

Hereward 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 Hereward College following publication of the inspection report on 21 November 2016. That inspection found the provider to be inadequate for overall effectiveness; the effectiveness of leadership and management; and personal behaviour, development and welfare. The college required improvement for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes for learners. The provision for learners with high needs was judged as inadequate.

At the time of the monitoring visit, the principal was on long-term sickness leave, and an interim principal had been in post for just over two weeks. A new chair of governors had recently been appointed. The college was in receipt of intervention by the Further Education Commissioner in November 2016. The Skills Funding Agency issued a revised notice of concern in the same month. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected the college's residential provision in October 2016 and judged it to be good overall.

Themes

The fitness for purpose of the post-inspection action plan; reporting arrangements; and rigour of senior leaders' and governors' scrutiny.

The post-inspection action plan, which was produced shortly after the inspection, outlines key areas for development as reflected in the inspection report. The plan identifies fundamental actions to be taken by appropriate staff and records that initial milestones have been achieved in a limited number of areas. Senior leaders have recognised that a clear line of sight needs to be established between the high-level action plan and individual staff development plans, so that all staff across the college know and understand the contribution they must make to improvement.

Although the intended outcomes of actions are mostly clear in the post-inspection action plan, many areas lack sufficient detail on how progress will be monitored. For example, too many areas of the plan do not contain an impact measure. Too few areas of the plan have meaningful or measurable targets to demonstrate the achievement of milestones of success along the improvement journey. Many actions in the plan are risk-rated as green and complete, although there is no measure of the impact of these actions on improving provision. Timescales in the plan, where specified, are too distant; this is particularly concerning where it is unclear how governors, leaders and managers will measure reliably progress and impact. The plan lacks reference to the needs of the current cohort of challenging and vulnerable learners and how their needs will be met.

Although leaders have taken steps to review the quality assurance process, managers have not yet established how the current quality cycle will be used to capture the evidence needed to assure leaders and managers that progress is being made.

For example, managers have not set the objectives for the revised college quality team. Leaders have not yet indicated how the achievement of milestones in one area will contribute to making successful progress overall. Managers do not make enough reference in the plan to their expectations of how college staff will meet the standards they have set.

Managers have not yet established mechanisms to ensure that improvement actions will result in sustained improvement. Planned activities within the post-inspection action plan demonstrate an over-reliance on the expectations of training to promote improvement, with little reference to securing sustainable improvements through management monitoring and support. In addition, the college's current staff training plan does not yet link to the post-inspection action plan.

Priorities for improvement

Leaders and managers must:

- urgently review the post-inspection action plan to ensure that:
 - clear and precise impact measures are in place, in order to monitor closely the success of planned actions
 - targets and milestones are included in order to ensure that steps to improvement are monitored, recognised and confirmed with suitable evidence
 - they take account of the inter-dependency of the success of one action on another
 - they adjust current quality improvement arrangements to support the measurement of success
 - staff at all levels across the college know and recognise their role in supporting the success of the plan
 - planned training is supported by additional coaching and mentoring so that staff are confident in the expectations made of them to support sustained culture change.

The effectiveness of safeguarding, including a review of all aspects of safeguarding arrangements and the level of engagement with external professionals, to ensure that:

- **they are robust and prioritise the safety and welfare of young people and adults**
- **they meet statutory requirements;**

Ensure that the recording and monitoring of all incidents and concerns are effective, that staff are suitably trained and that learners are safe in all learning and residential settings.

At the previous inspection, inspectors judged the arrangements for safeguarding as ineffective. Governors, leaders and managers had not ensured that the college met its responsibilities in relation to 'Working together to safeguard children' and 'Keeping children safe in education'.

Inspectors found that the existing systems and procedures to safeguard all learners were not comprehensive enough and their implementation lacked sufficient rigour and urgency.

Since the inspection, leaders have appointed a new safeguarding manager to take up post in January 2017.

