

Epping Forest College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130677

Name of lead inspector: Matt Vaughan, SHMI

Inspection date(s): 26 January 2016

Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Borders Lane
Loughton
Essex
IG10 3SA



Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit following publication of the inspection report on 6 January which found the provider to be inadequate for overall effectiveness, for all key judgements and all provision types.

Themes

What actions have been taken to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements for all groups of learners are effective?

Leaders have ensured that a comprehensive range of safeguarding processes and procedures have been established to safeguard all groups of learners, including appropriate risk assessments. This action took place immediately during and following the recent inspection. Leaders have worked closely with Essex County Council social care department, London Borough of Redbridge local authority and the headteachers of local schools and pupil referral units that refer pupils aged 14 to 16 to the college on a part-time basis. Leaders and managers are held accountable for a series of actions within a 'risk management action plan' that is reviewed regularly. Leaders have established precise communication processes and accountability for all safeguarding actions. In January 2017, all staff, except assessors, have conducted training on safeguarding and risk assessment.

Priorities for improvement

- Complete specific 14 to 16 safeguarding policy and specific vulnerable adult safeguarding policy.
- Ensure that plans are put in place for a dedicated 'safe area' for 14- to 16-year-olds.
- Complete assessor safeguarding training to further safeguard all apprentices.
- Complete governor training on safeguarding.

What actions have been taken to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment swiftly?

There remains much variability across the subjects and too much teaching, learning and assessment is not good. Where practice is stronger, for example music and hairdressing, teachers challenge learners to make good progress and produce work to a high standard. Teachers in these lessons ensure that learners' written work is well structured, contains few errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar and demonstrates that learners are developing their critical analysis skills well.

However, in the majority of subjects, too many teachers do not plan teaching, learning and assessment that meet the specific needs and abilities of their learners. Too many teachers continue to teach a generic plan that does not challenge different learners to make the progress of which they are capable. Not enough teachers

provide feedback that enables learners to improve their work sufficiently. Few teachers strive to ensure that their learners understand theory effectively; they pay scant attention to reinforcing theoretical concepts and ensuring that learners can apply them proficiently. Their use of questioning and coaching techniques does not check and extend learners' comprehension sufficiently. As a consequence, too few learners develop their higher-level thinking skills in too many subjects. Few teachers of vocational subjects promote the value of good English and mathematics skills in their subjects and engender learners to improve these essential skills well.

Priorities for improvement

- Provide training so that:
 - teachers plan learning activities that challenge different learners to excel
 - teachers develop confidence and expertise in teaching theory effectively
 - teachers hone their skills in questioning and coaching techniques
 - all vocational subject teachers confidently promote the value of English and mathematics in their subjects.

What actions have been taken to ensure that the observation of teachers' practice is strengthened to drive improvements in teaching, learning and assessment?

Leaders have placed a significant emphasis on learning walks to observe teachers' practice. Since the recent inspection, a total of 36 learning walks have taken place across a broad range of learning themes. The deputy principal, directors of learning and learning leaders conduct learning walks frequently. A high proportion of teachers confirm that these learning walks are a positive development and help them to improve their practice. However, there is insufficient analysis of the outcomes of this monitoring, and not enough focus on the strengths and weaknesses of teaching practice. As a result, the learning walks process is limited in the intended impact to improve teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders' planning of learning walks has not considered all the findings of the recent inspection; for example, there is no planned focus on teachers' use of formative assessment in lessons to inspire learning. It is not clear how findings from learning walks inform the subsequent planning of teachers' professional development.

Leaders have recently sharpened the formal observation process of teaching, learning and assessment to promote a more rapid improvement in practice. Leaders have decided to grade practice, with teachers whose practice is graded as outstanding, now invited to join a 'peer excellence' teaching, learning and assessment forum designed to drive up the quality of teaching and assessment. Leaders now provide teachers whose practice has been judged to be outstanding with the opportunity to peer mentor other teachers. Teachers whose practice is judged to be less than good are re-observed within a two week period. These teachers are provided with support and a peer mentor. Leaders have established a far swifter capability process to rectify continued weak practice. Governors are to consider leaders' proposals to revise the process of terminating teachers' contracts where their performance continues to not meet required standards over time.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that learning walks and observations of teaching, learning and assessment focus on the specific characteristics of practice and secure findings that will drive improvement.
- Make sure that all planned professional development opportunities for teachers are informed by the judgements secured through learning walks and observations.
- Ensure that the recent inspection report's findings on aspects of teaching, learning and assessment are taken into account fully when planning learning walks and formal observations.
- Ensure that teachers whose practice is judged to be outstanding are provided with the opportunity to share their practice.

