

Telford College

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: General further education college

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

On 20 December 2017, New College Telford merged with Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT) to form Telford College.

Both colleges required improvement at their previous full inspections. All judgements were 'requires improvement' apart from those for personal development, behaviour and welfare at New College, and the provision for learners with high needs at Telford College of Arts and Technology. These were both judged to be good. New College Telford was inspected in December 2016, and Telford College of Arts and Technology was inspected in June 2017. Since these inspections, Telford College of Arts and Technology received a support and challenge visit in October 2017, and New College Telford in February 2018. The themes for this monitoring visit were selected from the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection reports. The progress judgements from this current visit will inform Ofsted's risk assessment as to the timing of the next full inspection of the merged college.

Senior leaders have re-structured the curriculum leadership roles to include an interim vice-principal for curriculum and quality. They have led a detailed curriculum review, leading to a revised curriculum plan for 2018/19.

Senior leaders have a clear plan for the disposal of the King Street campus (formerly known as New College) and the re-location of staff to the Haybridge Road campus (formerly known as TCAT) and this has recently been shared with staff.

Themes

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| <p>1. What progress have senior leaders made in developing an effective quality improvement plan, and ensuring appropriate reporting and monitoring arrangements, which include rigorous scrutiny by governors?</p> | <p>Reasonable progress</p> |
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Senior leaders have captured the key areas for improvement in separate quality improvement action plans for the Haybridge Road campus and the King Street campus. Although they keep the plans separate, senior leaders present them in a common format, identify actions for improvement, and provide progress judgements. Senior leaders review the plans regularly. Senior leaders presented the detailed plan for Haybridge Road to governors in April, and they plan to share the detailed plan for King Street in May. Senior leaders produced a summary of key strengths and areas for improvement for the King Street campus in March. The chair of governors has a very clear understanding of the areas for improvement for the college. Governors have developed new and appropriate governance arrangements. Following a rigorous recruitment process, the new governing body possesses the appropriate skills and

abilities to support and challenge the new senior leadership team. Governors provide effective scrutiny and challenge regarding the quality improvement plans.

The current quality improvement plans do not reflect with sufficient clarity the impact of managers' actions, including the impact of these actions on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and on learners' attendance, retention and achievement. Senior leaders' updates on progress give too much weight to processes that have been completed and insufficient judgements against the intended improvements in quality. Senior leaders agree that the current action plans display a high proportion of actions that are in progress but not yet completed. These actions are recorded as 'amber' in the red, amber, green system that is used. Senior leaders are considering how to set targets that give a clearer view of the progress that managers are making on improving learners' experience. Currently, much of the impact of managers' actions is reported separately.

Senior leaders plan to bring the two improvement plans into a single document next academic year, with a clear focus on monitoring improvements in quality.

Curriculum managers at all levels in the college are aware of the key priorities for improvement and report on progress in their own areas through the series of quality support meetings with senior managers.

In-year indicators for attendance and retention are in line with performance at the same time last year, or very slightly better. Senior leaders monitor the progress of learners against a minimum target grade. Current data shows that the large majority of learners are working in line with or above their target grade.

2. What progress have leaders made in improving teaching, learning and assessment, in particular through the effective use of initial and ongoing assessment results, and the quality of teachers' written feedback? Reasonable progress

Managers are in the process of implementing a new approach to improving teaching, learning and assessment across the college. The first phase of developmental observations – mainly based on learning walks – is well under way. Managers are using the findings of these to identify and share good practice, which teachers value. The new approach to improving teaching and learning will also incorporate in-depth observations as part of 'curriculum reviews'. Managers use a range of information effectively to support teachers and, where necessary, to implement the college's capability and disciplinary procedures. This is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Teachers have a wide range of information about the initial starting points of learners. These include baseline assessments in English and mathematics, their GCSE results, and, where appropriate, vocational skills assessments. Managers and teachers use this information to set minimum and aspirational target grades. Managers have also recently held whole-college staff development activities to help improve teachers' use of this information in their teaching practice. This good

practice is not consistently embedded in teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, learners in those sessions do not make the progress of which they are capable. Senior managers have recently recruited a new learning coach, and a significant part of that role will be to share good practice and improve consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

In the majority of sessions, teachers use learning activities effectively. As a result, learners make good progress. In these sessions, teachers provide different learning activities which match the starting points of learners, and also provide options for further challenging work once the initial tasks are completed. Teachers adapt their questions appropriately to challenge and support learners. Teachers encourage learners to question and critique their peers, enabling them to reinforce and consolidate their learning. Teachers use learning support assistants effectively to meet the needs of learners who have learning difficulties. In a minority of sessions, teachers do not use the available information on learners to ensure that tasks and activities reflect the range of abilities in the teaching group. In these sessions, teachers do not explore different perspectives or challenge learners to explore topics more deeply. All learners do the same task, and for some learners, this is too easy and repetitive, and for others they need further support.

Senior leaders track learners' progress effectively. They have increased the number of assessments that teachers record centrally, and they compare learners' current performance against their aspirational targets. Managers are swift to intervene if learners are underperforming. Current data shows that most learners are performing in line with, or better than their minimum target grade.

