recently arrived into the local authority of London Borough of Tower Hamlets from abroad and all speak English as a second language. The students join the college at various points during the academic year based on their arrival date.

Themes

What progress has the college made in implementing clear admissions and exclusion policies for its 14 to 16 provision?	Significant progress
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The admissions policy is comprehensive and clear. It has been developed in close liaison with the local authority in order to meet the needs of newly arrived students into the borough who have English as their second language. The policy has been implemented appropriately and is proving successful in supporting students' various entry points. New students receive a thorough induction which includes assigning a 'buddy' to each to support their transition into college. Students speak highly positively about how they have been able to settle quickly into college life and make new friends. Their good behaviour and attitudes to work, as well as their high attendance, are further indications of the success of the admissions and induction arrangements. Staff promote students' team work as part of daily life and students work very well together, as shown by their recent performance of *Romeo and Juliet*.

An appropriate exclusion policy is in place which is based on the well-established college approach as well as guidance from the local authority. No exclusions had taken place at the time of the visit.

What progress has the college made in providing sufficient, appropriately qualified staff to lead and teach the provision and to support the learners?	Reasonable progress
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A well-resourced staff team is in place led by the Head of 14-16 provision, who is also the designated safeguarding officer for the provision. The provision is managed within the Foundation Learning department which is overseen by a senior manager. Both of these staff have significant experience of provision for this age group, as well as of provision for students for whom English is a second language. The staff team comprises teachers, some of whom are also personal tutors, and learning mentors who are assigned to vulnerable students. A number of the teachers have secondary school experience as well as experience of further education. Core subjects are taught by specialist teachers, a number of whom are highly skilled in helping

students with specific language needs to learn quickly and effectively. A few changes have been made to the teaching team to ensure that teaching is fully effective, for example in science teaching where a new teacher is in post. Teachers and learning mentors are receiving additional training and support to help them deal with the specific challenges that the context of the provision provides, for example in dealing with challenging behaviour and in providing for a wide ability range within groups of students.

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

Reasonable progress

The curriculum includes an appropriate mix of core subjects of mathematics, science and English alongside learning in other subjects largely chosen to help students develop their English skills quickly and effectively. For example, all students study drama which helps develop their communication skills as well as extending their knowledge of the arts and culture. Plans to develop the curriculum further in 2015/16 include introducing vocational options and further developing the approach to individualised English teaching and support to help accelerate students' development of English skills. It is intended to use the pupil premium to support these developments. The choice of a level 1 qualification aim in science is undemanding for some students who are capable of working at a higher level.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education is comprehensive and students also have time allocated to gain awareness and understanding of the community by making visits such as to local museums and historical sites including the Tower of London. Students have a weekly assembly which includes collective worship across a range of faiths and they attend daily registration periods which always include a period of time based on quiet reflection. Sex and relationship education is provided based on a sound policy by specialist staff.

The grouping of students for lessons based on their level of language skills on entry, introduced after the autumn term, is helping to ensure that students can make the best possible progress. The flexibility to move students between groups where appropriate and the increasing use of small group work, including one-to-one coaching, is proving positive in helping students to make progress. For example, a small group of students are working towards higher tier GCSE mathematics and did well in their mock examinations.

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

Reasonable progress

A detailed review, undertaken by an external secondary school specialist, was undertaken in the autumn term and good use was made of the areas for development identified to implement actions for improvement, most of which have been achieved. All teachers are observed teaching, although not always when

teaching students aged 14 to 16. Learning mentors are observed in their work with individual students. Teachers and mentors receive action plans after observations which are followed up on rigorously. Senior managers carry out learning walks and work scrutiny regularly in order to keep a regular check on the quality of provision. In a few cases, teachers are receiving some additional support to improve their practice.

A mid-year review of the provision was undertaken in the spring term and further actions for improvement identified. Plans are in hand to undertake a full self-assessment of the provision, in line with the approach in other college departments, at the end of this academic year. Parents' and carers' feedback is gathered through parents' evening where attendance is high. Students take part in focus groups and the findings from these groups inform improvement plans.

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? **Significant progress**

Staff provide a very high level of care for students consistently. As a result, attendance is high, all students have remained on the course and all speak very highly of the impact of the provision on their lives and their potential for progression. Implementation of the behaviour policy is successful and the policy's focus on developing good attitudes to learning as part of its requirements helps staff promote the development of students' study skills and independence. A reward system provides motivation and is used constructively to promote good behaviour and attendance. Most students are eligible for free school meals and appropriate arrangements are in place in the college's refectory so that students can take up this benefit.

Students receive independent career guidance and have a good knowledge of the options open to them when they have completed Year 11. All Year 11 students had made informed decisions about their next steps, which ranged from A-level study to vocational courses, mainly remaining within the college, but several were taking advantage of other local further education options.

What progress has the college made in providing good quality teaching, learning and assessment? **Reasonable progress**

The teaching team is becoming established and, after a few changes in staffing in subjects during the autumn and early spring term, teachers and support staff are working well together. Assessment is carefully planned and students' progress compared to their expected levels of progress is monitored closely. However, teachers' marking is not consistently of high quality. Teachers are beginning to become more expert at managing the wide range of abilities and the widely varying rates of progress in students' development of English skills, but they do not always

ensure that all students participate fully enough in activities. Some of the work covered in lessons is at too low a level for a few students.

Has the college implemented appropriate measures to ensure that all learners are reasonably safeguarded and that it meets its statutory duty for safeguarding in relation to learners of this age group?

Yes

The safeguarding arrangements meet the requirements for this age group of students. A dedicated area is used and security arrangements are robust to ensure that access is restricted to appropriate staff. Students are supervised at all times when they are not working in their designated area, and appropriate arrangements to meet them at the start of the day in the college reception area are in place. Learning mentors accompany students during breaks and meal times and are vigilant in their supervision. Students wear colour-coded lanyards and understand the different colours used for staff and other students.

A single central register of staff recruitment checks is up to date. Staff have received appropriate training in the safeguarding and care of this age group of students and in preventing radicalism and extremism.

Strengths and areas for development in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Strengths:

- teachers' use of initial assessment information to inform their planning and to match their work to students' ability levels
- teachers' sharp focus on improving students' grammar and vocabulary in English lessons
- students' enjoyment of their lessons and their good and productive collaborative work
- one-to-one coaching and mentoring undertaken by teachers and support staff which help students to learn quickly
- teachers' promotion of the application of English skills to life in modern British society.
- the promotion of British values through lessons and other curriculum activities.

Areas for development:

- classroom management of different ability groups
- the quality of marking, in particular clear identification of improvement points
- some questioning which does not involve all students in providing answers, meaning a few do not learn quickly enough
- in a few cases, teachers talking too much and not encouraging students' full participation in learning activities.

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