Leaders have begun to strengthen their relationships with external professionals. Close links with the local authority designated officer (LADO) in particular, are providing the college's designated safeguarding lead with valuable support in determining suitable safeguarding thresholds for referring concerns. However, leaders require a better understanding of the thresholds so that they make the correct referrals to the local authority and deal with other incidents effectively at the college. The number of incidents being referred to external agencies has risen as leaders' and staff's understanding of safeguarding has begun to grow.

While relationships with external professionals have begun to strengthen, they are not yet being maximised. For example, leaders and managers have not built links with the police service or the safeguarding team at the local authority to support curriculum development. As a result, external agencies have not contributed sufficiently to specialist training for staff and learners.

The college's overview of safeguarding incidents notes what has taken place and when, and the actions that have been taken, but does not show the follow-up action needed, making it difficult for leaders to monitor and hold staff to account. A worryingly high proportion of the incidents involve sexualised behaviour, and in some cases sexual assaults by one learner on another. Female learners and learners looked after are more often victims than learners from other groups. Leaders and managers now have a greater awareness that these incidents are occurring. However, leaders do not have a sufficiently wide range of strategies to tackle this endemic issue.

Leaders have sought and received support from the local authority to develop the safeguarding policy. The policy has been revised to take into account current government guidance. The new safeguarding policy deals primarily with issues of child protection. It fails to explain the college's approach to child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, restraint, intimate care or bullying, all of which are important issues for this group of learners. The policy fails to pay attention to the risks involved in staff and learners working on a one-to-one basis. Furthermore, it does not address the communication needs of the learners; for instance, how learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties or communication difficulties might communicate their concerns or disclose if they were being abused or harmed.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has undertaken both initial and refresher safeguarding lead training this term. Almost all staff have received general safeguarding training.

A survey of their knowledge and understanding revealed some important weaknesses; the DSL has plans in place to address these, but it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

The DSL has correctly identified that greater attention needs to be paid to staff's understanding of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and female genital mutilation (FGM), as well as to more general aspects of safeguarding. However, there is no clear, separate plan for safeguarding training, which makes it difficult for governors to keep a strategic overview and provide suitable challenge, and for leaders to notice quickly any likely omissions.

Leaders have started to undertake a review of the college's admissions policy. In particular, requests from the local authorities to cater for a wide range of learners, with potentially conflicting behaviour and support needs. The college does not always receive full or timely information about potential learners from local authorities. Some initial discussion has taken place with the three main placing authorities, leading to early agreement from one that it will avoid placing learners with challenging behaviours at the college.

Leaders and managers have paid insufficient attention to how to manage the current mix of learners more safely and effectively. Leaders have carried out risk assessments on various aspects of the college's work, which highlight a range of necessary actions to minimise risks to learners. Some of these risks have been underplayed, with the potential that actions are not strong or responsive enough.

Leaders and managers have given initial thought as to how to help learners to behave more safely and to understand how to keep themselves safe. Twenty staff have received training on how to teach 'protective behaviours'; leaders plan to disseminate this training to all staff in due course. Learners have received a series of 'briefings' in their pastoral time during the morning, focused on safeguarding. Days are planned to take place each half-term to focus on various aspects of safeguarding with learners. One has been held so far, focusing on the 'Prevent' duty. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these actions on learners' understanding of safeguarding.

Leaders and managers acknowledge that they are finding it challenging to balance the delivery of the accredited curriculum with the need to increase greatly the focus on personal, social and health education, and in particular sex and relationships education. While a start has been made on weaving these aspects into the daily life of the college, there is a long way to go to ensure that there is a sufficient focus on these crucial aspects of education for the learners. Leaders and managers have not ensured that enough attention has been paid to providing learners who have communication difficulties or those with profound and multiple learning difficulties with the means to communicate their fears, anxieties and uncertainties, or to be able to let someone know if they have been harmed.

Leaders acknowledge that their current policy of telephoning the parents of absent learners aged 14 to 16 at some point after 10am is inadequate.

