City of Bristol College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to City of Bristol College following publication of the inspection report on 10 March 2016 which found the following to be inadequate: overall effectiveness; the effectiveness of leadership and management; personal development, behaviour and welfare; outcomes for learners; and apprenticeships. Teaching, learning and assessment, 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learning programmes were judged to require improvement and provision for learners with high needs was judged to be good.

A new principal took up his post three weeks before the inspection; this was one of three new appointments to the strategic leadership team in the previous three months. Since the inspection, the college's senior leaders have produced a draft of a post-inspection action plan to identify the actions that need to be taken to improve the college.

Themes

The quality and implementation of an action plan to tackle the weaknesses identified during the inspection.

Senior leaders have worked closely with staff to produce a draft of a post-inspection action plan based on the recommendations in the inspection report. The plan clearly states who is accountable for each action. The plan is closely linked to monitoring reports and new, simpler key performance indicators. By simplifying the range of key performance indicators for the college, senior leaders are improving their reporting to governors and the strategic leadership team. Senior leaders recognise that the plan requires further development to clarify the actions to be taken, how the impact of the actions will be monitored and how progress towards targets will be measured. They also recognise that the omission of actions and performance measures for governors from the post-inspection action plan needs to be rectified.

Senior leaders have recognised the wide range of improvements that are needed and prioritised those that they believe will have the greatest impact and which need to be in place to form a foundation for other improvements. For example, managers are currently improving the electronic learner monitoring system in preparation for the new academic year. Once this is complete, they will be able to hold staff to account for their learners' progress and take swifter action to intervene when learners' progress is slow.

Senior leaders have recognised in the post-inspection action plan that staff do not have the expertise to bring about all the necessary improvements. They have quickly started to build relationships with other colleges and schools in order to learn how to improve their provision. For example, two local schools are providing guidance on successful strategies for teaching learners who are resitting a GCSE in English or mathematics. A local college is providing expertise in managing these subjects for

post-16 learners. However, the plan does not contain sufficient information about the training and development leaders, and managers may need to ensure that they have the capacity to lead their staff in implementing new policies and working practices.

Priorities for improvement

- Incorporate actions and targets for governors into the post-inspection action plan in order to improve their ability to hold senior leaders to account for progress in tackling the weaknesses identified at inspection and their understanding and scrutiny of learners' performance.
- Identify dates for completion for all actions and incorporate milestones for each target to ensure that governors, senior leaders and staff understand the progress being made towards each target.
- Ensure that each action has a clear statement of how its impact on improving the college will be monitored.
- Identify the training and development required by leaders and managers to lead improvements.

Governors' effectiveness in improving provision and holding senior leaders to account for their actions following the latest inspection.

The college is carrying out a review of governance in order to identify how to improve governors' effectiveness in monitoring and improving performance. Three new governors have been recruited, two of whom have useful expertise in financial management. Two further governors are being recruited in the next six months, although the skills required of these have yet to be defined.

Governors are working closely with senior leaders to develop new strategic priorities, which include a simple definition of the college's purpose and values. They are also developing simpler key performance indicators, which are aligned to those being developed for use by senior managers and the internal reports on the quality of provision. Governors have set targets for senior leaders for both financial and academic performance and are supporting the principal in developing an achievable curriculum and financial plan for 2016/17.

Governors recognise that they do not consistently collect and analyse the views of learners and staff to help to inform their decisions. They recognise that they would benefit from having more opportunities to receive views first hand from staff and learners, particularly at this time of significant change to the college.

Priorities for improvement

- Complete the review of governance and identify any gaps in skills on the board of governors so that new governors can be recruited to fill these gaps.
- Agree the new strategic priorities, the implementation plans that will underpin these and the methods by which governors will monitor their impact on the performance and culture of the college.

- Agree and use the new key performance indicators to effectively monitor the academic and financial performance of the college.
- Use the views of learners and staff more effectively to inform decision making.

