

Central Bedfordshire College

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Central Bedfordshire College was inspected in May 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Themes

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that teachers use challenging activities with learners and apprentices, that deepens their understanding and broadens their knowledge? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders have provided a good range of professional development for staff to improve lesson planning and target setting and, in turn, improve challenge for learners. Through improved observations of teaching and learning, leaders and managers have accurately identified areas for development in teaching practice specific to different departments of the college.

Teachers and assessors have improved challenge for learners through effective feedback. Learners demonstrate good levels of knowledge through their assignments and are encouraged to deepen their understanding through the developmental feedback teachers provide.

Teachers set challenging group and individual targets for learners and apprentices that enable them to more quickly improve their vocational skills and knowledge. Learners are set aspirational target grades to challenge them to achieve to the best of their ability. Learners know and aspire to achieve their target grades and understand the progress they are making towards them.

Teachers plan learning well and, as a result, learners are fully engaged in lessons. However, too many teachers do not use their questioning effectively when checking learners' understanding in lessons. For example, their questions are often superficial, focusing on learners' recall of facts with little follow-up to check on their depth of understanding.

What progress have leaders and managers made in improving the proportion of learners which achieve their qualifications? **Reasonable progress**

Governors and leaders have introduced new initiatives to successfully increase the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications. They work effectively with a partner college to improve the quality of provision, and with external consultants to

focus on those areas identified for development, for example the development of learners' skills in English and mathematics.

More learners on study programmes achieved their qualifications in 2017/18 than in 2016/17. More learners stay at college and complete their programme. Leaders have improved the accuracy of their data reporting and use this information effectively to monitor and forecast future achievements. For example, leaders use robust progress review boards to identify learners and apprentices at risk of not achieving. Leaders' current data clearly indicates that achievements will continue to improve this academic year.

Learners' attendance at lessons has greatly improved from the same point last year. However, attendance remains below the college target. Attendance at English and mathematics sessions has also improved significantly but remains too low.

While the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications is low, this has improved significantly from last year. Leaders have responded appropriately to support apprentices taken on by the college from previously failing providers. As a result, more current apprentices have achieved within planned timescales and this is improving rapidly.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that younger learners improve their skills in English and mathematics? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders have taken swift action to improve the quality of teaching and learning in GCSE English and mathematics. They have targeted staff delivering these lessons with carefully focused professional development. Leaders and staff work effectively with an external consultant in improving teachers' practice.

Teachers of English and mathematics now set meaningful targets for learners. These targets help learners to make better progress and improve their skills. More learners were successful in achieving high grade passes in their GCSE exams.

Teachers pay good attention to correcting learners' punctuation and grammar. Their useful feedback to learners helps them to improve their skills. This results in a good standard of written work, with few errors. Teachers effectively promote the essential vocational English and mathematics skills required for their subjects and most learners can apply these accurately in their work. For example, learners on carpentry programmes are able to convert between imperial and metric measurements with ease.

Tutors ensure that English and mathematics have visibility and are emphasised in vocational workshops, particularly where it is relevant to the practical activity. However, in too many vocational lessons, learners do not have opportunities to deepen their understanding of English and mathematics beyond the minimum requirements for the subject.

What progress have governors made in ensuring they hold leaders to account for the quality of the provision? **Reasonable progress**

Governors and senior leaders have recently changed the curriculum management and senior leadership roles at the college. New members of the governing body with appropriate experience have also been appointed. Governors' committee membership has been expanded to ensure sufficient representation from the board for more effective decision making. As a result, information shared between committees and the full governing body has improved.

Leaders provide governors with detailed, accurate reports on the performance of the college. Governors act on this information to help leaders improve the quality of learning, for example increasing the observations of teachers and learning activities. As a result, reports on the quality of teaching and learning are more accurate. However, governor minutes do not reflect their decision making. They do not accurately show how governors check the actions of senior leaders over time.

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