Leaders have draft plans in place for the implementation of a revised curriculum in 2017/18. This includes a greater focus on, and more time allocated to, the development of learners' personal, social and emotional skills and improvements to their understanding of safeguarding. However, managers recognise that further work is required to ensure that current learners have a good understanding of self-advocacy, the giving and receiving of messages regarding sexual behaviour and the use of a range of non-verbal communication methods to disclose concerns and feelings to staff.

Managers have ensured that aspects of sex education form part of the English curriculum. For example, English teachers promote an understanding of HIV and safe sex when discussing World Aids Day; learners gain a better understanding of healthy relationships when writing a letter to an 'agony aunt' at a magazine. Leaders and managers are planning to develop further the promotion of sex education where appropriate, across all subjects.

Leaders have created a safeguarding staff group to act as safeguarding champions, who meet daily to share important information between the residence and the day staff.

Priorities for improvement

Leaders and managers must:

- maximise links and relationships with external professionals to:
 - gain specific advice and guidance
 - provide training for staff
 - develop the curriculum related to safeguarding, personal, social and health education and sex and relationships education
 - provide a layer of objectivity and challenge
 - build leadership capacity
- urgently devise a specific strategy to tackle the incidents of unwanted sexual attention paid by one learner to another, which sometimes result in sexual assaults; they should seek external advice and guidance as needed
- urgently ensure a greater focus on the development of current learners' personal, social and emotional skills and their understanding of safeguarding
- build relationships with the police Vulnerability, Early Help and Referral Officer in order to support with training staff and educating and supporting learners with appropriate behaviours, as necessary
- ensure that the new safeguarding manager has ample opportunities to observe and learn from good practice in safeguarding in other colleges and in schools
- ensure that risk assessments are realistic, sufficiently wide-ranging and take full account of the needs of the current learner population

- ensure that the safeguarding policy fully reflects the needs of the learners, and is clear about an appropriately wide range of safeguarding issues, including child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, intimate care, restraint and bullying
- develop a clear plan for staff training related to all aspects of safeguarding and carefully monitor its impact
- deeply embed, in staff's and learners' understanding, the concept of appropriate and safe physical and emotional interactions
- ensure that current learners have a good understanding of self-advocacy, the giving and receiving of messages regarding sexual behaviour and the use of a range of non-verbal communication methods to disclose concerns and feelings to staff
- develop further the promotion of sex education where appropriate, across all subjects, so that all learners have a good understanding of the subject matter
- engage in additional training from the LADO and other external professionals to improve leaders' understanding of the safeguarding thresholds, so that they make the correct referrals to the local authority and deal with other incidents effectively at the college.

The effectiveness of governance, and the extent to which board members hold senior leaders and managers to account for the accuracy of self-assessment and the effectiveness of safeguarding practices and procedures.

At the most recent inspection, inspectors judged that governors had not ensured that the college met its safeguarding responsibilities. Inspectors identified that the self-assessment of the college's performance was inaccurate and governors, leaders and managers had underestimated the significance of serious weaknesses in safeguarding learners.

Since the inspection, senior leaders and governors have recognised that a review of the governance arrangements for safeguarding needs to be completed, and they have commissioned a few days of external support to start in January 2017. The aim of this is to strengthen overall arrangements and to improve the support and challenge provided by governors.

The new chair of governors has a robust understanding of the challenges that college leaders face and has initiated strategies to reform the support and challenge that the governing body will make in the future; for example, the link governor role has been reinstated. The clerk is currently seeking to recruit a governor with expertise in safeguarding in order to better equip the governors and support improvement. Initial safeguarding training has been provided to governors.

Governors recognise that the key priorities of the college are challenging. They understand that dealing with the areas for improvement from the inspection is entirely separate from the strategies needed to support the future direction of the college.

