

Stanmore College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first follow-up 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.

Since the previous visit, the principal has retired from her position and governors have appointed an interim principal, who took up her post on 4 January 2016. Governors and senior leaders are focusing on improving the quality of the students' experience in the classroom to enable as many as possible to achieve their qualifications. The interim principal has written and implemented a college recovery plan to inform this work.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Teachers' expectations of students and what they can achieve in lessons have improved since the previous visit. Teachers are working effectively to improve the quality of their teaching through a range of activities which include ungraded observations, peer observations and feedback from students in lessons using 'happy forms'. Teachers are very positive about how these, and other activities, are helping students to improve. A small minority of teachers have yet to embrace fully the training and development opportunities available to them.

In the more effective lessons teachers use a range of well-considered and implemented activities to help students learn; they explain difficult concepts clearly to maximise students' understanding. However, at times, teachers do not make it clear to students what is expected of them or they focus too much on an activity, rather than on the development of students' skills.

Several teachers are skilled at using questioning to help students confirm, develop or reinforce their knowledge and understanding. However, not enough teachers are yet sufficiently skilled at using a full range of questioning techniques to ensure they evaluate clearly how much progress students have made in lessons.

Teachers' written feedback on students' work varies considerably in its effectiveness in helping students to know what they have done well and what it is they need to do to improve further. In the best examples, teachers identify very clearly what skills, knowledge or understanding a student has mastered and they set clear and specific actions to help the student improve further. However, too frequently, teachers make

very little or no reference to the topic or subject being assessed; they are overly positive with their praise and they fail to identify where students could improve their presentation, spelling or grammar.

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

Reasonable progress

Students' attendance at, and punctuality to, lessons are improving, but still do not meet managers' targets for improvement. Managers have introduced a range of incentives, including improved teaching, learning and assessment to help motivate students to attend all of their lessons.

Teachers are more skilled and confident to challenge lateness as managers now provide them with up-to-date and reliable attendance data. Course and department managers monitor students' attendance more rigorously. Students are now more aware of their own rate of attendance and tutors set them clear and specific targets for improvement where this is required. However, a small minority of teachers do not yet implement the college policy on attendance and punctuality fully.

Learner services staff support students with poor attendance well and help to improve the frequency with which they attend. Staff provide good advice, guidance and, where appropriate, referrals to outside agencies to help students overcome personal barriers to their learning.

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

Reasonable progress

While it is too soon to see the full impact of improvements to the quality of English and mathematics provision at the college in terms of qualification achievement, managers have taken decisive and effective action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Senior leaders have worked effectively to ensure that the importance of students improving their English and mathematics skills is well understood by teachers and students.

English and mathematics teachers now understand better what skills and knowledge individual students need to master; they devise and implement activities which help students make progress with the specific skills that will enable them to improve their ability and confidence. Despite these improvements, in too many cases, students all

learn the same topic, at the same time, irrespective of whether this is sufficiently challenging for them. Teachers do not yet consistently put sufficient emphasis on developing and extending the skills students need to master.

Teachers of vocational subjects are gaining in their confidence to develop students' English and mathematics skills in lessons. However, many teachers have yet to extend this to their feedback on students' marked work.

Students' attendance at English and mathematics lessons has improved since the previous visit, but remains below the overall college rate. Data indicate that attendance at English and mathematics lessons has improved by between 15 and 30 percentage points over the previous two academic years.

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

Reasonable progress

Managers have established clear procedures for work experience placements which detail their expectations of which groups and types of students are expected to take part in a meaningful work experience placement. The proportion of students who have completed, or are currently completing, a placement has improved significantly. These students recognise well the skills they have developed and the benefits to their future careers as a result of taking part in these activities.

Managers have considered carefully the differing groups of students at the college and have taken appropriate decisions about the type, duration and timing of work placements to ensure students fully benefit from them. Managers are continuing to build links with local businesses and organisations to ensure greater choice and opportunity for students in subjects where work experience has not previously been a strength.

Those learners for whom a work experience placement would not be appropriate take up a wide range of alternative activities to help them understand the skills needed for working in their chosen careers. These include university visits, visiting speakers from industry and visits to trade shows and events.

Ensuring managers have accurate data and information about the performance of the students 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.

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have improved considerably the provision of, and access to, up-to-date and relevant data for managers. This enables them to understand the performance of their departments and intervene swiftly when performance falls below the expected standard. Managers are using data on students' attendance particularly well.

Managers are now able to produce fortnightly reports for senior leaders about the performance of their departments. They know well what data indicate about departmental performance and they are accountable to senior leaders for this.

Managers are now using data on assessment well to monitor and predict headline success rates, but it is too early in this process for them to make accurate predictions of students' progress.

Managers share their data with each other and they are now working collaboratively to solve common problems and challenges.

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

Reasonable progress

Governors, senior leaders, managers and teachers now know what needs to improve at the college to enable more students to be successful and achieve their qualifications. Managers have well-constructed plans for the different strands of improvement which set clear actions, milestones and success criteria with the ultimate aim of securing sustained improvement for students. Governors have confidence in the interim principal's ability to bring about the required improvements swiftly.

Minutes of governors' meetings now reflect more clearly the knowledge and understanding that governors have of the quality of provision at the college. The minutes demonstrate an increased level of challenging and probing questions about key college performance measures, with supporting papers demonstrating a much greater openness, clarity and honesty.

Senior leaders' action plans for improvement are now established and they receive fortnightly performance reports from department managers. Senior leaders hold managers to account for the accuracy of their reports and for the performance of their departments.

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