

Coventry College

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

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Address:	City Campus 50 Swanswell Street Coventry CV1 5DG

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Coventry College was inspected in September 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.

Coventry College is a large general further education college based in Coventry across two campuses: City campus, and Henley campus. At the time of the visit, 2,770 learners were on education programmes for young people, 2,654 learners were on adult learning programmes, 278 apprentices were studying apprenticeships, 51 learners were in receipt of high-needs funding and four learners were on a traineeship. Most learners on education programmes for young people study at level 3. The majority of apprentices are over 19 years old and study standards-based apprenticeships at advanced level.

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

Themes

What progress have leaders made in setting higher expectations of teaching quality and in supporting managers and staff to improve curriculum design, planning and delivery so that learners achieve the grades of which they are capable?

Reasonable progress

Leaders focused on key priorities to improve the standards of teaching, learning and assessment. They initially identified a range of actions that would produce a positive impact on the quality of education. For example, teachers completed staff development to help them improve their teaching skills. Managers underwent training to improve their approach to conducting appraisals. They implemented new, refined reporting processes, to ensure useful information is regularly looked at. As a result, managers and teachers understand senior leaders' high expectations for teaching and learning.

Leaders have implemented a standardised approach for teachers, when giving feedback to learners. They created a 'STAR' – strength, target, action and review – model. All teachers receive training in this approach. Leaders look at how well teachers use this model with termly reviews of work and internal verification

processes. However, they recognise there is still some inconsistency across the college. As a result, not all learners receive precise and useful feedback that helps them to make progress.

Leaders monitor learners' progress. They have designed a simple 'KAP' – key assessment points – system to capture information on how well learners are progressing. Teachers use a risk-rating system of gold, silver, and bronze to categorise the extent of learners' improvements. They review the level of support given to learners by the category they achieve at the assessment point. However, not all learners fully understand this system yet. As a result, learners are unclear of the levels of support they need and how well they are progressing.

Teachers develop 'long-term learning' for learners. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for learners to revisit and recap their learning. For example, in English and mathematics, teachers use 'take-away activities' as a way of revisiting and recapping learning. In childcare, the most successful approach is where learners revisit knowledge elements, and then apply their learning in practical activities. As a result, most learners can remember more.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that learners in receipt of high-needs funding receive the individualised support to enable them to achieve well and move into supported internships or employment? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders have developed strong relationships with local schools and the local authority. They use these relationships to explore fully the starting points of learners. Leaders review education health care plans (EHCP), visit and work with the learner's school to gain a realistic view of their needs. An enrolment panel reviews the collated information and identifies if the college can meet the learner's requirements. As a result, teachers and coaches are fully aware of learners' needs and can support them to transition into a new environment smoothly.

Teachers on vocational programmes assess the starting points of learners. They use traditional assessment methods, in English and mathematics, to identify the academic ability of learners. They take time in pre-course interviews to discuss learners' support needs and have available a copy of their individual support plan. They use the plan to identify helpful teaching strategies and make necessary allowances to enable learners to feel comfortable in class situations. For example, some learners like to work independently and sit at the back of the class. However, most teachers focus on the attainment of qualifications and do not pay attention to learners' wider development needs. As a result, learners recognise their academic goals, but are unclear of the personal developments needed to support them into work.

Coaches build valuable relationships with learners. They use EHCPs as a foundation to develop learners' 'support plans' in the college. Within the first six weeks of teaching, learners identify their long-term goals. Coaches use weekly one-to-one meetings to discuss their goals and break these down into smaller targets. They encourage learners to reflect on their performance and behaviour and set themselves targets accordingly. However, the learner support plans are not detailed enough. They fail to detail the learner's wider development needs, such as making friends. As a result, learners do not always develop the skills they need to support them in their next steps.

What progress have governors made in ensuring that leaders' improvement actions lead quickly to learners and apprentices knowing more and achieving their best?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, the chair of governors has expanded and diversified the skills of the governing board. The board is now much more widely represented in gender, age, and ethnicity. Governors demonstrate a variety of experience particularly within leadership, finance, and further education and skills. This expansion gives the board a more comprehensive approach to supporting the college and its senior leaders.

Governors understand their objectives to support rapid improvements around teaching and learning. Following the last inspection, they identified their first objective was to employ a principal with a strong focus on teaching and learning, to support them in their ambitions. On appointment, the principal was set clear targets for improvements. The chair monitors the progress of these objectives closely in regular meetings. As a result, governors can articulate well the overall improvements within the college.

Governors now receive informative and detailed reports that help them to ask the right questions. The increased detail within reports supports governors to gain more meaningful knowledge of the college, such as learners' punctuality, attendance, and well-being. These reports help them challenge leaders in areas they deem necessary. As a result, they know the areas that still need a quality improvement focus and the areas that are performing well.

Governors know what they need to do, to support the improvement of under-performing subject areas. For example, leaders recognised issues within the engineering courses were largely due to poor teaching. However, they faced difficulty recruiting good teachers into that area. As a result, governors supported leaders to introduce a new recruitment strategy to entice highly skilled teachers with that subject background. It is too early to see the impact of this strategy.

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