

Hull College

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

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Hull College was inspected in May 2019. 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.

Since the inspection in May 2019, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team of the college. The chief executive officer and deputy chief executive officer have both left the college. At the time of this monitoring visit, there was an interim chief executive in post.

At the time of this monitoring visit, Hull College was providing education for 191 learners aged 14 to 16 years old; 1,737 learners on study programmes; 2,607 adult learners; and 1,676 apprentices.

Themes

What progress are governors, leaders and managers making in ensuring that they secure and sustain improvements to the quality of education across all provision types?

Reasonable progress

Leaders, managers and governors are acutely aware of the areas that they need to improve. They passionately believe that the college has a vital role in supporting the skills agenda across the city of Hull and the wider region. They have taken appropriate action to address many of the weaknesses that they have identified. Some of these are starting to have an impact on improving the quality of provision.

Governors have recently broadened the range of skills of board members. The introduction of new governors who have educational and financial expertise means that the board of governors is better placed to hold senior leaders to account for the quality of provision. Governors are currently working with a national leader of governance to improve their effectiveness further.

Managers have introduced a comprehensive and helpful professional development programme that focuses on developing the craft of teachers and trainers by giving them more confidence to try new and innovative ideas. Most teachers and skills trainers have good subject expertise that they use effectively when planning their teaching so that learners and apprentices build on their previous knowledge and

skills. Most teachers and skills trainers use a wide range of assessment activities to check learners' understanding.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have revised their self-assessment of adult learning programmes, and now consider this provision to require improvement. This reflects leaders' view that, while the proportion of adult learners who achieve their qualifications is high, too many learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

What progress are leaders making in ensuring that a larger proportion of apprentices and learners on 16 to 19 study programmes make swift and sustained progress from their starting points?

Reasonable progress

Leaders are now closely monitoring the progress that learners and apprentices make toward achieving their qualifications and completing their apprenticeships. They work closely with curriculum directors to ensure that there is accurate oversight of those who may be at risk of not achieving. Improved reporting enables leaders to have more-effective discussions with curriculum staff who have direct responsibility for the progress of learners and apprentices. As a result, leaders can identify when learners and apprentices are not making the progress expected of them.

Since the previous inspection, managers have improved the process that they use when recruiting apprentices. They now work very closely with employers to ensure that employers fully understand their commitment to an apprenticeship, including releasing their apprentices for off-the-job training and coordinating the on-the-job training. As a result, only a very small proportion of the apprentices who have started with the college since May 2019 have withdrawn from learning without achieving their apprenticeship. Most of those who started after this date are making at least expected progress for the length of time that they have been on their programme.

Most staff use teaching and learning activities that challenge learners of different abilities, including those who are most able. As a result, a large majority of learners on study programmes are developing new knowledge and skills in their vocational subject areas.

Too many teachers do not use the results of initial assessments well enough to determine learners' starting points. In vocational subjects, teachers do not routinely assess subject-specific knowledge and skills at the start of the programme to identify what learners can already do. As a result, they are unable to plan the curriculum to meet individual needs.

In 2018/19, the proportion of learners on study programmes who achieved their qualification was too low. The proportion of learners on study programmes who

achieved a good pass in GCSE English and mathematics in their resit examination was very low. Managers estimate that a higher proportion of learners on study programmes will achieve their qualifications in the current academic year. However, their target for improvement is not high enough and, if met, would still mean that the proportion of learners achieving will remain too low. Of those apprentices due to complete their programmes in the current academic year, too many remain in learning beyond their planned end date.

What progress are leaders and managers making Insufficient progress in ensuring that attendance improves?

Despite the efforts of leaders and managers, the proportion of learners and apprentices who frequently attend college has not improved sufficiently since the previous inspection. The average rate of attendance has only marginally improved; attendance at English and mathematics lessons remains very low. The actions of leaders and managers have not yet had a consistent impact on the proportion of learners and apprentices who have high levels of attendance. As a result, the attendance of learners and apprentices varies significantly across different curriculum areas.

Leaders, managers and governors recognise that attendance needs to be better. They have made attendance one of their headline key performance indicators. As a result, there is ongoing scrutiny of attendance rates from senior leaders and governors.

At the start of this academic year, senior leaders introduced a range of new roles to support learners on study programmes and apprentices to improve their attendance. Staff such as youth workers now support learners and apprentices who have barriers that prevent them from attending college. Where appropriate, college staff provide financial support to learners and apprentices to help them with transport and course material costs, as well as carrying out home visits when learners on study programmes have persistently low attendance.

The very recent creation of a senior leadership post with responsibility for all aspects of learners' experience at the college is intended to provide a better overview of attendance. However, it is too early to see the impact of this role. Leaders and managers now celebrate learners who have high attendance. They have also introduced a range of incentives that actively promote positive attendance; for example, learners studying construction can win a toolbox with vital trade equipment.

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