

Stockport College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130512

Name of lead inspector: Paul Cocker, HMI

Inspection date(s): 11–12 January 2017

Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Wellington Road South
Stockport
Cheshire
SK1 3UQ



Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to Stockport College following publication of the inspection report on 24 November 2016, which found the provider to be inadequate for overall effectiveness; the effectiveness of leadership and management; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare; and outcomes for learners. Of the three provision types inspected, 16 to 19 study programmes and apprenticeships were judged inadequate and adult learning programmes required improvement.

Themes

What progress have leaders and managers made in producing and implementing a clear action plan in response to the areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection?

Leaders and managers have produced a post inspection action plan (PIAP) which relates directly to the main areas of recommendation identified in the inspection report. However, managers do not prioritise key action points according to their urgency. The timescale by which managers will implement the actions to rectify many of the areas for improvement are not swift enough and so the improvement in learners' progress is too slow. For example, one action details that human resources should undertake an audit of the current level of staff competency in English and mathematics so that the information can be used to provide training and support to teachers as required; the target date for the completion of the audit is February 2017, four months after the inspection.

Many of the actions in the plan relate to the implementation of policies, procedures and processes. The plan makes very little reference to what strategies leaders and managers will implement to improve the particularly weak standards of teaching and learning throughout the college. Consequently, insufficient progress has been made to address many of the recommendations identified at the inspection.

Too many targets are not comprehensive enough and do not contain the necessary short-term milestones to allow managers to meticulously monitor their progress. Consequently, many of the targets set in the action plan are ineffective due to key stages being omitted. For example, the action plan identifies that progress reports will be created for different groups of learners. However, prior to these reports being shared with senior managers and governors, no checks of their accuracy were conducted, resulting in much of the progress data for apprenticeships being imprecise and providing an overly positive picture of apprentices' progress.

Managers acknowledge that there is a significant amount of duplication between the PIAP and the quality improvement plan, which is causing confusion among managers

about which plan to follow; senior managers plan to merge these two documents to avoid repetition and improve clarity.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that the post inspection and quality improvement plan are succinct, clear and realistic to make sure that managers prioritise the most important actions that will have the greatest impact in improving rapidly the learning experiences and outcomes for learners and apprentices.
- Improve the target setting within the action plan to ensure that rigorous reporting and monitoring arrangements are in place, so that managers can identify the rate of improvement and hold staff and managers to account for the completion of specific actions within the plan.
- Combine the post inspection improvement plan with the quality improvement plan to avoid duplication and prevent confusion when planning, executing and evaluating improvements.

What progress have leaders and managers made in implementing a rigorous system to monitor all learners' progress and how effectively do governors hold senior managers to account, ensuring that more learners and apprentices stay on their programme and achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales?

Since the inspection, leaders and managers have worked hard to implement a system to monitor the progress of all learners and apprentices. The electronic monitoring system records for each learner their attendance, marks from key assessments and any notes of concern from staff. However, there are too many gaps in the information, either because the teacher has not completed the records or because the learner has yet to do the assessment. Consequently, the records on the electronic monitoring system are not yet an effective managing and reporting tool.

Managers now receive a weekly data dashboard that details a number of key performance indicators including attendance, average class size, retention and progress made by learners in completing units of their course. These data reports rely on the information from the incomplete electronic monitoring system and so it is not always possible for learners' progress to be determined, as there are too many learners that have yet to submit their assignments.

The system to monitor apprentices' progress is systematically flawed and requires a significant amount of development to allow managers to be confident in the results that it produces. The system does not take into consideration learners' starting points, particularly for their vocational skills, as these are not collected for apprentices. Teachers and assessors place a disproportionate focus on assessing learners' existing competences and monitoring unit completion as opposed to developing new skills and measuring the progress that they make. Consequently, learners' progress is not monitored between unit assessments, which means that

progress monitoring intervals could be as much as 11 weeks on some apprenticeship programmes, such as engineering.

Governors do not receive enough detailed information on learners' progress to allow them to consider what progress learners are making on their programme and hold senior managers to account for poor performance. The progress data that they receive for the apprenticeship programme is imprecise and fails to identify accurate, up-to-date information on the progress that apprentices make on their qualifications. Consequently, senior managers fail to tackle the root causes of why apprentices make slow progress, as they are unaware of which learners are making slow progress.

Priorities for improvement

- Improve the accuracy and use of the college's system for monitoring learners progress, by:
 - ensuring that the data is accurate
 - ensuring that staff have a thorough understanding of the different progress judgements that they can award
 - implementing a system of quality assurance to identify the accuracy of these judgements
 - ensuring that senior managers implement a system to monitor the progress that apprentices make on their qualification for the different components of their apprenticeship.
- Ensure that the governing body receives accurate and detailed reports that clearly articulate the progress that learners make on their courses to allow governors to hold senior managers to account for improvement at the college.

What progress have leaders and managers made in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment?

Leaders and managers have implemented a revised teaching and learning strategy to improve the quality of teachers and assessors' practices. Teachers' and course performance are reviewed monthly at teaching and learning reviews with newly recruited heads of study. Teachers and assessors whose performance is evaluated as being less than good receive a formal improvement plan to support them in developing the skills they need to improve their teaching practice. However, managers fail to use these reviews as a catalyst for significant change within the college. Improvement actions contained within these reviews are perfunctory and do not clearly articulate exactly what needs to be achieved nor do they explain when the action will be completed or who is held to account for its completion.

