

Greater Brighton Metropolitan College

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

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Greater Brighton Metropolitan College (GBMC) was inspected in October 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.

GBMC is a large general further education college serving the city of Brighton and Hove and the towns of Shoreham-by-Sea and Worthing. It was formed in March 2017 by the merger of City College Brighton and Northbrook College. The college has around 3,100 learners aged 16 to 18, around 3,000 adult learners and 700 apprentices. Ninety learners are in receipt of high needs funding.

GBMC offers a range of full- and part-time courses, from entry level to degree level, in most subject areas. The college has five sites: two in Brighton, two in Worthing and one in Shoreham. College leaders work with five subcontractors for apprenticeship and adult learning courses.

The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that teachers who are identified as needing further training benefit from appropriate training and support and in monitoring the impact on their teaching, especially those teaching level 1 and level 2? **Significant progress**

Staff participation in training and development events has increased, including that of teachers who teach level 1 and level 2 students. After the previous inspection, leaders and managers took swift action to radically change their approach to identifying and meeting staff training needs. A new coaching culture, which prioritises teachers' personal development, is now well established in the college. Staff speak highly of how leaders and managers are now investing in supporting them with their developmental needs.

Staff receive focused support from teaching and learning coaches, which helps them identify areas for development in their teaching practice and rapidly improve them. Teachers benefit from constructive professional discussions with their coach before

and after lesson observations. These targeted interventions bring improvements to teachers' teaching practice and, in turn, to their students' experience.

Leaders and managers closely and frequently monitor the quality of teaching that students receive. Staff who need higher levels of support receive more time-bound and intensive interventions through the 'accelerated support programme', so that their students' learning experience improves promptly. Student surveys show high levels of satisfaction with the teaching and the quality of the resources that students receive.

Learning coaches have built good relationships with staff, who approach them for support when they are trying something new in their lessons. All staff now have the opportunity to challenge themselves to improve their practice, and many choose to do so.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in identifying and overcoming the barriers faced by 16- to 18-year-old-students who do not attend lessons frequently and in increasing their attendance rates since full on-site activity recommenced? **Significant progress**

Leaders effectively use a range of reports to identify and monitor variances in attendance by factors, such as college site, curriculum area, course level, student age, gender or additional learning needs, among others. They closely monitor students' attendance to their main course subjects, as well as to English and mathematics lessons, where applicable. As a result, staff now take quicker action when students are absent from lessons.

Teachers and learning assistants work together to identify students whose attendance falls below target or whose change in behaviour gives them cause for concern. They put in place swift interventions to support these students, such as referrals to pastoral mentors to help students increase their attendance. Mentors have high levels of understanding of the barriers and issues that students face in their personal and social lives, which have an impact on their learning. They have well-established relationships with external agencies, such as mental health services and social services. Mentors use this knowledge well to work with students, and their families if needed, and set them realistic targets to return to learning at a pace that is achievable and sustainable.

Teachers use college mobile phones to send a text to students who are absent from lessons and, where appropriate, to their parents/carers. Students have responded positively to these personal and supportive approaches to tackling their absence. Many use the opportunity to discuss their problems or issues with staff, which allows for prompter referral to mentors for support. There has been a positive and incremental impact on attendance as a result.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in planning to increase the numbers of 16- to 18-year-old students who take part in meaningful, external work experience placements?

Significant progress

Managers introduced innovative alternative opportunities to enable students to develop their employability awareness within the parameters permitted by COVID-19 restrictions. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities carried out placements at the college library or reception. Games students benefited from virtual work experience and mentoring by games industry specialists. In the few curriculum areas in which students did not benefit from external input, students completed work-related activities in their lessons, like mock assignments and interviews.

Managers and teachers prepare students who can attend external placements well. Care students know what is expected of them, such as wearing a uniform. They gain practical experience of the theory they have covered on their courses, such as the differences in looking after children of different ages. They gain deeper knowledge of the world of work, for example realising the level of responsibility placed on staff who look after children and the elderly.

Managers have started planning early for next year's work and industry placements to ensure that students benefit from meaningful placements that increase their employability awareness. They have collected information about the interests, availability and willingness to travel and support needs of students who are continuing at the college in readiness for matching them with relevant employers in September.

Leaders and managers have made changes to their employability programmes so that they can offer students opportunities which reflect the world of work after the pandemic. For example, students will have virtual placements with employers who now work from home. Students will continue to receive remote talks as these allow them access to industry experts from a wider geographical area.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in accurately evaluating the quality of their apprenticeship provision, tackling weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, and using improvement processes effectively to bring about improvements?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have implemented processes and procedures that provide them with clear oversight of the progress that apprentices make, including their progress in functional skills qualifications and off-the-job training. Curriculum heads scrutinise apprentices' progress with senior leaders at monthly apprenticeship board meetings. Apprentices who are identified as being behind with their studies receive support to help them complete and achieve.

Curriculum heads manage the recruitment process with integrity. They focus on ensuring that apprentices are on the right programme for them. They make sure that

apprentices and employers can fulfil the requirements of the apprenticeship so that apprentices will be able to complete and achieve their apprenticeship.

A significant number of apprentices are behind in their studies because they have not completed their English and mathematics qualifications. To rectify this, leaders have integrated the teaching of functional skills into the apprenticeship. Teachers of English and mathematics are now involved in apprentices' progress reviews so that issues with their attendance or their progress can be picked up early and actions can be put in place to tackle them.

Leaders and managers have trained skills coaches in the expectations and requirements of apprenticeships. This has increased their confidence in tailoring their support to the specific needs of apprentices and their employers. However, in areas like construction, apprentice reviews are not yet of a good enough quality to support apprentices to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they require.

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