

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130408
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Last day of inspection: 2 November 2016
Type of provider: General further education college

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Publication date:

Inspection number: 10020860



Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the third follow up re-inspection monitoring visit to Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College following publication of the inspection report on 15 December 2015 which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College is a large general further education college which has four sites: Southall Community College; Hammersmith and Fulham College; Ealing Green College; and Acton Construction STEM Centre. It recruits learners from across west London and neighbouring boroughs and around 20,000 learners study at the college. Courses, which are largely for vocational training are offered in almost all subject areas. Most are taught at the college's sites, but the college also works in partnership with subcontractors, especially for apprenticeships. The college has learners on higher education programmes. Around 50% of learners at the college are from a Black or minority ethnic heritage.

Themes

The improvement of outcomes for learners

Significant progress

At the last inspection, the proportion of learners and apprentices achieving their qualifications was low, and had declined over the previous three academic years. Leaders and managers have successfully, and significantly, reversed this trend. For 2015/16, learners' overall achievement, for classroom based courses, is now above the national rate for colleges, with the large majority of learners completing their courses and achieving their qualifications.

Both the achievement of adults, by far the largest proportion of learners, and of learners aged 16 to 18, increased significantly in 2015/16, although overall achievement for adults is considerably higher. The large number of learners with high needs achieve very well, as do the substantial number of looked after learners, with good improvement to achievements in 2015/16.

Within this very positive picture overall, there is provision where achievement, although much improved, requires further improvement. The overall achievement of learners on level 3 courses is still below the national rate for colleges, especially for adults, and for the relatively small A level provision overall achievement requires further improvement, and high grades are too low. Apprentices' completion of their programmes within agreed timescales is markedly above national rates, but requires further improvement, as does overall framework completion.

Managers and teachers are beginning to make better use of information on the progress that learners make, given their starting points. Data for level 3 learners in 2015/16 shows that overall, learners too often did not make the progress expected of them and not enough made better than expected progress.

Actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure that they are increasingly of a consistently high quality

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have successfully transformed the culture of the college so that staff now have higher expectations of themselves and of their learners, and have maintained the rate of progress seen at the previous monitoring visit. Teachers are much more open about their practice and willingly share ideas with each other. Leaders and managers have used performance management processes well to support teachers to improve and, where necessary, to secure their departure.

Managers have taken positive steps to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They have a well-considered strategy, articulated clearly in 'the West London Way', that staff are fully aware of. Managers have implemented a thorough staff development programme that supports the strategy for improving teaching and learning and teachers have responded positively to this. In order to improve consistency in teachers' practice within curriculum areas, managers hold weekly team meetings where they share good practice. Teachers also increase their skills by observing each other teach, and while this is effective within curriculum areas, managers recognise the scope to broaden this between curriculum areas.

Leaders have introduced positive measures to recognise and reward excellence in teaching and to share this good practice, for example through the creation of around 30 beacon teachers. Leaders and managers have made good use of external organisations, including the Education Training Foundation, to train teachers and managers.

In order to improve consistency in managers' evaluations of the quality of teaching, the observation team has been reduced in numbers and given training to ensure that they assess lessons accurately. Teachers have also been trained to prepare them for observations and to ensure they know what expectations managers have of them. According to managers' data, the proportion of good or better lessons is now 85%, with none being inadequate.

The better planning of learning, enabling good or better progress, especially for the most able

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have put in place effective actions to improve the guidance given to learners before they enrol at the college, ensuring they are placed on courses to which they are suited, given their prior attainment and career and study goals. Consequently, in the current year, the proportion of learners leaving the college within the first six weeks has reduced markedly.

Managers have improved considerably their understanding of, and systems to monitor, the progress that learners make relative to their prior attainment, including for the most able learners. There was insufficient understanding in the previous academic year and not enough learners on level 3 academic and vocational programmes achieved the grades expected of them, although significantly more, of all ages and on all levels, achieved their qualifications. In this academic year, managers and teachers have a much improved knowledge of learners' prior attainment and the grades expected of them.

Managers and teachers have implemented a much better programme of assessments in order to measure more frequently and accurately the progress that learners make. At the time of the monitoring visit it was too early in the year to judge the impact of these actions.

Teachers and curriculum managers make effective use of the online system used for monitoring learners' progress. They can easily identify those who are falling behind in their work and have a range of suitable support mechanisms in place to help learners catch up.

Managers have ensured a strong focus on helping teachers to plan, and use, activities and tasks relevant to the abilities of different learners. All lesson plans now make reference to objectives set for the most able learners. However, as yet, not enough teachers are sufficiently skilled at putting all their plans into action. During inspectors' observations of lessons very good practice was seen in ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), inclusive learning, and fitness training, but this was not consistent across a minority of other subjects.

