

Stanmore College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130440

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Last day of inspection: 10 December 2015

Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Elm Park
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Publication date: 21 January 2016

Inspection number: 10009808



Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to Stanmore College following publication of the inspection report on 9 November 2015 which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

Governors are in the process of appointing an interim principal for spring 2016 when the current principal is due to retire.

Themes

Improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to enable all learners to make good progress, as a result of interesting and stimulating learning activities and clear and accurate feedback on their work.

Teachers have received training in several aspects of teaching, learning and assessment to help them improve the quality of lessons and the progress learners make. This work has yet to be fully effective as too many lessons still do not enable all learners to make good progress with their studies. In several examples, the targets that teachers set for learners were insufficiently challenging and did not relate to the learners' prior learning or target grades.

Teachers do not yet have consistently high expectations of what their learners can achieve in lessons and in assessments. For example, in several lessons, learners had not removed their coats and hats before the lesson started. In one case, learners had not yet had the opportunity to achieve merit and distinction grades as all assessments had been set at pass level.

Teachers' feedback to learners on their written work is not yet consistently good. In the better examples, teachers make it clear to learners what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. In poorer examples, teachers fail to mention the subject of the assignment and whether the learner has submitted work that meets the assessment criteria.

Most teachers provide learners with very good oral feedback on their work when they ask for it. This helps learners improve the quality of their work and to identify what they have done well. However, the quality of teachers' written feedback is poor.

Priorities for improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all learners are set clear and specific targets for development that relate to their prior learning and achievement, and to their target grades.

- Improve the quality of teachers' written feedback to learners on their marked work, so that learners know what they have done well and what it is they need to do to improve.

Improving learners' attendance at, and punctuality to, lessons by rigorous monitoring and swift intervention when their attendance and punctuality declines; ensure that learners with poor attendance receive relevant support.

Learners' attendance at lessons has improved by about three percentage points compared with the rate for the previous academic year. Attendance and study programme managers now monitor learners' attendance at lessons weekly and where a learner's attendance falls below 90%, they contact the learner to find out why they are not attending. A wide range of relevant interventions are available to managers to help support learners or to set clear targets for improvement where necessary.

Managers have not yet analysed the available attendance data for the current year to identify any trends that may exist within or across different subjects or levels of course. Managers have not yet compared the attendance data they have for the current academic year with that for previous years to see if there are any trends they need to be aware of, and to make changes to their current practice.

Learners with good attendance are very appreciative of the work managers are doing to remove learners with poor attendance from courses or to ensure that they attend more frequently. They report that their lesson time is more productive as teachers spend less time challenging latecomers and integrating them into the lesson.

Learners are attending lessons for English and mathematics qualifications at about the same rate as for vocational lessons. Study programme managers now have responsibility for all the elements of learners' study programmes and they monitor learners' attendance at English and mathematics lessons as well as for vocational lessons.

Priorities for improvement

- Analyse the attendance data for the current and previous academic years by subject and level to identify if any trends exist. Where subjects have different rates of attendance, investigate the reasons for this and set actions for improvement.

Improving the proportion of learners who achieve qualifications in English and mathematics by ensuring that teachers of these subjects plan and teach lessons that enable learners to improve the skills that they have not yet mastered.

Managers for English and mathematics are acutely aware of the challenge they face in ensuring that all learners improve their skills in English and mathematics. They are trying new strategies for the timing of examinations and for revision classes. The impact of these strategies can only be evaluated when the results of the examinations are published.

Managers for English and mathematics are supported well by the study programme managers, who help to ensure that learners attend their English and mathematics lessons. All teachers now see the development of learners' skills in English and mathematics and their attendance at English and mathematics lessons as their responsibility.

Teachers in vocational subjects are beginning to develop strategies to improve learners' English and mathematics skills, but they are not yet sufficiently proficient at identifying the particular skills each learner needs to develop. They tend to complete the same activity with all learners in a lesson and do not yet check if all learners have sufficient mastery of a particular skill.

