

Beacon Education Partnership Limited

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

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Beacon Education Partnership Limited (Beacon) was inspected in March 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.

Beacon is a small independent learning provider based in Camden, London. In 2015, Beacon gained a direct contract to teach adult learning programmes funded by advanced learner loans in health and social care. Beacon works with local communities and groups of health and social care employers in London, Wales, Bristol and Birmingham. The majority of teaching and learning takes place in community centres, in mosques and at employers' premises. At the time of the monitoring visit Beacon had 50 learners completing level 3 qualifications in health and social care, the vast majority of whom are unemployed.

Themes

What impact have leaders' and managers' actions had in improving learners' attendance at sessions and the opportunities for learners to attend work-related activities? Reasonable progress

Leaders' and managers' actions have secured a marked improvement in the proportion of adults who attend their training sessions. Leaders, managers and staff have high expectations of learners regarding attendance and communicate this clearly to learners at induction.

Staff have implemented effective systems to remind learners when their sessions take place and to follow up any unauthorised absences quickly. For example, managers set up instant messaging groups for each session and learners receive frequent reminders to attend. As a result, the vast majority of learners attend their lessons.

Leaders and managers have increased the opportunities for learners to gain a better understanding of the careers available in the health and social care sector. All staff have gained a qualification in information, advice and guidance to help them inform learners about the different types of job roles available when they complete their qualification. Towards the end of the course, care employers attend learning sessions and discuss with learners the work-related and job opportunities available to them.

Leaders have recently implemented a programme to support learners to complete their curriculum vitae and job application cover letters. However, it is too early to see the impact of this in terms of jobs obtained.

Leaders acknowledge that they have not been successful in offering learners access to a wide range of work-related activities that would help them to develop their knowledge of the sector further. For example, they have not informed learners of relevant exhibitions or local employer open days.

How effective have senior leaders and staff been in improving the English and mathematical skills of learners, including those who speak English as an additional language? Insufficient progress

Since the inspection, leaders and managers have been too slow to implement the required improvements needed to help learners develop their skills in English and mathematics. Too often learners' work still contains errors that remain uncorrected by tutors and assessors. As a result, learners, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, have not improved the standard of their written English or learned how to use the appropriate skills in mathematics.

Leaders and managers have recently implemented a range of activities to help assessors and tutors to develop their confidence in supporting learners with English and mathematics. However, many of these activities are in the early stages of implementation and their impact on learners' skills cannot yet be seen.

Managers and staff have put in place an appropriate method to assess the prior skills learners have in English and mathematics. However, tutors and assessors do not make sufficient use of the results of these assessments to identify exactly the skills learners need to develop.

Leaders and managers have provided learners with access to online resources to help them develop their skills. They have also made links with other providers to refer learners so that they can gain qualifications in English and mathematics. However, leaders and managers do not know how many learners access these resources, attend sessions with other providers and improve their skills as a result.

What impact have leaders and managers had in supporting tutors and assessors to give learners clear and helpful feedback on their work? Reasonable progress

The majority of learners benefit from frequent and helpful feedback on their work, which helps them improve the level of detail in their answers. For example, assessors encourage learners to complete further research about specific questions and then resubmit their more detailed answers. Tutors and assessors encourage learners effectively to consider topics in greater depth.

In training sessions, tutors use feedback and praise to engage learners to take part enthusiastically in group discussions. Tutors give learners feedback that is encouraging and confirms what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further. Learners feel well supported by their tutors and assessors and enjoy their learning. Learners benefit from frequent contact with their assessors, who set them specific targets at their progress reviews.

Tutors and assessors have attended useful and helpful training to support them in improving their practice. They meet frequently to share best practice as a team and to discuss what works well. As a result, the majority of assessors and tutors now give learners clear and helpful feedback on their work. In a minority of cases, their feedback is not consistently clear and feedback to learners on the standard of their written English requires improvement.

How well do tutors and assessors use the information they have about learners' prior skills and knowledge to plan and teach activities that challenge learners?

Reasonable progress

Since the inspection, leaders and managers have revised and strengthened their application process to take into account learners' prior knowledge and skills more effectively. Staff now use appropriate assessments to check learners' prior experience in the health and social care sector, their English and mathematics levels and how learners prefer to learn.

Tutors and assessors know their learners well. They use the information about learners' prior experience in health and social care effectively in sessions to challenge learners. For example, they draw on work-related examples from the more experienced learners to explain specific situations to the group.

Tutors and assessors adapt their teaching methods and resources effectively to meet the needs of the groups they teach. For example, they use presentations for learners who prefer to learn by watching and listening. The detailed workbooks available give learners good written information about the vocational topics they learn.

During observations of teaching, learning and assessment observers pay close attention to how effectively assessors and tutors teach sessions and their impact on learners' progress.

How effectively have leaders put in place arrangements to monitor the progress that learners make and check that the information they receive from staff is reliable and accurate?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have implemented a rigorous process to monitor the progress that learners make. They use the new frequent management meetings successfully to challenge managers and staff to explain why a minority of learners make slow progress.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the progress that learners make. The majority of learners are on track to achieve their qualifications. In 2017/18, there was a marked improvement in the proportion of adults who achieved their health and social care qualifications.

Leaders carry out effective checks to validate that the information they receive from managers about learners' progress is accurate. They check learners' progress frequently and follow up the responses and actions put in place by tutors and assessors when learners fall behind.

Leaders do not pay the same attention to detail when checking other information that they receive from managers and staff. For example, they do not check the consistency of the quality of feedback given to learners, and how tutors and assessors use the information they have about learners' skills in English and mathematics when planning and teaching sessions.

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