

Stockport 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 Stockport College following publication of the inspection report on 24 November 2016, which found the provider to be inadequate for overall effectiveness, 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? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have improved the post-inspection action plan and are now placing greater priority on the main areas of recommendation identified in the inspection report. Senior leaders now set much clearer targets, and improvement actions closely monitor the progress that middle managers make in delivering these actions.

Senior leaders now hold curriculum managers to account to improve learners' college experience. More recently, senior leaders have held weekly review meetings with curriculum managers, to discuss the impact of their actions on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and raising learners' achievements. Precise actions are set, to be achieved the following week. Data is analysed closely, with a key focus on learners' progress and attendance. Several underperforming staff have now left the college. As a result, managers now have a clearer view on their priorities to maximise learner achievement and progress for the end of the academic year.

Whilst these improvement actions have taken place very recently, leaders and managers have been too slow to respond to the findings of the previous monitoring visit. A minority of the targets in the action plan remain over-ambitious, given that there are only a few weeks of teaching remaining in this academic year. Leaders and managers need to ensure that all actions set are achievable and have a significant impact on improving the standards of education and training and maximising learners' achievements.

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? **Reasonable progress**

Managers continue to develop management information systems to ensure that staff, managers and leaders receive clear and concise data on the progress that learners and apprentices make. Staff have received extensive training on how to use the electronic system to effectively record progress and attendance. Consequently, the large majority of teaching staff now comply with college procedures and data non-compliance is minimal rather than extensive.

Governors, leaders and managers now use data with greater confidence and are able to rely on it as a more accurate reflection of learners' progress for most courses. As a result, they have better information to assist them in making informed decisions on the performance of the college, which assists them in intervening when performance is not good enough.

Governors now have specific links to the curriculum throughout the college; they espouse a determination to improve the standards of education despite difficulties in the college finances and long-term viability. They contribute regularly to curriculum health checks and complete observation walks to support managers.

Many learners who were not abiding to the high standards set by the new transition principal have left the college, which has resulted in the proportion of learners who leave their courses early increasing compared to the same point in the previous academic year. This is particularly prevalent on level 2 construction trade courses for learners aged 16 to 19, including plumbing, brickwork and carpentry.

As a consequence of poor historic planning on several courses, it is not clear how much of the remaining work, which many learners need to do to complete their qualifications, will be achieved. Managers and staff are working hard to provide opportunities for the large number of learners, who are behind in completing their assignments to catch up and/or improve their grades so that they achieve their potential.

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

A clearer system is now in place to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, using the college-devised '20 steps to success' work scrutiny model, aligned with regular observations which provide managers with a better picture of the quality of teaching and learning. Managers use this information to risk assess staff performance and provide support to improve teaching practices. This new system has been instrumental in addressing staff underperformance and improving the quality of lessons.

Teachers and assessors now have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their practices. Managers are working with external consultants to improve how well staff deliver their courses and apprenticeship programmes. However, the impact of this support is not yet leading to consistent enough improvements in the quality of learners' and apprentices' learning and progress.

In a few subjects, such as access to higher education, teachers plan learning well to meet the specific requirements of learners. They prosper from engaging and

thought-provoking discussions on pertinent issues such as atheism in modern society, challenging learners to develop their thoughts to attain higher grades on their assessments. Learners make good progress on this course and are excited about progression to higher levels of study next year.

Too much teaching is aimed at the middle-ability range of learners; the most able learners are not given sufficiently challenging tasks that develop the skills and knowledge to achieve high grades and lower-ability learners are not receiving the support to enable them to complete tasks to the required standard. In too many lessons, all learners, whatever their abilities and progress rates, complete the same work. This results in lower-ability learners struggling to start tasks and higher-ability learners not learning rapidly enough. In these lessons, a few learners become dis-engaged in their learning and become bored.

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

Managers have worked very hard since the previous monitoring visit to ensure an effective process to identify apprentices' starting points. They have put in place retrospective systems to assess what apprentices already know and can do. Managers have piloted two approaches to measure what apprentices can do since the previous visit, both of which have been successful not only in monitoring apprentices' existing skills and knowledge, but also in recording the progress that apprentices make.

Managers and assessors have worked very closely to design, implement and evaluate both pilot processes. Managers have provided training to assessors on how to use the new systems and all staff are positive about the new processes.

Managers have developed 'skill passports' to identify apprentices' existing abilities using a process of collaborative self-assessment between the apprentice, assessor and the employer. They use this to monitor the progress that apprentices are making on the different components of the programme. The progress that apprentices make is recorded on the passport to identify to what extent they are developing new skills, with plans put in place to prioritise the development of new ones.

Assessors use the skills passport to record apprentices' confidence in completing tasks using discussion and practical assessment. At monthly progress review meetings assessors then revisit the passport to identify the progress that apprentices have made and what new skills they have acquired. These are subsequently recorded on the skills passport.

Assessors and apprentices now have a clear understanding of the progress that is being made on the programme in relation to specific skill priorities identified. Consequently, apprentices who have been following the pilot scheme are making better progress than apprentices not taking part in the pilot.

Managers and staff now have a clearer understanding of apprentices' skills and knowledge, so it is clear what apprentices need to learn to achieve their

apprenticeship qualifications. This is enabling managers to monitor apprentices progress more accurately. However, too many tutors and assessors do not sufficiently plan learning to meet their apprentices' skills targets. On too many occasions, teachers and assessors teach to the minimum standards set by the awarding organisation as opposed to challenging the most able apprentices to complete work to a high standard or of a more complex nature.

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? **Insufficient progress**

While learners' English and mathematics attendance has improved slightly over recent months, too many learners do not attend their English and mathematics lessons. Staff changes since the previous visit have led to many changes in a large proportion of learners' timetables, which has disrupted learning and ultimately hindered the progress that learners are making in English and mathematics.

A concerted effort has been made by managers for all learners to complete mock examinations in preparation for their GCSE examinations in the summer; around three-quarters of learners have completed these tests. The results of the mock examinations are being used by teachers to identify precisely where learners need to improve. Managers offered extra revision sessions over the Easter holidays, which around one quarter of students attended. In addition, bespoke lessons in English and mathematics for hairdressing and engineering learners improved their knowledge and skills prior to summer examinations.

Teachers are ensuring that learners complete more individualised work to develop their gaps in skills and knowledge. However, too many learners are not completing activities and past paper questions that will help them to achieve a high grade in their forthcoming examinations. Vocational teachers are not yet consistently supporting learners to improve the standard of their writing.

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

Leaders and managers now have high expectations of attendance and punctuality throughout the college. Managers have continued to implement the amended learner disciplinary process and this has had a positive impact on improving attendance. Attendance has improved by around 10 percentage points since the inspection but it remains too low and significantly below the college target.

Managers now work closely with learners and their parents to reiterate that absences are not acceptable and persistent non-attendance would result in removal of the

learner from the course. Too many learners have sporadic and poor attendance in many subjects.

As a consequence of the new transition principal's policy of zero tolerance on absenteeism, more learners have left their early courses since the previous monitoring visit. As a result, retention is now broadly in line with the 2015/16 rate and below the college target. Learners leaving their courses early is particularly prevalent at level 2, with significant declines in retention for plumbing, brickwork and carpentry. Conversely, level 2 retention for adult learning programmes has slightly improved in the current year.

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