

Stephenson College

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: General further education college

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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 its provision.

This college has had full-time provision in place for 14 to 16 year olds since September 2014. It has eight students in this age group: six students joined the provision in Year 10 and two joined Year 11.

Themes

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

Significant progress

An inclusive admissions policy is in place and has been used well to provide individualised programmes of study for the first intake of students. As part of developing the policy, senior managers drew appropriately on their experience of setting up and running a studio school, open since 2011. They also worked collaboratively with the local authority and local schools in developing the provision. In particular, collaboration with the Leicestershire Behaviour Partnerships has ensured that the policy can be applied to support a number of vulnerable students to continue their education in college. Over the period since the provision began, managers have developed their relationship with schools well and local schools have a much greater understanding of the provision. Parents and carers are involved at all stages of the recruitment and admissions process. Records of their consent are appropriately in place. A suitable range of recruitment activities followed by interviews and an induction, have worked well to help students settle in and enjoy their studies.

A comprehensive, fair and rigorous exclusion policy is in place. No permanent exclusions have taken place, but several fixed term exclusions have been applied. Records relating to the exclusions are detailed and include reference to parental involvement and the work done to support students to return to their studies.

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

Significant progress

An experienced and cohesive team of staff is in place which comprises of staff with substantial experience of school education, as well as staff with significant further education experience. Teachers are experienced in teaching GCSE subjects, for example, they are good at assessing students' prior attainment and skills such as

reading as a basis for their work. Vocational staff have wide-ranging technical expertise. Staff are aspirational for students and work very well with them in gaining their confidence and respect. Managers are clear about the purpose of the provision and provide good leadership and very effective management. Experienced staff provide very good pastoral care which students value highly. A special educational needs coordinator leads a well-resourced team of learning support assistants who provide valuable additional support for students in lessons.

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

Significant progress

The curriculum is soundly based on the core subjects of GCSE English, mathematics and science, along with vocational options and time allocated to personal, social and health education. The vocational options are linked to local and regional employment needs and allow progression to post-16 provision within the college. For example, almost all current students are taking a vocational option in construction. This has been identified by the Local Enterprise Partnership as a priority subject in Leicestershire. Each student has an individual curriculum based on their plans for progression and longer term career ambitions. For example, one student who wishes to work with animals has undertaken a vocational course in animal care alongside the core curriculum. Students take part in vocational taster sessions during the first half term to help them decide their final option choice. Most students undertake vocational units at level one in Year 10, but will move on to take units at level 2 in Year 11. In the first half term, students have a series of lessons based on preparing them for life and work which includes developing team work and communication skills. This prepares them well for the vocational options they take up in the second half of the autumn term.

Students receive weekly timetabled sessions and take part in six 'super learning' days run in conjunction with the studio school, which cover a wide range of subjects including sex and relationships education, religious education, understanding of citizenship and development of their awareness of diversity and equality of opportunity. Assemblies and daily tutor time include an appropriate focus on spirituality and time allocated for reflection. Enrichment activities after school include sport, a homework club and a forensic science club with plans to extend this range further next year.

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

Significant progress

Well-established quality assurance arrangements are in place. These include an appropriate range of activities such as observations of learning and work scrutiny. These activities are used well to inform improvement actions and staff development activities. For example, a series of short observations based on evaluating teachers'

strategies for managing behaviour resulted in a highly useful report and staff development based on supporting staff in their use of the most effective strategies to deal with a range of students' behaviour. Inspectors observed teachers managing students' behaviour very effectively to ensure that they are motivated, involved in their lessons and contribute fully. As a result of reviewing the quality of the provision on a regular basis, managers have established a set of priorities for improvement. They have a very good understanding of how to measure students' progress thoroughly and rigorously. Parents and students' feedback informs the development of the provision and, through an annual curriculum review process, students' feedback from focus groups will be included in self-assessment.

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 high level of support for students and guide them well in preparing them for their next steps and in helping them to choose the right pathway to meet their longer term career aims. Students have confidence in staff and they speak highly of how pastoral staff, teachers and managers' support and respect for them has helped to improve their attitudes to studying as well as motivating them to do well. The pastoral and learning support team are experienced and readily available to support students when needed.

Students have a clear idea of their progression routes based on sound advice from staff. The wide range of support services available within the college is available to students. Parents' evenings are held each term and communications with parents are good.

The behaviour policy is implemented well and has helped ensure that most students have good attitudes to learning and contribute well in lessons. Staff have expertise, enhanced through experience and good staff development, in using appropriate strategies to resolve behavioural concerns that can disrupt learning. A reward system is used very effectively to motivate students. For example, reward points are accumulated in English lessons when students meet challenging targets for increasing their use of words in word challenges.

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

Teachers act as role models for students and motivate them well. They make good use of combining practical and theory in lessons in order to keep students involved and help them see the relevance of theory in practical tasks. For example, a science lesson on emulsification included students undertaking several experiments using a range of substances, and a construction lesson on health and safety included a physical assessment of equipment use and potential hazards around the college.

Teachers' learning resources are of high quality and well designed. Assessment is well organised and thorough. Marking and feedback to students are mostly of high quality, but in a few cases students do not complete the improvement actions that teachers propose as part of their feedback.

At times in lessons, teachers do not always check students' understanding of key points thoroughly enough and move on too quickly before students' learning is consolidated.

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 **Significant progress**

Robust arrangements are in place for safeguarding students. Students are appropriately supervised during breaks and when moving around the campus and they have a dedicated area for their lessons. Staff have received appropriate training in aspects of safeguarding including sexual exploitation of children. Safeguarding incidents are dealt with thoroughly including through close liaison with specialist agencies. Students' attendance is monitored closely and action is taken promptly in the case of absence, including where this is persistent. Almost all students' attendance is good and, for several, this represents a significant improvement on their previous attendance history. Governors receive appropriate reports on safeguarding.

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

Strengths:

- high emphasis on developing students' literacy and communication skills
- good integration of practical and theory learning
- good marking and feedback to students
- teachers' support for students in organising their notes and files
- teachers' highly effective use of rewards to motivate students
- teachers' good use of high quality learning resources.

Areas for development:

- teachers' insufficient checking of students' understanding in a few lessons
- students' limited written response to teachers' feedback points on some work.

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