

# Moulton College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130772

**Name of lead inspector:** Jai Sharda HMI

**Inspection dates:** 14–15 November 2018

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

**Address:** West Street  
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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This is the second re-inspection monitoring visit to Moulton College following publication of the inspection report on 3 April 2018, which found the provider to be inadequate for overall effectiveness. Inspectors also judged the effectiveness of leadership and management and personal development, behaviour and welfare to be inadequate. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners required improvement. Of the four provision types inspected, inspectors judged apprenticeships and provision for students with high needs to be inadequate and 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learning programmes to require improvement. As a consequence of the grades given during the inspection, the Education and Skills Funding Agency removed Moulton College from the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers, prohibiting it from taking on any new apprentices. Apprenticeship provision was not inspected during this visit.

At the time of this monitoring visit, the interim principal had been in post for six months. The director for quality and student support, the vice-principal and most of the programme managers are also new appointments. The senior leadership team has produced a detailed post-inspection action plan, a separate safeguarding action plan and a detailed position statement to address and tackle the areas for improvement noted at the previous inspection.

### Themes

#### **What plans have senior managers put in place to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection in relation to the safety of students when undertaking activities at the college? Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have continued to consolidate the actions, identified in the first monitoring visit report, to strengthen arrangements for ensuring the safety of students. They have appointed a governor with a background in the construction industry to oversee health and safety matters. They have also appointed a governor with extensive experience in student support and welfare to focus on safeguarding. These new posts have enabled the college to increase its focus on keeping students safe. Staff and students now routinely take account of their own safety and that of others when working or studying on college premises. Since the previous inspection, there have not been any reports of breaches of health and safety.

Leaders have implemented a strengthened student behaviour policy for this academic year, which teachers and curriculum managers apply thoroughly and consistently. This has resulted in the expulsion of five students for bullying and anti-social behaviour, and swift disciplinary action against students who breach the expected standards of behaviour. Students' behaviour in lessons and workshops and

in the public areas is very good. Few incidents of poor behaviour occur, although low-level disruption is evident in a few classes.

**How much progress have managers made in improving the quality of teaching and learning and in ensuring that teachers set suitably challenging tasks and activities that engage all students?**

**Reasonable progress**

A focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment is at the heart of the college's strategy. A sensible approach to delivering a comprehensive and continuing professional development programme for teachers began in September 2018. Managers have made good progress in ensuring that they fill teaching vacancies, although a few still remain. Early indications suggest that managers support weaker teachers to improve or replace them with teachers with good potential.

The capacity of new leaders and managers to improve the quality of provision is strong. Curriculum managers demonstrate a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Through learning walks, they identify the key characteristics of lessons and pockets of weak performance.

In the small sample of joint lessons observed, the quality of lessons is not consistently good. In the most effective lessons, teachers are adept at using a range of techniques to provide interesting and challenging work for students. Practical and vocational sessions are the most effective in securing students' full participation in learning, and in helping them to progress and achieve. The standard of practical work is often very high, as evident in stonemasonry and cabinet making.

The least effective learning sessions are classroom-based theory lessons at level 2 and, to a lesser extent, at level 3. In these lessons, teachers' low aspirations result in their allowing students too much time to complete simple tasks, or they fail to provide suitably challenging learning activities.

Attendance at the lessons observed is too low. In several subject areas, difficulties in recruitment have led to shortages of teachers and the continued use of agency staff. Although managers intervene in an effort to raise standards, their impact is not yet evident.

Leaders have a realistic view of the need to ensure that all students receive a good experience. They are aware of the above weaknesses and have taken sensible actions to make the necessary improvements. It is too soon to assess the full impact of the range of actions that the new leadership team has taken.

**What action have managers taken to ensure that all students make at least good progress and achieve well in their studies, especially in English and mathematics?** **Insufficient progress**

The proportion of students achieving their qualifications was low in 2016/17 and decreased in 2017/18. Students on courses at levels 1 and 2 perform particularly poorly and the subject areas where achievements are above national rates are few. Male students are less successful than females. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities perform poorly compared with their peers. Leaders are right to acknowledge that they were unable to address this decline, because most of them did not take up post until the end of the previous academic year.

The proportion of students who achieved grade 4 or better in GCSE mathematics and/or English was significantly worse in 2017/18 than the low national average. It is too soon to determine whether students beginning their studies in 2018 are making suitable progress in these subjects, but early indications are that significant problems remain.

Attendance at English and mathematics lessons during this visit is lower than for other subjects, and much lower than managers' predictions. Students' motivation for attending lessons in these subjects is low. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is significantly poorer than in other subjects. Teachers do not encourage students to practise and improve their skills through frequent homework. The head of English and mathematics has implemented a range of improvement measures. These include earlier interventions for students not attending classes, and the addition of extra classes in mathematics. It is too soon to judge the impact of these measures.

Senior leaders have largely resolved the range of problems associated with the quality and accuracy of data on students' progress and achievement that different departments held. Programme leaders make better use of their tracking and monitoring software. This enables them and their teams to identify the progress that students make, and to identify those at risk of leaving early. However, it is too early to determine the impact of these improved arrangements to monitor students' progress.

**What actions have the college's senior leaders taken to ensure that governors scrutinise the college's performance more rigorously and challenge the senior leadership team where appropriate?** **Reasonable progress**

The new leadership team has strengthened governance arrangements significantly since the previous inspection. The appointment of two governors with experience of senior leadership roles in further education, and another with sector experience in quality assurance and improvement, has equipped the board with the skills to scrutinise performance more thoroughly.

Before the previous inspection, it was the practice of leaders to present management and performance reports to governors at the beginning of each board meeting. This meant that governors had no time to consider the papers in detail. Consequently, their ability to understand or challenge what senior leaders were telling them was low. The new leadership team presents performance reports to governors well before each board meeting. This allows governors to scrutinise more effectively the information they receive. It is too early to judge the full impact of these changes.

Governors have begun to receive additional training and support to develop their skills and capacity to carry out their role effectively. They now have greater confidence in questioning and challenging management and performance reports, and in requesting additional information. Board meeting minutes for the last three months show that governors often seek clarification and detailed responses from senior leaders to specific questions. These minutes also indicate that governors challenge the leadership team much more strongly than they did previously.

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