Priorities for improvement

- Train teachers to plan and teach English and mathematics lessons, taking into account the skills learners already have and the skills they need to master to achieve their qualifications.
- Ensure that all teachers in vocational subjects help learners to develop their skills in English and mathematics, and that they are aware of the skills that each individual learner needs to improve.

Improving the proportion of learners who develop their skills for work and their vocational skills by completing and evaluating high-quality work experience placements.

At the time of the previous inspection, too many learners had not had the opportunity to improve their skills for work or their vocational skills by completing a high-quality, external work placement.

Managers now have clear targets for learners' participation in work experience placements; most learners know they will be doing work experience and when this will be. A minority of learners have completed placements so far in this academic year.

Managers recognise that several subject areas present greater challenges to securing meaningful work placements, but that other methods of improving learners' exposure to industry, such as visits to shows, trade fairs, visiting speakers and university visits exist.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that all learners, for whom it would be appropriate, complete and evaluate an external work experience placement.
- Ensure that all learners for whom it would not be appropriate to complete an external work experience placement have the opportunity to complete purposeful activity that will help them progress to their next stage of education or training.

Ensuring that managers have accurate data and information about the performance of the learners and teachers in their departments, and that they use these to set precise actions for improvement and intervene swiftly when improvements are not being achieved.

Managers have access to accurate data and information about the progress and performance of the learners in their departments. They are monitoring attendance of learners assiduously, and the data available indicate some small improvements in the rates of learners' attendance at lessons. Managers intervene rapidly when learners' attendance falls below 90% and set targets for improvement, which they monitor closely, with support from appropriate learner services staff.

Managers have prioritised improving learners' attendance at lessons. They have yet to use other data and information about learners' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to bring about improvements in the proportion of learners who are making sufficient progress towards the achievement of their target grades. Data show that too many learners, especially those on courses at levels 2 and 3, and those on GCSE courses in English and mathematics, are not yet making sufficient progress to achieve their qualifications.

Managers have not yet had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their departments. Observations of teaching, learning and assessment show too much poor practice, which has yet to be addressed effectively. For example, in several lessons, teachers did not have high enough expectations of what their learners could achieve. In these lessons, learners did not produce enough work, or the work they did produce was not at the level of the course.

Priorities for improvement

- Analyse data on learners' progress with their qualifications and ensure that targets for improvement are set and achieved, so that as many learners as possible make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Use the data and information that managers have about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to set teachers actions to improve their practice, so that learners can make good progress.

Ensuring governors and senior leaders monitor frequently the progress learners are making in different subject areas, and intervene swiftly when actions for improvement are not being achieved within planned timescales.

Governors have a clearer and more realistic understanding of the performance of the college since the previous inspection. The information they receive in preparation for meetings is presented in a greater depth, but not yet in a consistent format to enable them to see where improvements are being made or to make comparisons with previous performance. They are not yet fully confident that the rate of change is sufficient to bring about improvements to the quality of provision and the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications quickly enough.

Minutes of governors' meetings are thorough in their coverage of the topics of discussion at meetings but they do not yet record the challenge that governors give to senior leaders. Senior leaders believe they are more closely held to account for the performance of the college and that improvements are being made to the quality of provision in line with the targets and timescales in the post-inspection action plan. Senior leaders now monitor the performance of teaching departments more frequently and in more detail than at the time of the previous inspection. However, the rate of improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and in the proportion of learners who are meeting or exceeding their target grades, is not yet good enough.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that senior leaders present information about the performance of the college to governors in a consistent format to enable them to make judgements on the rate of improvement, and hold senior leaders to account where improvements are not being secured quickly enough.
- Ensure that senior leaders hold managers to account when the rate of improvement in their departments is not quick enough; ensure that clear and specific targets with challenging timescales are set, and progress towards them monitored rigorously

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