

# West Cheshire College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130618

**Name of lead inspector:** Steve Hailstone HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 18 May 2016

**Type of provider:** General further education college

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**Publication date:**

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**Inspection number:** 10017626



## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This is the third re-inspection monitoring visit to West Cheshire College following publication of the inspection report on 11 November 2015, which found the college to be inadequate overall.

At the inspection in September 2015, the effectiveness of leadership and management, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners were judged to be inadequate. Personal development, behaviour and welfare were judged to require improvement. Study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 were judged to be inadequate. Adult learning provision was judged to require improvement. Apprenticeships were judged to be good.

The second visit in February 2016 found that leaders and managers had made insufficient progress in: planning to address the areas for improvement identified at inspection; monitoring underperforming programme areas; implementing fully the requirements of the study programme; taking action to ensure that learners make good progress towards achieving their learning goals; improving the quality of English and mathematics provision; improving the quality of additional learning support. They had made reasonable progress in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The findings of this visit are outlined below.

### Themes

**What progress have governors, leaders and managers made in producing and implementing a clear action plan to address the areas for improvement identified at inspection?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have revised the post-inspection action plan significantly since the last monitoring visit. The revised plan identifies clearly and succinctly the specific actions that leaders and managers are taking to tackle the weaknesses identified at the last inspection and in previous monitoring visits.

The evaluation of progress towards achieving the actions provides a much more accurate assessment of the college's current position and makes good reference to reliable data to provide evidence of improvements. This includes data on attendance, in-year retention, learners' progress towards their target grades, and the proportion of learners who have work experience planned. Following frequent reviews of progress, leaders and managers identify accurately further actions that they need to take before the next review. Target dates for achieving actions are challenging but realistic. Leaders and managers are clear about who is responsible for implementing each action; however, this is not indicated in the action plan.

The review of progress in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is over-optimistic. It indicates that the target to improve quality so that over 80% of the provision is good or better has been achieved. Inspectors disagreed with this evaluation as they found that, despite many improvements made, there is still too much weak teaching.

In contrast with the rest of the action plan, the section on improving the quality of reports to governors contains little comment on progress towards achieving targets.

**What has been done to improve the rigour in monitoring underperforming programme areas?**

**Reasonable progress**

The senior leadership team has made radical changes to the process for monitoring how successfully managers are making improvements in underperforming areas. They have replaced the time-consuming and ineffective programme areas reviews with a much more targeted approach that identifies accurately programme areas that are at high risk of underperforming. The new approach provides accurate and accessible information that enables leaders and managers to intervene swiftly to make improvements. Staff at all levels in the college have a better understanding of data and how it is used to measure performance. They are much more actively involved in measuring and improving performance and are held to account more effectively for the performance of the courses for which they are responsible.

The more rigorous approach to monitoring performance is beginning to have a positive impact on improving learners' progress in most programme areas. However, it has not yet had sufficient impact in business, English and mathematics, where too much poor-quality provision remains and learners' progress is still not rapid enough. Despite the strong focus on improving attendance and punctuality, too many learners across all areas of the college still miss lessons, and not all learners arrive at their lessons on time.

**To what extent have leaders and managers addressed the need to implement fully the requirements of the study programme?**

**Reasonable progress**

The quality of careers guidance that learners receive has improved. Managers, personal tutors and guidance support staff have carried out relevant training in providing careers guidance. Most learners have benefited from careers advice through individual advice sessions and the introduction of 'progression days' when learners are provided with a broad range of information about progression opportunities. Learners who are still undecided about their next steps receive additional guidance that identifies actions to help them to make informed choices about their future education or employment options. The more rigorous approach to careers guidance is beginning to have a positive impact on increasing learners' awareness of progression opportunities. However, too many learners are still not clear about their next steps once they have completed their programme.

Leaders and managers have increased significantly the proportion of learners who complete work experience placement during their programme, from 28% at the last monitoring visit to 84% currently. Staff are working closely with learners who do not yet have a planned work placement to ensure that they benefit from work experience before the end of their course. Learners in most vocational areas now participate in a wide range of additional work-related activity that enriches their learning experience. This includes visits to employers and community-based voluntary activity.

**What actions are managers taking to ensure that learners make good progress towards achieving their learning goals? Reasonable progress**

Managers and teachers make much more effective use of the college's system for monitoring learners' progress. They identify accurately learners who are falling behind and are at risk of not achieving their target grade, and they intervene quickly to provide these learners with appropriate support. Teachers are more accountable for the success of their learners, and have regular meetings with their managers to evaluate the impact of actions they are taking to improve learners' progress.

