

City of Bristol College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: General further education college

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the third re-inspection monitoring visit to City of Bristol College following publication of the inspection report on 10 March 2016 which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

At the inspection in January 2016 inspectors judged overall effectiveness; the effectiveness of leadership and management; personal development, behaviour and welfare; outcomes for learners; and apprenticeships, to be inadequate. 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.

At the previous re-inspection monitoring visit in June 2016 inspectors judged that governors and staff at the college were making reasonable progress with the following themes:

- The quality and implementation of an action plan to tackle the weaknesses identified during the inspection.
- Governors' effectiveness in improving provision and holding senior leaders to account for their actions following the latest inspection.
- Learners' attendance at lessons.
- The leadership of apprenticeship provision.

Themes

Qualification outcomes, and learners' progress from their starting points, in 2015/16. Reasonable progress

Up until 2015/16, the proportion of learners who completed and achieved their qualifications had declined for three years. In 2015/16, this decline was arrested but has yet to be reversed.

Behind this headline lie considerable variations in qualification outcomes for different groups of learners and different subjects. Improvements in achievements in 2014/15 for adults at levels 1 and 3 have continued in 2015/16. However, achievement for 16- to 18-year-old learners on full-time courses at level 2 has fallen further and is now very low. A higher proportion of learners studying diploma courses are now achieving their qualification than in previous years but those studying for awards are less successful than in previous years.

The overall proportion of apprentices who complete their apprenticeship, as well as those that do so in the expected timescale, has increased slightly. The rate of increase has been rapid for intermediate apprentices in accounting, hairdressing, customer service, and warehousing and storage, as well as for advanced apprentices in catering. However, the proportions of apprentices successfully completing and

achieving their apprenticeship in administration, vehicle maintenance and repair, team leading and catering, remain low or have declined.

The grades achieved by A-level learners, when taking into account their prior achievement, are slightly higher than in previous years. However, the proportion of learners on AS levels who achieve their expected grades fell sharply in 2015/16 compared to previous years.

Learners who have previously received free school meals, been in care or have a learning difficulty and/or disability have similar achievement rates as other learners.

The effectiveness of arrangements for monitoring learners' progress in 2016/17.

Reasonable progress

Following the previous inspection managers swiftly took action to improve the availability of information about learners' progress. Staff have improved their use of the college's electronic records to record accurately information about the progress learners should make. They now evaluate learners' progress by comparing when learners complete assignments and units with the expected dates for completion. As a result, staff, learners and managers now have the reliable information about learners' progress which they previously lacked. Staff who had not been consistently recording learners' progress accurately now do so as a result of effective training.

Staff are recording and sharing information about learners more effectively. As a result, they are better able to work together to put in place the support that learners need early enough to stop them from getting behind with their work.

Senior managers closely monitor the accuracy of learners' records and use this information to take action to prevent learners' progress from slowing. They now meet frequently with curriculum managers and, due to the improved accuracy of information, their actions to support learners are quicker and better tailored to individual needs than in previous years.

Recently appointed study coaches have a clear focus on supporting the progress and achievement of learners, something that was missing for many learners at the time of the previous inspection.

Managers have successfully created a culture which encourages staff at all levels to be innovative in their solutions to improve outcomes for their learners. As a result, managers are supporting staff with schemes to reward, and provide incentives for, learners' high attendance. Curriculum managers are taking greater responsibility for supporting their staff by, for example, being in the corridors to talk to learners on days and times where they have identified deteriorations in learners' punctuality and attendance.

Senior managers are aware that, at the time of this monitoring visit, it is too early to evaluate the impact of actions taken by their staff to stop learners falling behind with their work. They have planned how they will provide more support if strategies are not successful and have devised a process that will trigger more interventions and resources to support learners if necessary.

Learners' attendance at lessons.

Reasonable progress

Levels of attendance have risen compared to the same point in the previous year. The increase for adults has been greater than the increase for 16- to 18-year-olds. Staff use college systems more effectively than at the time of the previous inspection to monitor learners' attendance at lessons. Staff share information on learners' attendance, and the reasons for non-attendance, more effectively which has led to them providing the necessary support, or applying sanctions, quickly and effectively.