The new chair of governors recognises that the previous weak governance and oversight of the leadership of safeguarding remain an issue. Senior leaders provide the governing body with insufficient information to inform them of significant issues and high-risk cases. Senior leaders have made improvements to the quality and frequency of safeguarding reports to governors, but at the time of this visit, too little information was available. A revised report to governors on safeguarding is not scheduled to be presented until January 2017.

Governors currently provide insufficient challenge to the senior leadership team regarding safeguarding practice and the success of processes in improving the safety of learners. For example, the governing body is currently unaware of the risk assessment process used by college managers and how effectively leaders are assessing the needs of learners. Although external support has been sourced by governors to build the capacity of governors and senior leaders, this action is too slow and is currently delaying the effectiveness of governors' ability to support and challenge leaders.

Priorities for improvement

Governors, leaders and managers must:

- urgently implement the revised governance arrangements so that they can effectively support and challenge safeguarding practice
- allocate the resources needed in order to achieve rapid improvements
- ensure that they are able to focus on addressing the issues identified at the inspection and are not distracted by the future strategies for the college.

The effectiveness of actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, of individual learning support, and of the progress made and the standards achieved by learners.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that teachers' expectations of their learners were not of a consistently high standard. They did not set learners sufficiently specific targets to meet their individual needs or to improve their skills development. Teachers did not routinely involve independent learning staff (ILS) in the planning of learning and assessment, and too often did not direct them well enough in lessons, resulting in a negative impact on learners' progress.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have responded quickly to the need to improve aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. They have recently introduced a number of quality improvement initiatives including: a clear quality improvement strategy and cycle which includes reviewing learners' performance; audits of learners' work; conducting internal quality reviews of each learning pathway; detailed improvement action plans for staff managing each pathway; and ongoing management 'health checks' of the progress made as a result of the actions taken. Managers are able to identify that the actions are beginning to result in improvements to the quality of provision.

Leaders and managers have provided teachers with training on supporting and challenging learners in lessons and setting personalised targets for learners. Managers' records of recent observations of lessons indicate that teachers are using questioning techniques well to engage most learners in learning activities; the quality of targets set by teachers and ILS has improved. However, further improvements are required to ensure that targets are sufficiently personalised for all learners so that they make consistently good progress in their learning.

Leaders and managers have provided ILS with training on how to improve their communication and support for learners and teachers; staff are allocated an afternoon each week to plan lessons jointly with teachers and to update risk assessments and behaviour plans for each learner. Most staff make good use of this time. Managers regularly observe and assess the interaction between ILS and learners in the residences and outside of lessons. However, managers do not observe ILS separately from teachers in lessons and therefore do not provide them with sufficiently detailed information on their strengths and areas for improvement.

Managers' assessment of the quality of the work undertaken by ILS indicates that the quality of planning and the levels of communication between ILS and teachers and learners have improved. However, these require further improvement to ensure that all ILS provide learners and teachers with a consistent and good-quality service.

Leaders and managers have developed further the observation of teaching and learning process; records of the feedback given to teachers by managers include a good focus on the progress made by learners, the craft of teaching, the planning of learning to meet learners' individual needs, and the quality of feedback provided to learners. The post-observation development plans are specific and clearly identify the areas for improvement, the actions taken and the improvement made by the teachers. However, managers' feedback to teachers does not always focus sufficiently on the standard of learners' work and the level of their skills development. It too often does not capture what learners can now do as a result of attending the learning session, the impact of ILS on learners' progress, or the opportunities taken by teachers and ILS to reinforce learners' understanding of safeguarding, self-advocacy, British values and 'Prevent'.

Leaders and managers have introduced a new system for tracking the standard of apprentices' work and their progress over time. Action plans help to ensure that the most able learners are challenged appropriately and the least able learners are supported and make at least good progress. Managers plan to adopt this system to track all classroom-based learners from January 2017.

