

Nelson and Colne College

Monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

On 30 November 2018, Nelson and Colne College merged with Accrington and Rossendale College. The newly merged college provides education and training to 2,300 young people, 3,835 adult learners, 1,296 apprentices and 114 learners with high needs.

At their previous full inspections, Nelson and Colne College was judged outstanding and Accrington and Rossendale College was judged good. At Nelson and Colne College's previous inspection in June 2008, all key judgements were outstanding, with the exception of achievement and standards, which was good.

At Accrington and Rossendale College's previous inspection in January 2018, all key judgements and provision types were good, with the exception of apprenticeships, which required improvement.

The themes for this monitoring visit were selected from the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection of Accrington and Rossendale College. The progress judgements from this monitoring visit will inform Ofsted's risk assessment as to the timing of the next full inspection of the merged college.

Themes

How effective have leaders and managers been in improving the quality of education that apprentices receive on their training programmes?

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have worked hard since the merger of the two colleges to improve the standard of training that apprentices receive. They have nurtured very effective links with industry specialists.

Managers and staff use their local intelligence about the health sector to develop and put in place very effective learning programmes. They use innovative ways to develop and plan the curriculum. For example, the principal has seconded a member of the local hospital's workforce development team to help develop the curriculum. This development benefits all learning programmes at the college, including apprenticeships.

Managers' and trainer-assessors' planning of the off-the-job training ensures that apprentices acquire useful and powerful knowledge that is linked closely to apprentices' training in the workplace. This allows apprentices to successfully practise and implement what they learn in the classroom in their jobs. Apprentices apply their new knowledge and skills at work. This ensures that they are more effective employees and that their work is accurate and of a high quality. For

example, business management apprentices confidently use their newly acquired knowledge of coaching to develop a colleague's touch-typing skills.

Assessors and workplace mentors implement the curriculum effectively. They ensure that apprentices' on- and off-the-job training is appropriately coordinated. Workplace mentors provide effective curriculum support to apprentices to ensure that they swiftly develop the necessary skills that they need and their employers require. This results in apprentices quickly making an effective contribution to their employers' businesses.

Apprentices who are at risk of not completing their apprenticeship on time receive effective support to help them catch up. Leaders and managers have an accurate oversight of the progress that apprentices make on their programmes. The vast majority of apprentices complete their programme on time.

How effective have leaders, managers and staff been in making sure that apprentices have an appropriate understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism?

Reasonable progress

While leaders and managers ensure that apprentices receive training about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism at the start of their programmes, this learning is not sufficiently reinforced throughout apprentices' training. For example, apprentices are not aware of risks such as far-right extremism.

How effectively do teachers and assessors use assessments completed at the start of the programme to implement a demanding curriculum so that all learners and apprentices can achieve their potential?

Significant progress

Staff ensure that learners and apprentices complete appropriate assessments at the start of their programmes to assess what they know and can do. They use the results of these assessments to plan an ambitious learning programme. As a result, many learners and apprentices receive a rich experience at college. They learn new knowledge that will support them in their next steps of learning or future careers. For example, high-needs learners undertake supported internships at the local hospital trust, which improves their confidence and teamworking skills. This helps them to gain employment and/or greater independence. Management apprentices at a local law firm develop coaching skills which they put in place in their management roles to good effect.

Leaders and managers have nurtured long-standing and effective relationships with local employers. They work with these employers to ensure that learners receive a fulfilling learning experience to meet their aspirations. For example, health and social care level 3 study programme learners are rightly upbeat about their experiences in local hospitals. They take part in a wide range of placements throughout a hospital. These include placements in dermatology, post-natal care, rehabilitation wards, podiatry, urgent care and endoscopy. This allows them to experience different

specialisms in preparation for applying for jobs at the hospital or applications to university to start nursing and health-related degrees.

While learners have a good understanding of how their learning is structured, a few management apprentices do not always know what they will do next on their programme. This prevents them from completing additional independent study to prepare them for the next stage of their learning.

How successful have leaders and managers been in improving learners' and apprentices' knowledge in English and mathematics? Significant progress

Since the merger of the two colleges, leaders have prioritised the improvement in the English and mathematics curriculum. This has resulted in the successful implementation of the 'big fat English and mathematics strategy'. This strategy ensures that all learners and apprentices benefit from extended time with teachers to develop these important skills.

Leaders work closely with other outstanding colleges in the region and local schools to improve further the quality of education in English and mathematics. For example, the principal leads the strategy that helps learners and apprentices to continually improve their skills and belief in themselves throughout their programme and in their personal lives.

All learners at the merged college now receive structured learning of three hours per week for English and mathematics. Those learners and apprentices who need further support receive additional intervention workshops that help them to improve their knowledge, with the aim of improving their confidence in these subjects and achieving these qualifications.

Teachers use assessments completed at the start of the course or programme to identify gaps in learners' and apprentices' knowledge. They use this information to plan learning to improve their knowledge and skills. Learners can confidently articulate how they have improved their skills. For example, English GCSE learners are proud that they have improved their first assessment marks from the start of the course by using similes, personification and adverbs to improve their scores in their first assessments. Learners on painting and decorating courses studying functional mathematics are proud that they can use ratios precisely to mix different colours to achieve the required paint shade.

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