The improved use of target setting for learners and apprentices, to raise their aspirations and support them to achieve

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers continue to take appropriate action to improve the quality of targets set for learners. On 16 to 19 study programmes, teachers make good use of the online tools for the setting of targets which, helpfully, for both teachers and learners, include learners' targets for English and mathematics, as well as those for their other vocational and academic learning and progress.

The use of targets has improved markedly on most programmes. Almost all learners know their target grades and, in the best cases, use these to motivate themselves to achieve. Learners frequently review their progress with their tutors and teachers and have a good awareness of the progress they are making. In most cases, teachers set well-drafted targets for learners so that they know what actions they can take to improve their skills or understanding.

On apprenticeships, the head of operations and the newly appointed staff for quality and performance management now closely monitor the quality of target setting, both

on the college-delivered programmes and for subcontractors. Staff still need to improve further the targets set for apprentices, ensuring that these relate not just to the completion of units of their qualifications, but are more individualised. This will enable all apprentices to identify targets which focus on their specific skills development, particularly in the workplace.

The improvement of learners' rates of attendance Significant progress

Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders and managers have continued to ensure that the further improvement of learners' attendance remains a key priority.

Overall attendance for 2015/16 was 87%, compared with 84% in the previous year. For 2016/17 to date, overall attendance is 90%, with little variation between constituent colleges and different curriculum areas, reflecting the very positive behaviour and attitudes that learners have towards their learning. Attendance for English and mathematics lessons has improved significantly and college data for the current year shows that learners' attendance at their lessons is often good. The attendance of looked after learners is particularly high, at 91%; much improved over 2014/15.

Learners better understand the link between their attendance and achievement, and the importance that employers attach to employees' good attendance. Managers and teachers are making particularly good use of employers, as guest speakers, and during work experience, for example, to emphasise the importance of good attendance for employability.

Leaders and managers have reinforced their message to staff that learners' poor attendance will not be tolerated. They have high expectations of teachers in the implementation of the college's rigorous arrangements to tackle poor attendance. Incentives and sanctions are used well to re-engage disaffected learners and improve attendance.

Ensuring improvement in the quality of teaching Reasonable progress and learning, and outcomes, in English and mathematics

Leaders and managers continue to strongly focus on improving the quality of the provision in English and mathematics. Two new heads of English and mathematics, appointed in February and April 2016, have improved its management and implemented much more effective timetabling of lessons across all college sites. The subjects now have more status in the eyes of learners and teachers, and learners' attendance at both English and mathematics lessons has improved to 90%.

Managers continue to tackle underperformance and have established more coherent teaching teams, with more substantive posts and little reliance on agency staff. They have much improved the yearly assessment schedules, for both functional skills and GCSE, providing teachers, learners and parents with clarity. Learners taking GCSE examinations in November 2016 attended helpful additional workshops and had individual and supportive coaching.

Curriculum area managers now take responsibility for their learners' performance in English and mathematics, particularly as part of 16 to 19 study programmes. Their closer liaison with specialist teachers of English and mathematics is improving learners' progress and attendance. Specialist teachers work ever more closely with vocational teachers, who, with training, increasingly teach English and mathematics within the context of learners' vocational areas of study.

On 16 to 19 study programmes, teachers ensure that learners have settled well into their new groups for English and mathematics, with appropriate initial and diagnostic assessment of their individual starting points. Learners' behaviour is generally good and the vast majority demonstrate that they are keen to learn. Learners benefit from very helpful individual coaching, questioning and feedback, enabling them to clarify their understanding of key concepts, through discussions with teachers.

However, managers and teachers have not yet secured sufficient improvements in teaching and learning for English and mathematics. Most significantly, teaching does not sufficiently challenge all learners or enable them all to make the progress that they are capable of, and work is too often at the same pace and level, with insufficiently skilled checking of individual learning in lessons.

Learners' achievements in English and mathematics are improving overall, but require further improvement. In 2015/16, although learners' achievements in functional skills in both English and mathematics at entry levels and level 1 improved, at level 2 they declined and are low. Learners' high grade achievement in GCSE English and GCSE mathematics improved, but particularly for learners aged 16 to 18 are still too low.

Ensuring that safeguarding continues to be effective

Significant progress

Safeguarding was effective at the last inspection. Leaders and managers continue to ensure that the safeguarding of learners has the highest priority and that arrangements for safeguarding are fully effective. They have paid good attention to keeping pace with the changing demands of safeguarding, including the fuller implementation of the 'Prevent' duty.

In relation to 'Prevent' and helping learners to best understand British values, managers have planned to build on the training that learners have already received, through training that relates specifically to the type, and nature, of their course.

The college has over 150 looked after learners and has paid particular attention to their safeguarding, working even more closely with the many local authorities concerned, and making collaborative early interventions to best safeguard these learners. Learners with high needs are also particularly well safeguarded.

Further actions by leaders and managers to maintain the quality of safeguarding are well conceived, clearly published and subject to detailed monitoring and review by senior managers and governors.

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