Priorities for improvement

Managers must:

- improve the quality of observers' feedback to teachers so that it focuses sufficiently on the standard of learners' work and the level of their skills development; records what learners can now do as a result of attending the learning session; measures the impact of the support provided by the ILS on the progress learners make; captures the opportunities taken by teachers and ILS to reinforce learners' understanding of safeguarding, self-advocacy, British values and 'Prevent' in lessons
- ensure that all teachers and ILS provide learners with targets that are sufficiently personalised, so that learners make good or better progress in their learning
- observe ILS separately from teaching staff in lessons; provide them with detailed feedback on their strengths and weaknesses; provide them with support from managers to create an improvement development plan and help them to improve to their performance
- ensure that all ILS are engaged by teachers in the planning of learning sessions, so that they provide learners with good-quality and effective support
- plan a schedule of peer observations for the spring term so that ILS are able to share good practice in supporting learners and teachers
- adopt the use of the apprenticeship tracking system across all subjects; use it to monitor the standard of learners' work and the progress they make over time; use the information to ensure that, where learners are not making the expected progress or working at the expected standard, appropriate remedial actions are taken
- measure the impact of each of the quality improvement interventions on the quality of provision.

Improvements in the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment in discrete English and mathematics provision; improvements in the standards of work and the skills developed by learners.

At the previous inspection, inspectors judged that in discrete English lessons, teachers did not focus sufficiently on improving learners' technical skills in writing, in the correct use of punctuation, or on skimming and scanning strategies in reading. Too often teachers used learning activities which learners found dull and uninspiring. In discrete mathematics lessons, staff did not take into account learners' varying abilities when planning assessment activities; as a result, those learners who were more confident and most able were insufficiently challenged.

Since the previous inspection, managers have undertaken an audit of the planning of learning in lessons and over time, and the use of ILS by English and mathematics teachers. The analysis of the findings of the audit indicated that not all teachers were planning learning and assessment sufficiently.

As a result, managers have provided staff with a helpful checklist to help them to identify the starting points and support needs of each learner. Managers' recent observations of English and mathematics lessons indicate that planning for learning and support has much improved, and many learners are now making good progress in developing their skills.

During the visit, an inspector sampled a small number of learners' portfolios. Teachers' written feedback on learners' work was helpful in improving learners' skills and in identifying the key corrections learners needed to make. As a result, learners were making slow but consistent improvements to the quality of their writing, spelling, use of vocabulary and sentence construction.

Priorities for improvement

Leaders and managers must:

- ensure that English and mathematics teachers plan consistently and effectively learning, assessment and support in lessons, so that all learners make good or better progress in developing their skills and become more independent over time.

The effectiveness of actions to ensure that the college complies with the 'Prevent' duty, including the promotion of British values.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that governors, leaders and managers had failed to comply with the 'Prevent' duty.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have engaged staff and learners in initial face-to-face and online training. Leaders have used the feedback from this early training to identify gaps in staff's and learners' understanding. A group of staff has been trained to become in-house 'Prevent' trainers and cascade knowledge and information to larger groups of staff. A senior leader has recently sought external support in the development of tools and resources to enable staff to become more confident in promoting an understanding of 'Prevent' and British values.

Managers and teachers have begun to provide 'Prevent' training to learners. Managers have considered the most appropriate way to support learners' understanding of the subject matter, at the correct level, based on learners' skills and abilities. A new safeguarding manager has been appointed to start in January 2017 who is already equipped to deliver 'Prevent' train-the-trainer training.

It is not yet clear how the gaps in staff's and learners' knowledge of 'Prevent' and British values will be met. Leaders are at an early stage of devising and using supportive resources to ensure that learners have a good understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Leaders have not yet considered how the impact of 'Prevent' training will be measured.

Priorities for improvement

Leaders and managers must:

- ensure that staff rapidly gain confidence in their knowledge of 'Prevent' and British values, so that they can more effectively plan and deliver appropriate training to learners
- devise and use effective assessment strategies so that leaders and managers can monitor learners' knowledge and understanding, and measure the impact of training on learners' confidence in knowing how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism.

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