

Marine Society College

Follow up re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the third re-inspection monitoring visit to Marine Society College following publication of the inspection report on 24 November 2014, which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

The Marine Society College offers a range of educational opportunities, including GCSE and A-level qualifications, to professional seafarers. Qualifications are offered as a distance-learning package through a subcontractor. This allows learners to study whilst working at sea. The inspection in October 2014 focused on the GCSE and A-level qualifications.

The purpose of this visit was to establish what progress managers have made to improve the provision, in response to the priorities for improvement set in the first re-inspection monitoring visit.

Themes

What progress is the college making to increase the number of learners who complete their GCSE and A-level programmes successfully?

Managers have improved the advice and guidance learners receive from staff before they enrol on their course, and in April 2015 they established a pre-course programme to ensure that learners understand what the distance-learning package entails and how it will work, particularly when they are away working at sea. Learners enrolled since the new pre-course programme are making much better progress than learners who were enrolled before April 2015. Managers have also taken action to ensure that the current subcontractor will now implement better arrangements for supporting learners.

Reasonable improvement for learners

What progress is the college making to ensure that all teaching, learning and assessment are good or better?

Managers are now monitoring the performance of the current subcontractor and of their learners. The current sub-contractor is providing better learning programmes for new learners that include more frequent contact from the tutor; previously tutors relied on learners contacting them to ask for support. The pre-course programme helps to prepare the learners more effectively for their course and ensures that learners fully understand the self-discipline and time that will be needed to complete the qualification successfully.

Learners receive thorough and constructive feedback from tutors on their work, which helps them to improve. Learners value the good and supportive feedback they get from their tutors when they submit work for assessment or contact them for help.

Managers have invited tenders for a new subcontractor to provide teaching, learning and assessment from September 2016. Bids have been submitted and managers are currently scrutinising these prior to the selection of the preferred bidder. The tender document sets out clearly the standard of support and tutoring that subcontractors must provide.

Reasonable improvement for learners

What progress is the college making to ensure that all learners make good progress in their studies?

Managers have established a system, including weekly review meetings, for monitoring the progress learners are making with their courses. Managers are now in frequent contact with learners and intervene more swiftly when a learner is failing to make the expected rate of progress.

Learners enrolled since April 2015 are making better progress as a result of the improved pre-course guidance and the better support that is now in place. However, learners enrolled between December 2014 and April 2015 are yet to benefit fully from these new arrangements and further work is required urgently to provide the same level of support for these learners, and to ensure that the programme is meeting their needs.

Reasonable improvement for learners

What progress is the college making to improve managers' use of data to monitor learners' progress effectively?

Managers have produced data which enables them to monitor the progress, achievement and destinations of learners. They review this information weekly and now intervene more swiftly to support learners who are making slow progress.

Staff have designed and implemented a series of learner surveys which will provide them with appropriate information to evaluate how well the training is meeting learners' needs and how effectively the courses they are studying are helping them to achieve their career aspirations. This includes follow-up surveys for learners at 12 and 24 months after achievement of their qualifications.

Reasonable improvement for learners

What progress is the college making to ensure that the courses offered by the college are the most suitable for the maritime industry?

Managers have met recently with education officers from the Royal Navy to discuss the qualifications the college offers and their suitability for seafarers seeking promotion or personal development. The Royal Navy is enthusiastic about working with Marine Society College managers to ensure that the qualifications Royal Navy personnel study are appropriate. Managers have arranged to meet with the Maritime Skills Alliance to ensure that learners in the Merchant Navy have the same opportunities.

Senior managers are redefining the educational vision of the Marine Society College, to ensure it continues to offer appropriate qualifications for seafarers and the industry in the future. As part of this work, they are surveying previous and existing learners to seek their views on the medium- and long-term benefits of the qualifications they have achieved or are hoping to achieve.

Reasonable improvement for learners

What progress is the college making to ensure that the safeguarding arrangements of GCSE and A-level learners improve?

Managers have continued to ensure that the tutors employed by their current subcontractor are checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service and are appropriate to work with young people and vulnerable adults. Managers have included this requirement for all tutors involved with the teaching, learning and assessment of their learners in the tender document for the new subcontractor.

Managers are improving the pre-course programme to include activities to help learners understand better how to keep themselves safe whilst at work and online.

Reasonable improvement for learners

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