Senior managers have clearly explained their expectations of high attendance to learners and staff now understand their responsibilities for emphasising the importance of high attendance to their learners. Staff feel better supported in this, by senior managers, than prior to the previous inspection. They have more confidence in the effectiveness of measures to deal with poor attendance. Incentives, such as free breakfasts and reward schemes devised by course teams, have been introduced to encourage better punctuality and attendance but the impact of these has yet to be evaluated and data is not consistently collected to enable this.

Managers have yet to monitor the attendance of different groups of learners sufficiently. As a result, plans to improve the quality of provision do not contain precise enough actions. Managers have not recognised sufficiently some small declines in attendance in 2016/17 or produced contingency plans for how to manage these if they become more prevalent.

The effectiveness of college leaders in taking action to make improvements in the weaker curriculum areas.

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of curriculum areas. They have revised arrangements for managing curriculum areas and have successfully developed a team of middle managers who understand and promote the college's revised values and codes of conduct for staff and learners. Senior leaders provide managers with a high level of support to achieve improvements to learners' outcomes and to take actions to improve provision. However, given the high number of weaknesses that existed in the previous year, managers have much to do. Mostly they are prioritising their actions well but weaknesses, such as continued low attendance in a small number of curriculum areas and some insufficiently critical evaluations of the quality of provision, are not being dealt with quickly enough.

Teachers' and assessors' poor assessment practice had contributed to the decline in the proportion of learners achieving their qualifications in the three years prior to the most recent inspection. This continued to prevent a small number of learners from completing their studies within the expected timescale. Managers have effectively improved the quality of assessment practice by teachers and assessors. For example, in construction, teachers and assessors have improved the quality of their assessment practice sufficiently to secure the confidence of the awarding organisation. Construction apprentices are now able to achieve their apprenticeship, albeit later than expected.

Action plans are not consistently of a high enough standard. Some, which should provide details of actions to tackle poor outcomes in 2015/16, have yet to be completed. Some do not identify actions precisely enough and some omit significant areas for improvement, such as how staff will improve outcomes for 16- to 18-year-old learners at level 2.

The impact of the college’s arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have improved their knowledge of the quality of teaching by spending more time visiting classrooms and consulting with teachers and learners. They have identified clearly improvements that teachers need to make to lessons and provided relevant training. They have followed up training well by ensuring that their judgements about the quality of teaching focus on how well teachers are putting their training into practice. For example, over the summer they introduced new codes of conduct for staff and learners and trained staff in applying them. This was followed early in the autumn term with managers checking whether these codes are applied effectively in lessons.

Individual teams of teachers have welcomed the opportunity offered by recent training. One group attended a talk on recognising transferable skills and recognised that this was something their learners would benefit from. Therefore they followed the training with a team meeting to devise materials and activities to help their learners prepare their applications for university.

Managers have well-developed plans to encourage teachers to share their experiences of effective teaching, starting with an event in December where teachers will demonstrate their ideas. Teachers who need to, or who want to, improve their teaching are being given effective help by teaching, learning and assessment coaches. Curriculum managers now have clear responsibilities for monitoring the quality of teaching in their area and for ensuring that teachers are supported to make improvements when necessary.

The revised arrangements for leading apprenticeship provision and their impact on the quality of apprenticeships.

Reasonable progress

Senior managers now have an appropriate focus on improving the quality of apprenticeships and have the expertise to do this. They have reviewed the extent to which apprenticeships meet the needs of employers and apprentices and have removed those that do neither. In curriculum areas in which the college is no longer recruiting new apprentices, managers have made arrangements to ensure that current apprentices continue to receive the support they need.

Managers have a better understanding, than at the time of the previous inspection, of their apprentices’ achievement, areas of development and where interventions are required. They use robust performance measures to assess the quality of apprenticeship training and hold staff to account for the performance of their

apprentices. Managers now analyse the data they collect about their apprentices' progress in order to understand the quality of different apprenticeships and to decide how best to allocate staff and resources. Towards the end of 2015/16, their estimates for the proportion of apprentices expected to achieve their apprenticeship proved to be accurate. In the past, this had been an imprecise estimation which had provided undue comfort to senior leaders about the quality of provision.

Staff are more careful, when recruiting new apprentices, to ensure that the apprenticeship meets the apprentices', and the employers' needs. They have improved their liaison with employers and are working more closely with staff throughout the college to ensure all are working in the best interests of the apprentices.

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