

Epping Forest College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second re-inspection monitoring visit to Epping Forest College following publication of the inspection report on 6 January 2017 when inspectors judged the provider to be inadequate for overall effectiveness, all key judgements and all provision types. The focus of this second visit, three months after the first, was to judge, against the themes previously agreed, the progress that leaders, governors and managers have made to improve the provision.

Themes

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

Since the previous re-inspection monitoring visit, leaders have completed almost all of their planned actions to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements for all groups of learners are effective. The comprehensive range of safeguarding processes and procedures includes a specific and appropriate set of arrangements to safeguard learners aged 14 to 16 and vulnerable adults. Leaders continue to work productively with Essex County Council social care department and London Borough of Redbridge local authority to ensure that safeguarding policies, procedures and training are robust. All governors have completed specific safeguarding training.

Leaders have established a dedicated 'safe area' for 14–16-year-old learners; take-up of this dedicated area is low and as a result of learners' feedback, leaders are to relocate the 'safe area' to the main college thoroughfare entitled 'the street'.

The very large majority of assessors were to receive safeguarding training during the week of the re-inspection. Assessors who are not able to participate in this training are able to take up online learning; however, leaders have not planned specific training to enable this small minority to benefit from tuition on safeguarding.

Leaders and managers have successfully promoted learners' and apprentices' understanding of safeguarding through a series of well-planned cross-college events. This includes effective awareness-raising of online safety, bullying and harassment and continued promotion of the importance of British values.

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

Leaders have taken a series of actions to strengthen teaching, learning and assessment. These include establishing a professional development and training programme for teachers and assessors that takes into account fully the findings of the previous inspection and re-inspection monitoring visit. Recent initiatives launched to support and challenge teachers to improve their practice include drop-in 'buzz' sessions, a peer excellence group to share best practice and podcasts uploaded on

the college's intranet. Leaders are currently recruiting further teaching and learning coaches to increase the offer to teachers of individual coaching sessions with additional support in the classroom or workshop.

However, first-hand evidence from observations, scrutiny of work and speaking to learners indicated no improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The majority of learners do not make enough progress because too many teachers do not plan and execute teaching, learning and assessment to meet their needs and abilities. Not enough teachers take their learners' starting points into account fully in order to enable them to accelerate their knowledge and skills. Too many learners do not deepen their understanding or extend their higher level thinking skills sufficiently. Too many learners do not demonstrate a robust understanding or application of the more complex aspects of theory proficiently. As a result, the majority of learners are not producing sufficiently high standards of work. Too often, teachers do not enable the most able learners to make the swift progress of which they are capable. Too many teachers do not use questioning techniques to check and extend learners' comprehension. Too many teachers do not deploy learning support assistants effectively in lessons to enable learners to make good progress in their studies. Too often, learning support assistants are not sufficiently aware of learners' goals and as a consequence, do not target their support effectively to provide pertinent guidance. Not enough teachers provide industry-specific contexts to their teaching and challenge learners to understand the relevance of theory to the needs of employers and the world of work.

A minority of teachers inspire their learners to reap the dividends of working hard in and outside lessons. These teachers enthuse their learners successfully to master complex theoretical concepts and principles, apply them fluently and work independently. These teachers plan pertinent tasks and activities that motivate their learners to want to do their very best and make rapid progress. They deploy good questioning methods and plan relevant contingency approaches and techniques to ensure that all learners stay focused and make gains if and when their attention begins to drift. As a result, learners augment their understanding, knowledge and skills and are well placed to achieve their career aspirations.

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

Since the previous re-inspection monitoring visit, leaders have continued to place a strong emphasis on ensuring that formal observations and learning walks of teachers' practice are conducted very frequently.

Leaders and managers now analyse the findings from learning walks and pay particular attention to the characteristics of teaching and learning. Leaders and managers now ensure that planned professional development opportunities are informed by the judgements secured through learning walks and formal observations.

However, leaders do not focus enough on securing an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of assessment practice and ensuring that subsequent training improves teachers' and assessors' use of assessment. Teachers whose practice is judged at graded observations to be less than good are provided with swift, appropriate support from learning leaders and teaching and learning coaches. However, leaders' monitoring of the actions intended to improve these teachers' practice is not rigorous.

Leaders now ensure that both formal observations and learning walks of teachers' and assessors' practice focus appropriately on the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on learners' and apprentices' outcomes. Leaders and managers hold fortnightly meetings to moderate the findings of formal observations and ensure that arising areas for improvement inform teachers' and assessors' subsequent action plans. However, the post-observation action-planning process requires improvement. Too many planned actions to rectify weaknesses in practice are not monitored or evaluated at or after the agreed planned timescale for completion. A minority of actions to rectify weaknesses do not have any timescales planned for resolution. The action-planning process does not include a focus on how teachers and assessors can improve their practice. As a consequence, leaders and managers do not know whether the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving.

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have consolidated the revised procedures they introduced following the inspection in November 2016. Improved monitoring of attendance, punctuality and behaviour is followed by swift interventions to rectify any concerns. Regular communication with parents and carers, the endeavours of five attendance monitors and well-publicised promotion of the importance of attendance have prevented any further deterioration in attendance levels; overall attendance remains static at around 82%. Leaders acknowledge readily that this requires improvement.

During the re-inspection, attendance was low in too many lessons and too many learners were late to lessons. Learners' attendance at English and mathematics lessons was particularly low. In a very few instances, leaders' and managers' timetabling provides no time for learners to move between classrooms to attend their lessons. For example, construction learners end their GCSE mathematics lesson at the same time as they are expected to commence learning in their main vocational qualification. As a result, this impedes teachers' planning and the execution of summary recaps and starter activities in lessons, and disrupts learning because learners either arrive late to lessons or want to finish early to get to their next lesson. Learners' behaviour was exemplary throughout the re-inspection; a significant step change from the findings at the inspection of November 2016.

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

Since the previous re-inspection monitoring visit, leaders have ensured that all teachers record and monitor their learners' progress on the college's electronic monitoring system. This information is now utilised effectively by leaders to provide governors with a good level of pertinent data and information on the overall progress that learners are making. This now enables governors to understand the overall strengths and weaknesses of provision and to challenge leaders effectively. At the time of re-inspection, around a fifth of all learners were identified as at risk of not achieving their main qualification; just under four tenths of learners were identified as not making good progress. This data and information are used to provide appropriate support and challenge at all levels throughout the college on a regular basis. However, leaders acknowledge that the tracking and monitoring of apprentices' progress require improvement; an electronic assessment and tracking process has been introduced but is at an embryonic stage and yet to secure its intended impact.

The large majority of teachers have a good understanding of leaders' expectations to monitor assiduously the progress of their learners. However, not enough teachers set challenging targets to motivate learners to work purposefully, strive to reach their potential and make good progress. Too many learners are not sufficiently clear about the progress they have made against set targets or what they need to develop in order to make further effective progress.

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

Leaders and managers have re-established a productive working partnership with Jobcentre Plus; as a result, a series of planned retail and customer service employability courses for unemployed adults are to commence in the summer term.

Leaders have conducted productive meetings with a few national employers who are based in the locality in order to develop the college's curriculum offer to meet their needs. Leaders' intentions to establish a business development unit to improve the college's employer engagement have been bolstered by constructive dialogue with the local chamber of commerce, Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council; this development is at an early stage.

Leaders accept readily that more work needs to take place to ensure that the college's provision takes into account fully the local enterprise partnership's skills priorities. Leaders are currently recruiting to the post of head of enterprise and innovation to lead on employer and community engagement and consolidate partnership working with the local enterprise partnership.

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