Managers have improved the process for identifying learners who are at risk of not achieving their targets. Previously, the level of risk was based solely on attendance. Managers and teachers now also consider learners' punctuality, behaviour and standard of work, the progress that learners have made from their starting points, and learners' success in meeting deadlines.

As a result of these improvements, a higher proportion of learners are now on target to achieve at an appropriate level. Learners are more aware of what they need to do to achieve their targets. However, further work is needed to ensure that all teachers record accurately learners' progress on the monitoring system so that managers have full confidence in the reliability of reports on learners' progress.

Leader and managers have placed a strong focus on improving attendance, punctuality and learners' readiness for study. They have communicated their expectations clearly to learners and have put in place arrangements to monitor more closely learners' attendance and punctuality. Since the last monitoring visit, leaders and managers have increased significantly their visibility around the college. At the beginning of the day, they welcome learners on arrival, and ensure that learners are ready for work as soon as they arrive. They challenge learners who arrive late and those who do not have their identity badges. As a result of these actions, learners are more aware of the expectations that they arrive at the college on time and that they are prepared for learning. Recently appointed attendance assistants support managers and teachers in reducing absence and carry out home visits to learners whose attendance is a significant cause of concern. Despite these actions, attendance and punctuality remain concerns. The overall level of attendance has stabilised but has not yet improved, and is particularly low in English and

mathematics lessons. Learners who arrive to their lesson late are not always challenged appropriately by their teacher.

**What progress has the college made in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment?**

**Reasonable progress**

Teachers carry out a wide range of relevant training and development that has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Training is responsive to areas for improvement identified through lesson observations and focuses well on strategies to support and challenge learners to achieve their aspirations. It has encouraged staff to be more innovative in their teaching and has developed their skills in keeping learners fully engaged in learning.

As a result of their training, many teachers now use a wider range of activities that challenge learners more effectively. However, too much teaching remains dull and uninspiring, and does not motivate learners. Lessons often lack sufficient pace, and teachers do not always design activities that meet the needs of the most-able learners.

Leaders and managers have taken action to improve the learning environment at the Ellesmere Port campus through increasing the number of partitions between learning areas. Further work is required to reduce the disruption to lessons caused by noise from surrounding areas.

**What progress has the college made in improving the quality of English and mathematics provision?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have taken swift action to improve the quality of English and mathematics provision. They have introduced additional lessons to support learners who are not progressing quickly enough towards achieving their qualifications. The planned improvements to the timetabling of English and mathematics lessons for September 2016 are intended to address the timetabling weaknesses identified in the last monitoring visit. Several teachers whose performance was weak have now left the college.

Teachers provide good support for learners as they prepare for their examinations in English and mathematics. They plan revision lessons well to ensure that learners work on specific activities to improve their skills in the areas they find most challenging.

Despite these improvements, the quality of English and mathematics provision is not yet consistently high. Activities do not always challenge learners sufficiently well, and poor classroom management inhibits the development of learners' personal skills and confidence. In many lessons, learners have little opportunity to interact with their

peers and develop their confidence to express their ideas and engage in discussion about the lesson content.

Managers of vocational programmes take insufficient responsibility for ensuring that learners make good progress towards achieving their English and mathematics qualifications. As result, too many learners, including those making good progress on their vocational course, fall behind on their English and mathematics courses.

**What progress have managers made in improving the quality of additional support for learners who need extra help?**

**Reasonable progress**

The team of learning support assistants has carried out relevant training to improve their awareness on the expectations of the role and the skills they need to provide effective support. This is beginning have a positive impact on the quality of support that they provide in lessons for learners who need extra help. Learning support assistants are more effective in providing constructive support through appropriate questioning and guidance rather than completing work for learners. They provide good support for learners with behavioural difficulties that reduces disruption and enables these learners to remain focused on their learning.

Planning of learning to meet the needs of learners who need extra help is not rigorous enough. Learning support assistants rarely plan alternative activities to meet the specific needs of the learners they are supporting. They do not plan support well enough to increase learners' independence and so reduce the volume of support that learners need as they progress on their course.

**How well are governors, leaders and managers implementing the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty?**

**Reasonable progress**

Governors, leaders and managers are implementing the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty well. Governors and all staff have participated in appropriate training on the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Management responsibilities for safeguarding learners from all risks, including those relating to the 'Prevent' duty, are sufficiently robust. Close links are maintained with relevant agencies including the local authority safeguarding team, social services and the police to ensure a coordinated and effective approach to recognising and reducing risks of radicalisation. Tutors receive relevant training prior to delivering tutorials on radicalisation and extremism. They successfully develop learners' awareness of the risks through well-designed tutorial activities. Managers have not yet carried out an evaluation of the level of learners' understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism that would enable them to identify whether any further action is needed.

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