

Greenwich Community College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the third follow-up re-inspection monitoring visit to Greenwich Community College following publication of the inspection report on 17 December 2014, which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

The Principal and governing body must fully recognise, and take decisive action to improve quickly, years of college under-performance.

Reasonable progress

Governors, the Principal and senior managers have maintained constant and relentless activity to improve the previously entrenched and unacceptably low standards of education. Key performance indicators show that leaders have made some progress in improving most aspects of provision. In a few areas, significant improvements are evident. However, making sufficient improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, outcomes for learners and provision in mathematics and English continues to vex leaders and managers.

While the college continues to struggle with residual problems, the culture of the organisation is now more focused on ensuring that learners achieve. Governors, the Principal, managers and staff have a clear understanding of the progress made to date and what still needs to be done. Following a college-wide review of the quality and availability of resources, the range of courses offered has narrowed and the number of learners enrolling has declined. Merger arrangements with a local further education college are well advanced and are planned to take place at the end of the year.

Ensure that managers and teachers are held accountable for every aspect of learners' performance.

Reasonable progress

Lines of accountability for learners' achievements are now well established. Managers use regular programme meetings to check learners' progress and they monitor actions to improve learners' performance closely. Overall, data for 2014/15 show that learners' achievements rose marginally and in most cases aligned well with managers' and teachers' predicted forecasts. The number of learners remaining to the end of their programme declined compared to the previous year. However, of those that did remain on programme, the percentage achieving their qualification rose significantly, particularly for those aged 16 to 18 years. Apprenticeship success rates have much improved from a previously very low rate. However, most success rates in 2014/15 continue to be well below those of similar colleges.

Learners starting programmes in 2015/16 are now better informed about their programmes, and staff have evaluated their existing skills and knowledge appropriately to determine which level of programme suits their needs best. It is too early in the academic year to make a judgement about retention rates, although the latest data show an improvement.

Make sure all teachers raise aspirations by providing lively teaching that motivates learners. **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, arrangements to assess accurately the standards of teaching, learning and assessment have continued to develop. The results of no-notice observations of teaching indicate continuous improvements in teachers' performance. Enthusiastic teacher-support coaches have recently been introduced to further improve standards.

Of the lessons observed during the monitoring visit, learners were attentive, engaged and well-motivated. Managers have completed a good number of observations of teaching and learning. However, when checking the records, managers have identified that a few lessons in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) may have been over-graded. Generally, the planning of lessons does not articulate sufficiently well learners' specific development needs in English, mathematics and employment skills.

Improve learners' results in mathematics and English qualifications **Insufficient progress**

In 2014/15, overall English and mathematics functional skill success rates rose on average by around 20 percentage points from a very low rate, but continue to be well below that of similar colleges. The progress made to the number of learners achieving A* to C grades in GCSE English and mathematics varied between the two subjects, and between learners aged 16 to 18 and adults. For example, the proportion of learners achieving an A* to C grade rose in English but declined in mathematics. Adults achieve much better than learners aged 16 to 18.

Managers and teachers have ensured that learners who enrolled in September 2015 have been placed on to the most appropriate level of study. Most learners fully recognise the importance of English and mathematics for their future plans. However, attendance rates continue to be well below those of vocational courses. The planning of English and mathematics in vocational lessons is not sufficiently well linked to learners' existing knowledge or to the specific mathematics and English schemes of work. Managers have recently introduced regular meetings between English and mathematics teachers and vocational teachers to discuss learners' progress across all subjects, particularly for those learners on study programmes.

However, it is too early to judge the impact of these meetings on learners' achievement of English and mathematics qualifications.

The previous visit judged progress towards improving English and mathematics to be reasonable, however recent difficulties in retaining English and/or mathematics teachers and the inability to recruit sufficiently well-qualified new staff has had an adverse effect on many learners. For example, in the past two months, learners on English courses have been subjected to repeated changes of teachers. Where learners are taught in mixed ability groups, not all teachers plan appropriately to meet the needs of those on higher levels.

Implement the full requirements of study programmes by working with employers and other partners

Significant progress

College managers and staff have made significant improvements towards the introduction of work placements for all study programme learners. The majority of learners have already completed their first placement within the first two months of their programme, and all other study programme learners have placements planned. Staff manage placements well, and feedback from employers, learners and teachers is particularly good. Through the work placements, learners are gaining additional opportunities to develop their vocational and employment skills, such as part-time work; they are using the knowledge they have gained on placement in college to improve their motivation and develop their skills further. Learners are excited by the help that work placements opportunities have given them in making plans for their next steps. They are now benefiting from regular college-based talks with employers and improved guidance on employment opportunities and employers' expectations.

Make better use of, and critically analyse, data at all levels to improve learner performance.

Significant progress

The effective use and analysis of data by governors, managers and staff are now better established. Managers use timely and accurate data better to track learners' progress. Programme managers regularly meet to discuss and plan further improvements to aspects of provision that are not performing as well as expected. Governors, the Principal, managers and staff have a better understanding of the progress that learners are making. Managers have set realistic targets for improvement and have set a challenging pace for change.

Develop a plan that identifies and delivers an appropriate curriculum.

Insufficient progress

Given the significant difficulties that the Principal and managers have faced since the previous inspection, plans to develop an appropriate curriculum that meets the local community's needs have not been a key college objective. Operational and resource difficulties have hindered the Principal's and senior managers' abilities to address this key inspection recommendation. For example, most engineering courses have ceased, due to key members of staff leaving and the college's inability to recruit suitable replacement teachers.

However, a new team has improved the quality of apprenticeship provision, and success rates, while still too low, have improved from the very low rates at the time of the previous inspection.

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