What actions have been taken to ensure that learners' attendance, punctuality and behaviour are good?

Leaders are very self-critical in their assessment of attendance and punctuality at lessons across the subjects, and accept that both are not good enough. During the inspection, too many learners were not punctual to lessons. As there was a rail strike during the inspection that affected up to 40% of the learner population attending the college, inspectors were not able to accurately judge attendance. However, leaders' data indicates that overall attendance for the week commencing 23 January stands at just under 82%; overall attendance was very low for the week ending 13 January, at 74%. Leaders have recently written to all parents/carers of learners, providing details of each learner's attendance patterns and requesting their support to improve attendance where it is a concern. Leaders have also improved follow-up procedures to challenge absenteeism within an aspiration of resolution within an hour.

Leaders have introduced a new duty manager rota to deal more swiftly with any potential poor behaviour in shared spaces across the college. Duty staff are now cognisant of the accountable leads for learners' behaviour in each subject area; a new incident procedure has been introduced that aims to involve these staff in any concerns involving their learners. Staff conducted training in January 2017 on approaches to managing disruptive behaviour in classrooms and workshops. Leaders are currently publicly tendering for the function of security service in shared spaces across the college.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that the monitoring of attendance leads to appropriate interventions that support the re-engagement of learners.
- Complete the tendering process to establish an increased presence of security staff and make sure that the commissioned company ensures that any gaps in staffing for sickness are covered immediately.

What actions have been taken to ensure that the progress of learners and apprentices is monitored rigorously and that governors, leaders and managers understand accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the provision?

Directors of learning and learning leaders are promoting assiduously the need for all teachers and assessors to record their learners' progress regularly against initial and aspirational targets using the college's monitoring process. The use of this system commenced at the start of the academic year. Leaders and managers accept that there is much more work required in order to embed its use and enable staff at all levels to secure accurate data and understand the progress that groups of learners and apprentices are making. Too many teachers and assessors either do not use the system at all or do not use it frequently enough; currently, 88% of learners have their progress tracked on the system. As a result, leaders do not yet have an accurate understanding of the progress that learners and apprentices are making.

The post-inspection action plan contains a comprehensive range of actions designed to rectify the large majority of the identified weaknesses at the recent inspection. The plan lacks sufficient emphasis on recording progress against planned actions; consequently, stakeholders cannot gauge how much improvement has taken place. There is a risk of confusing completion of outcomes with the impact achieved; such potential confusion risks providing leaders and managers with an overly optimistic view of progress. There is an insufficient focus on the characteristics of teaching, learning and assessment throughout the plan, including in the 'improve teaching and learning' section.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that all teachers record and monitor all learners' progress rigorously and that governors, leaders and managers use this information to secure high-quality provision.
- Improve the post-inspection action plan to ensure that there is a specific focus on recording progress against planned actions.
- Ensure that the plan includes a strong emphasis on the characteristics of teaching, learning and assessment and specifies how weaknesses in teachers' practice will be improved.

What actions have been taken to ensure that leaders and managers work effectively with the local enterprise partnership, employers and community organisations to ensure that the range and content of all provision is aligned to local and regional priorities?

Leaders have plans in place to recruit two business development managers to improve employer engagement. Leaders have very recently appointed an interim head of enterprise and innovation to spearhead employer engagement and development with the local enterprise partnership. It is too early to judge any impact of this development, other than the links with Jobcentre Plus which have recently been renewed with the intention of establishing adult learning courses for unemployed people.

Priorities for improvement

- Establish a productive working relationship with the local enterprise partnership (LEP).
- Ensure that all curriculum planning against LEP-identified sector skills gaps involves local employers and community organisations.

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