Leaders' and managers' lack of rapid and effective improvement actions to develop the quality of teaching and learning has resulted in too many weak practices remaining unchallenged. Throughout the monitoring visit, too much teaching and learning was dull and uninspiring and did not challenge learners to achieve what they are capable of. Teachers do not sufficiently use the sparse information that they

receive to plan learning to meet learners' and apprentices' specific requirements. In too many lessons, it is not clear from the activity planned what the teacher's intention is regarding what learners should know and be able to do at the end of the lesson. Teachers are not using the assessment of learners' knowledge and understanding, from either classwork or assignment completion, to plan the next steps in learning so that all learners make the progress they are capable of.

Apprentices' programmes are not sufficiently planned in relation to their previous qualifications and experiences, resulting in a few not developing new skills while at college, but merely accrediting the existing competencies they have acquired in the workplace. Many apprentices do not receive clear learning objectives to work towards nor do they receive helpful feedback. Consequently, they are unable to improve the quality of their work.

Too many teachers do not promote a culture of high expectation in lessons so that learners are prepared for work. Basic classroom rules are not followed. For example, learners wear baseball caps in lessons, mobile phones are used to go on social networking sites when the teacher is delivering key information, and food and drink is consumed while the lesson is in progress. Too many teachers fail to acknowledge and tackle this inappropriate behaviour.

Priorities for improvement

- Managers should ensure that improvement plans are put in place for underperforming teachers and assessors, which identify precisely what they need to do to improve and when and how the areas of improvement will be monitored.
- Implement swiftly a development programme for all members of staff who require support to improve rapidly the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Ensure that all learners' and apprentices' starting points are measured at the beginning of the programme and use this baseline information to plan learning to meet their specific requirements.
- Ensure that teachers and assessors monitor the progress of learners on a regular basis and that they follow college procedures accurately.
- Ensure that all staff comply with the college managers' expectations to challenge learners who do not follow the standards of behaviour in lessons.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that assessors rigorously assess apprentices' starting points and plan programmes to meet apprentices' varying needs?

Leaders and managers have not prioritised the collection of accurate and meaningful information on apprentices' starting points since the inspection. They have been too slow to respond to the recommendations of the inspection, which has led to lessons not being planned and apprentices not learning new skills but merely accrediting existing competencies.

Teachers and assessors record apprentices' starting points in English and mathematics at the start of their apprenticeship. However, most teachers and assessors do not use this valuable information to plan meaningful lessons that support apprentices to develop their skills in English and mathematics.

Operational managers do not ensure that assessments of apprentices' vocational starting points are carried out at the start of the programme. Subsequently, many apprentices work on the same tasks and at the same level despite their significant differences in prior attainment and vocational experiences. This leads to many apprentices not making the progress they are capable of and advising inspectors that they are bored in practical lessons.

Priorities for improvement

- As a matter of the utmost urgency, managers should ensure that they implement a system to assess rigorously apprentices' starting points on all components of their apprenticeship.
- Managers should ensure that teachers and assessors meticulously plan a learning programme that will challenge apprentices to ensure they develop new skills and apply them in the workplace.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners and apprentices improve their English and mathematics skills while at the college, make good progress in attaining their English and mathematics qualifications and achieve good grades in their GCSEs?

Leaders and managers have not improved the poor and sporadic attendance to English and, particularly, mathematics lessons, which hampers learners' and apprentices' progress. Managers have failed to ensure that suitable mathematics teachers are in post at the college to support learners to develop their skills, make good progress and achieve good grades on their qualifications. Inspectors noted too much weak teaching in lessons, which is partly due to the constant changes in teaching staff. The standard of presentation of learners' written work is generally poor, compounded by the lack of challenge by teachers throughout the college for learners to improve the standard of their written work.

In too many instances, all learners in lessons do the same work despite their starting points. In mathematics, learners spend too long doing work that they are already capable of doing as opposed to completing questions that are more challenging and would get them a better grade. In vocational lessons, learners lack a basic understanding of key technical terms they need to understand in order to achieve their qualification.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that teachers rigorously monitor the quality of learners' work in both English and mathematics lessons and ensure that the most able are challenged and those who require additional support receive it.
- Ensure that teachers and assessors set high expectations for learners to ensure that learners and apprentices improve their spelling, grammar and technical vocabulary throughout their courses.

What strategies have leaders and managers put in place to improve attendance and reduce the number of learners that leave their courses early, and how effective have these been?

Since the inspection, leaders and managers have amended the student disciplinary process, which has improved attendance since the inspection but it still remains too low. Data indicates that attendance rates have improved by around 7% since the inspection, from a very low starting point. Around 1 in 5 apprentices do not attend their college classes, which is significantly below the college target of 90% attendance. Too many learners arrive at lessons late. The sanctions for poor attendance and punctuality are not clear and there is no consistent approach to dealing with learners who persistently disregard the college's expectations to attend and arrive to lessons on time. For example, learners attend routine dental appointments and miss lessons.

Mentors record absences and the actions they have taken to contact the learner on the electronic monitoring system. However, the intervention by managers is not robust enough. Managers and staff are too accepting of the reasons for learners' poor attendance. For example, attendance rates of around 35% are recorded for several learners and there are no clear sanctions in place. Managers are not tackling the root causes of poor attendance.

Priorities for improvement

- Managers should ensure that they monitor attendance and intervene swiftly where it is too low.
- Managers should ensure as a matter of urgency that they provide training and support to teachers and assessors to effectively deal with the causes of poor attendance and punctuality in lessons and, when appropriate, escalate concerns to the appropriate manager where improvement does not take place.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Learner View

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

Employer View

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017