Managers carry out half-termly audits of teachers' marking of learners' work. Managers' evaluation is that teachers mark the majority of work well, but that a minority requires further improvement. Inspectors reviewed a sample of written work, and the written feedback. The majority of teachers' written feedback to learners on key assessments is helpful and identifies what learners have done well and what they need to do to improve. Teachers' written feedback to learners on other pieces of work and homework is not consistently good. A minority of teachers simply identify mistakes without explaining how to improve and a few other teachers give detailed feedback, but use technical language that learners do not understand.

3. What progress have leaders made in improving the development of learners' mathematical and English skills, both in specific English and mathematics qualifications, and in vocational courses?

Significant progress

Since the previous inspection reports on TCAT and New College, the published outcomes for learners for English and mathematics in GCSE and for functional skills for 2016/17 have been an improvement on previous performance. For both colleges, the English and mathematics GCSE outcomes for high grades were above the relevant national averages. For TCAT, the outcomes for functional skills for learners

aged 16 to 18 were well above the national averages. The main area for improvement was in the functional skills outcomes for adult learners. In-year data for English and mathematics qualifications is encouraging, including timely achievement rates for adult learners. Managers monitor the progress of learners closely and report on their performance at each key assessment point. Current learners are performing better than last year in English, and in line with last year's improved performance in mathematics.

The learning managers have developed the initial assessment process to ensure that learners are on the right level and course. In the large majority of English and mathematics sessions, teachers use learners' starting points effectively to set individual learning targets, plan appropriate learning activities and provide specific learning support. Where necessary, teachers provide additional guidance for learners who need more support in English. As a result, the large majority of learners make good progress. Learners are in lessons with learners from the same vocational specialism. Teachers take the opportunity to set the teaching of English and mathematical functional skills within an appropriate vocational context.

Attendance in English and mathematics shows improvement on last year's rates, and on those in October 2017. However, senior managers acknowledge that this falls short of the target of 90%, which is closer to the college's average overall attendance figure. Senior managers recognise the importance of a common approach to skills development across the curriculum. Senior managers have strengthened the communication between English and mathematics teams and vocational teams through the new structure and the development of learning managers.

Senior managers have prepared a very detailed package of professional development resources that show how teachers can integrate and feel confident about teaching English and mathematical skills. Each curriculum area manager has developed an action plan for the integration of mathematical and English skills. Managers support teachers well in the development of English and mathematical skills through paper and electronic support materials, which are directly linked to functional skills and GCSE topics.

Through observations of teaching and learning, and talking with learners and staff, it is clear that the development of English and mathematics is a priority with the college, and that teachers develop these skills effectively for the large majority of learners.

4. What progress have leaders made in increasing the proportion of apprentices who have achieved or are on track to achieve their qualification within the planned time? Reasonable progress

The apprenticeship provision is now led by a new single team.

Senior leaders have taken appropriate action to address the previously very poor performance of apprentices at New College. In the current year, managers have taken a number of steps to improve timely achievement rates with current

apprentices. They have placed the support for, and assessment of, functional skills at the beginning of the course to ensure that apprentices have the best possible chances of successfully completing them. They have also improved their initial advice and guidance to include a broader assessment of learners' skills and aspirations, and to ensure that apprentices are on the right course and at the right level. They also ensure that those apprentices with weak mathematics and English receive support before starting the programme.

College data indicates that these measures are beginning to have a positive impact on apprentices' outcomes. The improvement at the Haybridge Road campus is considerably better than at this point last year, and is particularly strong for apprentices aged 16 to 18. Timely achievement at King Street is severely affected by apprentices from the previous year who were already beyond their planned end date. The overall achievement rate for King Street apprentices is an improvement on the previous year. Managers state that about a quarter of the apprentices who were already out of funding prior to the merger will complete by the end of the year. The proportion of apprentices who have successfully completed their functional skills qualifications is much higher than at the same point last year.

Managers need to ensure that these initiatives are fully embedded to sustain the improvement in apprentices' progress to bring it closer to, and then beyond, national averages.

The majority of apprentices were aware of the progress they are making and when they were likely to complete their course. However, a minority were not clear about what they needed to do to complete on time.

5. What progress have leaders and managers made in improving learners' and apprentices' understanding of British values and the risks of extremism and radicalisation? **Reasonable progress**

Managers have a clear strategy for ensuring that learners and apprentices have a good understanding of British values, and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They ensure that teachers, tutors and assessors are well trained, so that they feel confident to discuss these issues with learners and apprentices. Managers send employers an information leaflet. Teachers, tutors and assessors teach regular sessions using good resources. Managers check learners' understanding through surveys and individual reviews.

Managers effectively encourage teaching staff and tutors to raise learners' awareness of British values and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation by integrating current topics and local issues within the curriculum. Observations confirm that teachers are more confident in using current topics, such as the status of Windrush immigrants and the recent bombing of Syria. As a result, most learners have a good understanding of British values and were able to discuss current topics and how they relate to their lives. Apprentices also had a good understanding of British values, but their understanding of how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism was less well developed. Learners' understanding was often influenced by the subjects they were studying. Those studying public services and health and

social care have a good understating of keeping themselves safe. However, in other areas, such as engineering, learners' understanding is less well developed.

The large majority of learners are able to explain how to keep themselves safe online, and to discuss the different types of extremism, and how they can keep themselves safe in the local community.

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