Learners' attendance at lessons.

Learners' attendance at lessons has been an area for improvement since the inspection in 2014. At the most recent inspection, inspectors found the attendance by 16- to 18-year-old learners was particularly low and managers had not deployed appropriate strategies to improve it.

Senior leaders recognise that low attendance is linked to the lack of oversight of learners' progress through their programmes and the lack of a consistent approach to pastoral care. Teachers and managers have established a culture that has not consistently set high expectations for all learners with respect to attendance and arriving on time and ready to learn. To change this, the principal has communicated to staff and learners a very clear and very strong message that attendance is fundamental to successful learning. Senior leaders have acted quickly to remove unnecessary hindrances to involving parents and carers when a learner's absence causes concern.

Teachers feel that the clear expectations for attendance, in the revised attendance policy and the principal's communications, have given them the authority to challenge and support learners.

Senior leaders have identified a new role of study coaches and intend to have these in place by September 2016. This role has at its heart the pastoral care of learners, including tutorial support, monitoring academic progress and intervening quickly to improve attendance when necessary. A new disciplinary policy for learners, and a staff and student charter, are currently being drawn up and will be agreed by governors in the summer term. These incorporate an expectation of high standards of behaviour and attendance for learners.

Managers are now using data on attendance to monitor quality and senior managers receive weekly reports. However, this data is not consistently being used by teachers to inform their planning. Senior leaders are providing a good role model to other managers by making themselves visible around the college, talking to learners who are not in lessons and enforcing the college's new attendance policy.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that all teachers complete attendance data that is accurate and in line with the new policy and use it to inform their planning.
- Appoint a sufficient number of study coaches to ensure that all learners are well supported, that their progress, including attendance, is closely monitored and that suitable interventions are in place to enable all learners to reach their full potential.

- Ensure that quality improvement plans address any problems regarding low attendance or poor punctuality effectively.
- Complete the development of the new staff and student charter and provide targeted training for staff to enable them to understand how it is to be used.

The leadership of apprenticeship provision.

At the most recent inspection, inspectors judged that the apprenticeship provision was inadequate. A very low proportion completed their apprenticeship within the expected timescale, apprenticeships lacked leadership. Too few apprentices completed their English and mathematics qualifications and many did not understand their options once they completed their apprenticeship. Inspectors found that off-the-job training was mostly well planned and apprentices make a positive contribution to the employer.

College leaders have started to work with employers to evaluate the extent to which the training and assessment of apprentices in the workplace are effective. They are also reviewing the information, advice and guidance for employers to ensure they understand and provide the necessary time and commitment to the apprenticeship. The college has successfully appointed a new senior leader for apprenticeships, who will take up the post at the end of May 2016.

Managers have provided training to assessors on how to use the college's data management system to monitor the progress of apprentices and to identify apprentices who are at risk of not completing their apprenticeship within the time allocated. At the time of the monitoring visit managers were predicting that the proportion of apprentices completing within the expected timescale would rise to 53%; this would be a notable improvement on the previous year's outcomes.

Senior leaders have revised the wide range of apprenticeship frameworks offered and are reviewing the models of delivery of apprenticeships to eliminate the weaker practice. They are reducing the number of frameworks offered in order to ensure that they are better focused on local employment priorities and to enable staff to develop greater expertise and experience in a smaller range of apprenticeships.

Priorities for improvement

- Complete the review of how apprenticeships are delivered and provide staff with clear guidance and training on their responsibilities for providing high-quality assessment and training in the workplace.
- Review the delivery of functional skills. Ensure that these are taught well and apprentices pass them before they affect the timely completion of the apprenticeship.
- Set clear expectations for the leadership of apprenticeships and monitor closely the impact of actions to improve quality.
- Continue to train staff in the use of management information and software to track apprentices' training and progress.

■ Ensure managers use the information about learners' training and progress to improve the quality of assessment practice and training in the workplace.