

# Mid Cheshire College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130620

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

**Inspection dates:** 24–25 January 2017

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

**Address:** Chester Road  
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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This is the third re-inspection monitoring visit to Mid Cheshire College following publication of the inspection report on 3 March 2016 which found the college to be inadequate overall. At the inspection, outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare, and the effectiveness of leadership and management were judged to be inadequate. Inspectors graded three provision types; 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learning programmes were judged to be inadequate, and apprenticeships were judged to be good.

This monitoring visit focused on implementation of the improvement action plan, improving outcomes for learners, quality improvement, meeting the requirements of study programmes and governance.

### Themes

#### **What progress have leaders and managers made in implementing a clear action plan in response to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection? Reasonable progress**

Leaders and senior managers demonstrate a clear ambition to improve standards. Since the last monitoring visit, they have made progress in implementing more rigorous arrangements to improve staff performance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have prioritised the most urgent actions that they need to take to improve standards. These include making better use of the outcomes of lesson observations to manage staff performance and using data more effectively to monitor learners' progress, retention and attendance. Leaders and managers have identified accurately the college's most effective teachers and managers, and are beginning to put in place arrangements to enable these staff to share good practice across the college. However, progress in making improvements quickly has been hampered by a high level of staff absence.

Leaders and senior managers have recently introduced reviews of each curriculum area that provide information on learners' progress and the outcomes of lesson observations. They use this information in frequent meetings with curriculum managers to identify improvement actions and to hold managers to account for the success of their learners. However, they have not assured themselves fully that all curriculum managers are taking swift and effective action to tackle weaknesses. While the reviews carried out so far are beginning to have a positive impact in many curriculum areas, too often the actions for improvements identified are not specific enough or are not implemented quickly enough, particularly in areas where performance is weakest.

Recently appointed curriculum managers receive good support from senior managers to enable them to carry out their role effectively. The very recently appointed curriculum manager for engineering and construction is beginning to tackle quickly some of the significant weaknesses in this area.

**How successfully are leaders and managers taking action to ensure that current learners make good progress and achieve their potential?**

**Reasonable progress**

Scrutiny of learners' progress is now more rigorous. In most curriculum areas, teachers comply fully with revised arrangements for monitoring progress, and they record accurately the progress of their learners. Managers in these areas use information about learners' progress to identify weaknesses and take action to improve the quality of teaching and learning quickly. As a result, in many curriculum areas, learners are making sufficient progress towards their target grades.

In curriculum areas where the quality of provision is weakest, including engineering and construction, actions taken by managers have not yet resulted in sufficient improvement in learners' progress and achievement. Too much of the work that learners produce in these areas is not of a sufficiently high standard for the level at which they are working.

The methodology that managers use to establish learners' targets based on their starting points does not lead to high enough expectations of what learners can achieve. As a result, managers and teachers often overestimate the progress that learners make from their starting points.

**What has been the impact of actions taken by leaders and managers to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in underperforming areas?**

**Reasonable progress**

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved in many curriculum areas as a result of more rigorous management of teachers' performance. Leaders and managers now evaluate the quality of provision more accurately through lesson observations. They use the outcomes of observations to identify aspects of teachers' practice that need to improve, act quickly to provide appropriate support to improve practice, and monitor closely teachers' progress in improving their practice. Teachers whose performance is particularly weak receive significant support from their managers and from teaching and learning mentors which, in many instances, has resulted in improvements in their practice. Teaching and learning mentors often work alongside underperforming teachers in their lessons to provide support and challenge. In a number of instances where improvement has not been rapid enough, this has resulted in teachers leaving the college.

Managers and teachers have begun to change the culture of the college and promote higher expectations of what learners can achieve. Learners' attitudes towards their

studies and the pride that they take in their work have improved on most courses. Instances of low-level disruption are now isolated rather than endemic.

Teachers now benefit from a wide range of relevant training to improve the quality of their teaching. Sharing of good practice and communication among staff has been enhanced by the relocation of teachers into curriculum-based staff rooms. However, the pace at which good practice is shared is not yet rapid enough. For example, managers have collected high-quality examples of feedback to learners following assessment of their work but have not used them to improve the practice of teachers whose feedback has been identified as less effective.

Improvements in the quality of provision in some of the weakest-performing curriculum areas, particularly in engineering and construction, are too slow and, as a result, learners in these areas are not developing their skills and understanding quickly enough. Standards of work in practical workshops have improved on most engineering and construction courses, but too many theory lessons are still not challenging enough and fail to motivate learners sufficiently. High levels of staff absence, particularly following notification of the implementation of formal capability procedures, is limiting the speed at which managers are able to make improvements in these areas. Additional support for learners who need extra help is still weak in too many areas.

**What action has been taken to ensure that the college fully meets the requirements of 16 to 19 study programmes, and how effective has it been?**

**Reasonable progress**

As a result of actions that leaders and managers have taken during the current year, all learners on study programmes are now either preparing for, or have carried out, work experience placements. Over a half of learners have already completed a relevant placement.

All learners now follow appropriate English and mathematics courses. Learners who need extra help in English and mathematics benefit from individual support outside their lessons. Although managers have begun to make improvements in the quality of provision in English and mathematics, progress has been slow as a result of the absence of the curriculum manager and several teachers. The proportion of learners who achieved a grade C or above in their GCSE English and mathematics re-sit examination in November 2016 was low.

The impact of managers' actions to improve the quality of career guidance has also been limited as a result of significant staff absence due to sickness. New arrangements have been put in place very recently to provide learners with appropriate careers guidance.

Attendance on study programmes has improved, and is now high in many curriculum areas. Managers and teachers monitor learners' attendance closely and take

appropriate action to improve attendance, including liaison with parents. In a number of areas, however, including in English and mathematics, attendance is still too low.

**What progress has been made in ensuring that governors have sufficiently detailed information about the college's performance so that they can hold leaders and managers to account effectively?** **Reasonable progress**

Governors receive a range of relevant and accurate reports that give them a comprehensive overview of key indicators of the college's performance such as learners' progress and achievement, levels of attendance, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the impact of actions to improve teachers' performance. Two full board meetings have taken place since the last monitoring visit. The minutes of these meetings and the reports that governors received demonstrate that the improvements in governance that were made at the beginning of this academic year have been sustained. Governors understand fully the challenges that the college faces, and they support and challenge senior leaders well to improve the college's performance.

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