

Lewisham Southwark College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second follow-up re-inspection monitoring visit to Lewisham Southwark College following publication of the inspection report on 30 March 2015, which found the provider to be inadequate overall. The inspection in February 2015 was a re-inspection as the college was first judged to be inadequate in November 2013.

Lewisham Southwark College provides a vocational curriculum and the majority of its students are adults.

Themes

Improving governance including the college's approach to its new duties under the 'Prevent' legislation

Reasonable progress

The board of governors is now established with the vast majority of the current board having been appointed in the last 18 months. The board contains a very good range of experiences and skills, and the governors are enthusiastic and keen to play an active role in supporting the college to improve. For example, following reports at one board meeting about attendance, one governor took time to visit the college shortly afterwards to follow up on discussions from the meeting, talking to students and staff and putting together a useful report to take back to the board. Another governor has participated in staff development activities in order to evaluate the quality of staff training. Senior leaders report a much increased level of challenge at board meetings, and appreciate the commitment of governors to bring about improvement.

However, although all governors receive an induction into the role and subsequent training, and although they have a wide range of relevant commercial experience, senior leaders have not ensured that new governors have a good enough understanding of education and training. So, for example, they were not able to be sufficiently challenging about the college's most recent self-assessment report. The report is overly long and descriptive. Many strengths are normal practice and it does not use data about students' achievements well enough to identify differences in the achievements of different groups of students. The report does not focus sufficiently on the quality of different types of provision and, for example, makes very few judgements about the quality of study programmes. Governors did not recognise these difficulties with the report and signed it off without sufficiently challenging many of the judgements in it, including the grading of curriculum areas.

Senior leaders have taken a very good approach to ensuring that the college meets its statutory duties under the government's new 'Prevent' legislation. Staff have a very good understanding about the dangers of students being vulnerable to radicalisation or extremist views. 'Prevent' is firmly embedded in the college's safeguarding

practices, and staff regularly seek advice and guidance about students they are concerned about. Staff are considering how they can involve students in the promotion of fundamental British values and 'Prevent', and how they can use innovative techniques such as drama to improve students' understanding.

Results of the new process for observations of teaching and learning and progress in ensuring a consistently high standard of teaching across all provision **Reasonable progress**

Senior leaders have focused strongly on improving teaching and learning, and have created a coherent and effective programme of support for teachers. Managers employ a range of approaches including formal observations of teaching and learning, professional discussions and dialogue between teachers and coaches, and less formal observations designed to develop teachers' practice and skills. As part of this, senior leaders have successfully changed the culture of the college so that teachers recognise that it is not enough to simply support students whose backgrounds are challenging and difficult: they must also ensure that they teach these students well and enable them to achieve.

Teachers' morale has improved greatly and they are now re-focused on teaching effectively and enthusiastic to develop new skills. The college's teacher coaching programme has been particularly successful and the coaches have worked effectively and enthusiastically with teachers. Teachers are learning to use technology innovatively to bring their subject to life, and to provide learning in a way which suits their students and makes use of their keenness to use devices such as tablets and smartphones. Leaders have a well-planned programme of staff development which is leading to improvements in teaching, and investment in new roles, such as the improvement coaches, is leading to good results. However, it is still too early in 2015/16 for sufficient observations of teaching and learning to have taken place to evaluate fully the improvements in teaching across the whole of the college's work.

Improvements in English and mathematics provision **Reasonable progress**

The new English and mathematics team is making progress towards improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for students, and working well towards remedying the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Managers have ensured that English and mathematics sessions are timetabled as the core of all study programmes, with other classes being planned around these important subjects. This has led to much better attendance from students who describe a planned and organised programme of mathematics or English in which they are clearly learning new skills, gaining confidence and making progress towards planned assessments.

Staff now ensure that students clearly understand the importance of improving their mathematics and English skills, and take care to ensure that students attend the correct level of study and that teachers plan lessons to support students to develop their skills at the appropriate level and pace. Teachers are using regular practice tests and mock exams very well to help students to improve their confidence in understanding test questions. Teachers mark students' work effectively and provide clear feedback on how they can improve their work. However, managers and teachers do not always ensure that students' targets for mathematics and English are clearly recorded and shared with vocational subject teachers before scheduled progress reviews and college progress boards.

The new mathematics and English managers have worked hard to review the quality of mathematics and English teaching, and have formed a new team of teachers most of whom are new to the college this year. Leaders have ensured that the balance of permanent teachers to agency teachers is now much more weighted towards permanent teachers to provide more consistency for students. Managers have devised a carefully planned development programme to support improved classroom teaching and sharing of good practice across English and mathematics teams. However, managers must ensure that these new teachers receive continued coaching and support to ensure that improvements are sustained and translate into improved mathematics and English achievements for students.

Improving students' attendance and punctuality Reasonable progress through new support arrangements

Managers have taken robust action to improve the monitoring of attendance and punctuality across the college. They have rationalised the marking of registers so that students can now only be marked as present or absent. This has allowed senior managers to evaluate attendance fairly across all curriculum areas. All staff now follow a very clear attendance policy, which includes a series of actions to be taken if a student is not attending regularly. Two-thirds of students referred for help improve their attendance after the first stage of this new programme of support. Staff now provide students with a range of different support mechanisms to help them attend, but ultimately students will now be withdrawn from courses if they are persistently missing from classes. This robust action has improved classroom morale and since students now see that persistent poor attendance will not be tolerated by teachers, attendance overall has improved. Many teachers also use a good range of incentives such as end-of-term social events, book vouchers and certificates to reward exemplary attendance. Leaders are encouraging students to arrive at college early through the use of breakfast clubs and by opening practical workshops early. Leaders have established a doctor's surgery on campus so that students can receive help with health problems and referrals to other specialist agencies during the college day with minimum disruption to their studies. For some students, this is the first time they have been able to access health care since they are not registered with a surgery in their community.

Improving students' achievements through the use of six-weekly progress boards **Reasonable progress**

Senior leaders introduced six-weekly progress reviews following the previous inspection, and these are being used very well by staff to review the progress of students. Staff are now identifying students who are making slow progress much more quickly, and taking action to support them much more promptly. Staff now systematically identify those students who might struggle to attend regularly and achieve well at the point of enrolment, rather than only identifying students as being at risk when they are failing to achieve. Heads of department now have a clear responsibility for the progress of students in all aspects of their programme, including English and mathematics.

This increased focus on students' progress has led to improved achievements and data for 2014/15 show that, on the majority of courses, students are now achieving in line with other general further education colleges. However, there are still pockets of poor performance as yet to be resolved; a small minority of students continue to do poorly despite increased monitoring and better support.

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